

**Duke English Department Course Descriptions
Spring 2022**

ENGLISH 90S.01 SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE

TRANSNATIONAL BLACK WOMEN INTIMACIES: A Black Girls' Love Story

Kelsey Desir

In this course, we will analyze the formation of Black women's transnational connections, intimacies, and coalitions to better understand the Black Atlantic, communities of African descended peoples dispersed across lands that are joined by the Atlantic Ocean (e.g., African Americans, Haitians, and Jamaicans). The Black Atlantic is often defined in terms of the loss and violence caused by the Atlantic Slave Trade. While pain is an essential part of the Black Atlantic story, this course proposes a reading that centers Black women's intimate connections. We can gain much from studying Black women's sacred practices, desires, and personal trials and tribulations, which are often encapsulated in the products of their self-expression, such as poems, memoirs, music, and letters. In essence, I am proposing a reading of the Black Atlantic that would—in the words of cultural anthropologist Celeste Henery—frame it as a love story.

To this end, we will take an interdisciplinary approach and draw from the disciplines of English, sociology, and history to examine myriad forms of cultural expression produced from the late 20th century to our current moment. We will explore how women of African descent in the Black Atlantic build diaspora amongst one another through literature and other forms of expressive culture (e.g., YouTube videos, films, and visual art). Assigned texts may include Celeste Henery's "And so I Write You: Practices in Black Women's Diaspora," Kasi Lemmons's *Eve's Bayou*, Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther*, and more.

To keep students actively engaged with both assigned course materials and each other's thoughts, they will post weekly responses (250-500 words) on Sakai. Each student will serve as a discussion lead in which they will deliver a close reading of one of the assigned texts. Two papers will be assigned; The mid-term paper (5-6 pages) will require students to analyze one assigned text. Upon workshopping and receiving feedback on their first drafts, they will submit a final draft. The final paper (8-10 pages) will be completed in stages. Students will first complete an annotated bibliography, paper proposal, and a first draft before submitting a final version. There will also be the option to do a creative project instead of writing a standard seminar paper for the final.

ENGLISH 90S.02 SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE

LITERARY ADAPTATION

Kevin Gallin

What happens when a book becomes a movie? What decisions need to be made, and what decisions are forced, when a story changes medium? In this course, we will consider original stories paired with their adaptations. For example, how did *Frankenstein* change when it was adopted from its novel form to the 2011 stage production? The 2013 film *Snowpiercer* and its source material, the 1983 French graphic novel? *Hamlet* on the page, or on stage, or on screen with Kenneth Branagh or Ethan Hawke as the titular prince? The various iterations of *Pride and Prejudice*, including the ones with zombies? *Zola*, the recent film that began as one of the rowdiest tweetstorms in the platform's history?

Through sustained attention to the same stories, told differently, we will ask whether they really are the same stories after all. By thinking through these pairings, we will consider medium directly, providing students with a basis for thinking about narrative in a broad, capacious way. Students will be challenged to

do the same kind of adaptive thinking themselves: the course will include a creative element where students will choose a text that is meaningful to them and adapt it into a new form of storytelling altogether. Later in the semester, students will also have the opportunity to participate in a roundtable discussion with professionals in the film industry who have worked on literary adaptation and ask them questions about the process.

Grading: participation, short reflections, two analysis papers (3-5 pages) based on course texts, independent analysis of pair of texts from outside of class, and an independent creative project.

**ENGLISH 101S.01 THE ART OF READING
GOTHIC FICTION & FILM
Leonard Tennenhouse**

This course considers why a literate public who prided itself on its modernity developed such an enduring appetite for gothic fictions and films. How did advances in modern science, the expansion of empires, and the growth of an information society feed this appetite? What aspects of daily life tend to take on gothic qualities and under what conditions? We will address these questions by examining how selected works of fiction and film challenge and perhaps anticipate changes in established notions of the self, family, nation, and world.

**ENGLISH 101S.02 THE ART OF READING
WAR & WORSHIP, WINE & (WO)MEN
Thomas Ferraro**

WAR & WORSHIP, WINE & (WO)MEN
A Seminar for Sophomores & Freshfolk
Spring 2022
Prof. Tom Ferraro

Our age has lost much of its ear for poetry, as it has its eye for color and line, and its taste for war and worship, wine and women.

Henry Adams (1904)

Why read when there is so much else to do? What is there in a novel, a poem, an essay to hold our imagination captive? to make us smarter, wiser, more artful and more courageous? to bring us closer to each other, to the world at large, to the wonder and the terror and the majesty? How are we to know "it" when we see it; get there when we're not; speak of it when we are? And how are we to take the next step--to the point where bearing witness becomes a form of making present? embodying, a form of propagating? critical analysis, a form of collective self-interrogation?

These questions are the biggies--the overarching, meta-issues of deeply engaged, bloody demanding, fiercely intelligent, aching beautiful reading.

Nice to contemplate, for sure. But, speaking practically, how to begin?

I will gather for us some of the best stuff I know, American Romantic texts especially, treating matters of nearly universal interest: those matters of “war and worship, wine and (wo)men and work,” to expand pointedly on Henry Adams’s 1904 alliterative litany. The kind of texts worth reading again and again. We will take character to heart, query idea and plot, describe the sound and sight and feel of the language. We'll ask each text to tutor us on how it wishes, in particular, to be read. And we'll work methodically on our game: 1) reading aloud, to catch the tone and the drama of the words on the page, even in expository prose, experiencing form as content; 2) cross-interrogating between part and whole, whole and part (a given phrase vs. its sentence or paragraph, a given passage vs. the text, the text-at-hand vs. the texts-so-far); and 3) cultivating self-reflexivity, in which what is going on in a text is seen to be at stake in how, separately and together, we discuss it. The ultimate goal is to be able to inhabit a text in its own terms, so intimately that it lives in us; to analyze it so cogently that it, in effect, analyzes us.

An introduction, in sum, to the pleasuring intensities of sustained reading during the age of cyber-immediacy and virtual contact: the visceral texture it offers, the analytic trenchancy (including capacity for contradiction) it demands, the repartee it solicits, the essaying that honors it, and the kinship of word and thought it ultimately inspirits.

TEXTS TO BE DRAWN FROM: Poetry by Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, and Langston Hughes; fiction by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Willa Cather, Claude McKay, and Ron Hansen; and art-essays by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Michael Herr, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Richard Rodriguez; maybe even a vocal recording or video clip, or two.

PREREQUISITES: an appetite for risk, a willingness to dig in, and that extra something.

INVITATION/WARNING: I know that English 101 fills a requirement, which produces an allergic reaction to all and sundry, even the majors! More damaging still, it is a clear that--thanks to high-school pedagogy, not to mention the current cultural climate--the pendulum has swung back to certain whispered assumptions about "English": above all, that it is a touchy-feely enterprise of dreamy subjectivity for those without the brains or the gumption to do the real stuff. But let me say, at the risk of sounding defensive: Dream on. As former President Brodhead reminds us, almost every single American winner of the Nobel Prize in the Sciences of the last 25 years began intellectual life with an undergraduate Liberal Arts degree heavy on English. Now is the time to start wondering, what am I missing?

**ENGLISH 101S.03 THE ART OF READING
ARTS OF ATTENTION
Sarah Beckwith**

Throughout the class we will be paying close attention to what writers do in various genres, media, and idioms of human voicing. We will be *noticing* how poets, novelists, and dramatists of various historical periods *notice* the world, and also *noticing* ourselves *noticing*. How do we learn to read –skilfully and with acumen-- poetry, plays, and prose, and what are we doing when we read? How do we do things with words?

How might these arts of attention provoke us or inspire us to our own expression, to try to become people on whom nothing is lost, as Henry James marvelously put it?

In Literature classes we have the privileged luxury of working in the same medium as the writers we study: words. In this course we'll aid our study of literature by writing quite a bit ourselves. I ask students to build their own primers or handbooks to develop a critical vocabulary. We will work with forms of parody and imitation too to work close up with form. We will also be keeping notebooks of our reading and writing, a record, refinement, practice, and development of the art of attention. We will think about and also use the form of the essay, our medium for testing things out against ourselves (from *essay*, Fr.).

We will look at a range of poetic forms, (ode, sonnet, free verse, elegy, dramatic monologue, lyric, epic) and think of poetry as witness (Czeslaw Milosz), and redress (Seamus Heaney), lament, celebration, and prayer in many idioms of human voicing. We will also read a range of fascinating novels in which each succeeding writer rewrites his or her forebears: Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, (1847), Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), which rewrites Bronte's novel from the point of view of Antionette Cosby, the Dominican heiress of Bronte's tale. As our third novel we will read Caryl Phillips, *A View of the Empire at Sunset* (2019), Phillips' take on Jean Rhys and the forms of estrangement and belonging at the heart of empire.

Our explorations and investigations of theatre will focus on memory: Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, and Tennessee Williams *The Glass Menagerie*.

ENGLISH 110S.01

INTRO CREATIVE WRITING

Faulkner Fox

This course gives students an opportunity to practice and explore four genres of creative writing: creative nonfiction, fiction, drama, and poetry. Part of the class will be devoted to peer critique of student work ("workshopping"), and part to discussions of craft and close reading of published essays, stories, plays, and poems. There will be weekly writing assignments—both creative and critical—and students will submit a final portfolio of finished work.

ENGLISH 110S.02

INTRO CREATIVE WRITING: Narratives

JP Gritton

Although this introduction to creative writing will feature (some) poetry, students who enroll in this class should be focused primarily on composing works of prose, both nonfiction and fiction. In addition to exploring elements of the craft—setting, characterization, voice, point of view, and so on— this class seeks to explore the ways in which storytellers are engaged in ongoing "conversations" with one another. As a class, we'll explore explicit responses writers have made to the work of others. In poetry, for instance, the first line of Langston Hughes' "I, Too" forms an "answer" to Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing." In fiction, we might read Clarice Lispector's "The Disasters of Sofia" as a response to "Little Red Cap" by the Brothers

Grimm, or explore how Nathan Englander's "What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank" replies to Ray Carver's "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" (a story which is itself a "cover" Plato's *Symposium*). Through our own writing and through the careful reading of others', we'll explore a literary "grammar" before situating ourselves in ongoing and ever-evolving conversations of storytellers.

ENGLISH 220S.01

INTRO TO THE WRITING OF POETRY

Joseph Donahue

This class is a poetry writing workshop with a significant reading component. We will read some of the defining works of modern poetry, and look at the history of various avant garde movements such as Dadaism, Surrealism, Imagism, Futurism and Expressionism. But our main focus will be on writing poetry. We will explore various styles and techniques, collage, random procedures, simulated madness, trance writing, hyperrational nonsense, dream narratives, incantation, spells, arbitrary rules, confessions, and much else as we deepen our own understanding of the sources of human creativity in language, and write our own ever more astonishing poems.

ENGLISH 221S.01 INTRO TO THE WRITING OF FICTION

GREAT ARTISTS STEAL

JP Gritton

In addition to composing their own pieces of short fiction, students will read work by exemplars of the short form. These stories are lenses through which we'll explore the building blocks of the narrative craft—character, point of view, setting, plot, as well as voice—and they will complement chapters from Janet Burroway's guide to narrative craft, *Writing Fiction*. Students who remain in the course will be required to purchase this text, which is going to give us a technical ballast as we explore fiction by the likes of Daniel Orozco, Amy Hempel, Toni Morrison, and others. In addition to our weekly meetings, students will maintain a robust online presence on the class's Sakai site. Students may be asked to post discussion questions on readings, as well as informally "workshop" classmates' fiction in class and on the discussion board. In addition to weekly writing exercises, students will submit one fully revised short story at semester's end, along with a final portfolio "letter" that articulates their revision process.

ENGLISH 221S.02 INTRO TO THE WRITING OF FICTION

Peter Kimani

Course description forthcoming.

ENGLISH 222S.01 INTRO TO THE WRITING OF CREATIVE NONFICTION
WRITING THE SELF
Cathy Shuman

How do you craft a self through writing? The semester will be spent exploring approaches to autobiographical writing, as students write preliminary drafts/exercises that will lead through workshops and revision to the production of three 7-9 page autobiographical essays. As we consider topics such as childhood and memory, the people, places, and things that make up our present selves, and the stories that have shaped our lives, we will read selected examples of published memoir and personal essay that will help us develop techniques for creating our own. No previous creative writing coursework is required for this course.

ENGLISH 222S.02 INTRO TO THE WRITING OF CREATIVE NONFICTION
INTRO TO JOURNALISM
Peter Kimani

Course description forthcoming.

ENGLISH 271.01 CLASSICS OF AM LIT: 1915-1960
Victor Strandberg

This course in modern American literature will begin with major figures of the WWI period and will move through the decades up to the 1960s. Most of the course will be devoted to novels, but we shall also look at such major poets as T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Edna St Vincent Millay, and William Carlos Williams. Although our primary interest will be to understand and appreciate the specific works we study, we shall also consider the larger cultural and intellectual context relevant to each writer. In addition to the poets already mentioned, this course will study prose works by Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Hemingway, Carson McCullers, Saul Bellow, Richard Wright and/or Toni Morrison, and John Updike.

Exams: Three hour-long exams and a terminal quiz. There will be NO 3-hour final.

Term papers: One term paper, about 5-7 pages.

Grade to be based on: exams 75%, term paper 25 %.

ENGLISH 276.01 AFRICAN DIASPORA LITERATURE
BLACK LIVES MATTER
Tsitsi Jaji

Black lives have always mattered to Black people, and literature has been a crucial way to articulate the beauty and power of Black culture within and beyond its bounds. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 crisis

police violence, and incarceration call for the study of Blackness from a cultural, historical perspective. The term “Black” has been used in multiple ways since the 15th century, influenced by race-thinking, colonization, and slavery. This course will focus on how diverse Black cultures think with and about each other. Beginning with the 17th century biography of an Ethiopian nun who resisted colonization, we will turn to writers like Phillis Wheatley, Mary Prince and Maria Stewart who used their words to call for Black freedom in the 18th and 19th centuries. How did African, Caribbean, and U.S. Black women envision freedom. What are the connections between their work and black women’s leadership in today’s Black Lives Matter movement?

In the wake of emancipation and the struggle for full civil, and human rights involved thinking Blackness in an international framework of solidarity. This was never easy. We will turn to a question first formulated by Countee Cullen, a leading poet of the Harlem Renaissance: “What is Africa to me?” For African Americans, the continent beckoned as a site of origin, as we will see in Maya Angelou’s memoir of her years in Ghana, *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes*, and Saidya Hartmann’s moving account of her study trip there, *Lose Your Mother*. African writers also reflected on what pan-African, nationalist, and later, Afropolitan ideas meant for what “Africa” meant. We will welcome author Novuyo Tshuma as we read her multi-generational political novel, *House of Stone*. In closing we will return to the immediate prompts for this topic: anti-black violence and COVID’s disproportionate impact on black and brown communities.

This class focuses on literature but also includes film, non-fiction, and scholarly articles. No experience in literary study is expected, and grades are based on class discussion, short reflection papers, and an extended essay or creative project. There are no exams in this class.

ENGLISH 290S-1.01 SP TOPICS MEDIEVAL/EARLY MODERN LIT

ENGLISH EPIC

Julianne Werlin

One of the oldest extant works of western literature, Homer’s *Iliad* has had a long afterlife. In late medieval and Renaissance England, two millennia after the *Iliad* was first composed, writers sought inspiration from the myths and heroes of ancient epic as they attempted to forge their own national literature. Even today, with its vast scale of action, its cast of heroes and gods, its heartrending scenes of death and devastation, and its startlingly vivid language, the *Iliad* continues to define epic form and style.

This class will examine Homer and his influence on medieval and Renaissance English writing. We will begin by reading the *Iliad*, then consider some of the great adaptations and rewritings of Homeric epic by major authors including Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton. We will see the story of Troy transformed into a tale of betrayed love in Chaucer and Shakespeare, while in Spenser, we will find Homeric epic conjoined with Arthurian legend and Christian allegory to create a strange literary hybrid. With Milton, we will encounter epic on a new scale, spanning Heaven, Hell, and Paradise, as Homeric gods and heroes are replaced with angels, devils, and the Christian God. Throughout the course, we will consider such questions as the character of the epic hero and the nature of heroism; the value attached to human life in this frequently violent form; and the relationship between epic action and literary style.

Assignments will include two papers, quizzes, and weekly postings.

**ENGLISH 290S-2.01 SP TOPICS 18th/19th CENTURY LIT
AMERICAN CRIME: FICTION & FILM, 1800-1914
Michael D'Alessandro**

Public drunkenness, prostitution, arson, kidnapping, assault and battery, homicide: these are just a handful of the crimes that became increasingly prevalent in the United States during the long nineteenth century. In this course, we examine the period's novels, fictionalized confessions, and silent films—as well as modern-day films and criticism—that reveal a culture of seemingly never-ending vice. We trace how authors and filmmakers utilized formal experimentation to depict violent, nearly pornographic scenes of crime. The course moves across Northeastern urban capitals of sin to dehumanizing Southern plantations and through the often lawless Western frontier. By tracing how artists exploited and sensationalized crime, we will engage national debates regarding social class advancement, immigration, slavery, and sex trafficking.

The syllabus covers short fiction by Edgar Allan Poe, Louisa May Alcott, and Stephen Crane, early silent films including *The Great Train Robbery* and *Inside the White Slave Traffic*, and modern films such as *12 Years a Slave*, *The Wild Bunch*, *Gangs of New York*, and *The Assassination of the Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*. Supplemental readings feature exposé journalistic sketches and police gazette reports, as well as secondary source readings from social and political history and film studies. In examining all our primary texts against these materials, we attempt to separate the era's real-life crimes from those existing only within the literary imagination. Evaluation consists of online response posts, two mid-length formal essays, and an oral presentation. Also, as this class is a discussion seminar, most of our time (and a sizeable percentage of the evaluation) will focus on class participation. No prerequisites necessary.

**ENGLISH 290S-4.01 SP TOPICS IN CREATIVE WRITING
WRITING ACROSS BORDERS
Faulkner Fox**

“This creative nonfiction course focuses on a fundamental challenge: how can a member of one culture effectively and ethically write about another culture? How can Duke students, in particular, become even more cognizant of the dynamics involved in observing then writing about cultures they encounter? While this class is open to any student who wants to improve his or her writing and observational skills, it may be of particular value to those who have participated in—or plan to participate in—DukeEngage, a study abroad program, or Duke's Hart Leadership Program.

Over the course of the semester, students will write multiple drafts of two final essays, as well as weekly shorter, more informal exercises and reading responses. The class will also have a workshop component in which students discuss drafts of each other's work, as well as several individual conferences with the professor, peers, and the Duke Writing Studio.

ENGLISH 290S-4.02 SP TOPICS IN CREATIVE WRITING

FLASH NONFICTION

Cathy Shuman

Experimenting with creative nonfiction style, tone, and structure, in this class we will explore the challenges and opportunities offered by the genre of flash nonfiction (very short personal essays). Over the course of the semester each student will gather material for, draft, workshop, revise, and polish a series of six flash nonfiction pieces of 600-800 words each, using a variety of approaches. Along the way, in-class writing exercises and reading responses to published examples of flash nonfiction will provide inspiration and ideas. No previous creative writing coursework is required for this course.

ENGLISH 321S.01 INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOP WTG OF FICT.

DETECTIVES, ROBOTS AND TALKING FROGS: WRITING ALTERED/ALTERNATE REALITIES

Amin Ahmad

As children, we easily live in worlds that combine reality and fantasy, but as we grow older, we lose that ability. Perhaps that is why we are drawn to fiction that creates new realities. In this class, we will explore fiction that alters existing reality, or creates an alternate one: Hardboiled/ noir detective fiction, magical realism, dystopian fiction, fantasy and science fiction.

Reading like writers, we will analyze each genre to understand how it creates a new but authentic world, and how it draws upon existing archetypes and story structures.

We will then apply those understandings to our own writing through in-class writing exercises and short homework writing assignments. Students will ultimately write two full short stories in different genres, and workshop them in class.

This is an intensive class- come prepared to read a lot, write a lot, and to experiment with your writing.

ENGLISH 337.01 SHAKESPEARE THROUGH 1600

THE JACOBEAN SHAKESPEARE

Leonard Tennenhouse

This course will focus on the second half of Shakespeare's career. Known as the Jacobean Shakespeare, this was the period in which he wrote many of his greatest plays. Within the period from 1600 to approximately 1613 or so, he wrote more than seventeen plays. Reading a representative selection of these plays, we will look at how he revised the dramatic materials of his Elizabethan period to address the concerns of a Jacobean audience. We will ask, what his preoccupations were in this period, why he no longer wrote romantic comedies but turned instead to so-called problem comedies, what were the concerns of his great tragedies, and why as the decade came to an end he experimented with an entirely new form in which to write. The course will consist of a mixture of lecture and discussion. Lectures will be relatively brief. They will be designed to provide some historical and theatrical background. Among the plays we will read are

Hamlet, Measure for Measure, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest. Requirements: three papers, 8-10 pages each.

ENGLISH 372S.01 MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

Victor Strandberg

This course will have a double-track syllabus. On one track the instructor will focus on important figures in 20th century poetry ranging from Robert Frost and Ezra Pound to Allen Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath, and Amiri Baraka. (T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Edna St Vincent Millay, Langston Hughes, and Elizabeth Bishop, among others, are also on the major poets list.) The other track is the Open Choice approach, which is expected to occur every week or two during the semester. This gambit invites (requires) each student to present any poem of their own choosing, from any source, to the class for brief analysis and discussion. Requirements include two exams and two term papers of 5-7 pages.

ENGLISH 373S.01 AM LIT, COLD WAR / AFTER

PUZO'S CANON

Thomas Ferraro

For thirty-plus years, I have been reading Mario Puzo's The Godfather (the original novel, not just the films) through the collective lens of the American novelistic tradition, and it is time now to return the favor. The primary purpose of this version of English 373s is to (re)inhabit The Godfather and then to read through its prism a half dozen of the indispensable acts of the U.S. imagination composed in its wake. The Godfather was at the first and continues to be, among other things, the world's most successful novel for grown-ups, and there are reasons for that, culturally mythic because narratively ingenious: especially, its sardonic complexity, which outstrips in significant measure even Coppola's movie, as perfect a realization on screen as it otherwise is.

By sardonic complexity I mean the thematic entanglements of family and business, bound masculinity and feminine eros, self-interested violence and God-gifted sanctity--of blood and the marketplace--that lie at its thematic center. So blatant, yet so unfamiliar. But by sardonic complexity I also mean the combination of love and irony, reverence and fear, hypnotic romance and insidious condemnation that Puzo's narrative style conjures, which is at one level again blatant yet in other ways oh-so-very unfamiliar. Understanding that "overdetermination" is the offer I will make that you won't want to refuse. For in the omerta between text and readers, Puzo not only portrays but constitutes--embodies, enacts, effects--an alternative mode of knowing and doing (call it "Pagan Catholic Romanticism") that challenges at the deepest levels how we in the U.S. have been taught to think (therapeutic moralism, cancel-culture liberalism, allegorizing by symbols, either/or dichotomization, the pre-professional libidinal economy) and in so doing calls us forth, as individuals but also as a crew, to bear special witness to the developing American novel--sotto voce--in all its dark wisdom, courage, and beauty.

For me, as I say, it has been three decades in coming, but revenge, as the Don reminds us, is a dish best tasted cold. That the year 2019 was the fiftieth anniversary of the novel's publication puts extended icing on the cake. All are welcome to the block party.

5 or 6 novels to be chosen from: Cormac McCarthy's All the Pretty Horses or Blood Meridian, E.L. Doctorow's The Book of Daniel, Joan Chase's The Reign of the Queen of Persia, Joy Kogawa's Obasan, Ron Hansen's Mariette in Ecstasy, Oscar Hijuelos's Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, Jeannette Winterson's The Passion, and any of several by Toni Morrison. You will also surely want to screen at one or more of The Godfather films, with or without me—as well as greatest “novel” of the new millennium, David Chase's The Sopranos, Season 1.

ENGLISH 390-1.01 SINGLE AMERICAN AUTHOR

BOB DYLAN

Taylor Black

Bob Dylan is certainly a divisive figure. That said, one cannot deny his impact and influence on the ways we understand American culture. His 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature requires us all to reconsider the ways in which we have traditionally approached the worlds of music and literature. This course takes on that task.

We will analyze Dylan as both a contemporary, living figure and a more opaque, shadowy persona that moves backwards and forwards through time and space. Our work will chart Dylan's course through time—song-by-song, album-by-album and decade-by-decade—while also filling in the space surrounding his music with historical materials that add life and meaning to his creations. Dylan is partly the subject and musical composer for our journey, but we will also think of him as a kind of provocateur and spiritual guide who will lead us to think about basic problems related to the human condition. For instance, we will think about Dylan's musical visions of love/hate and death/salvation.

This class requires a willingness to accept improvisation as an intellectual skill and openness to new forms of response. Expect to read and think through critical texts--from American Studies, Black Studies, Popular Music Criticism and Continental Philosophy, to name a few--that will enhance our abilities to think more deeply about the media we consume. Most of all, you will need to be willing to do a lot of *listening*: to the music itself, but also to the, sometimes counterintuitive, messages that non-musical materials have to offer. Throughout the semester, we will endeavor to cultivate our habits as critical listeners and musical thinkers.

“Bob Dylan” will be presented in a lecture-format with an emphasis on different modes of participation including weekly blogs, group projects and in-class discussions. There will otherwise be short writing assignments, quizzes, exams and/or creative assignments fleshing out the rest of your grade.

ENGLISH 396S.01
LANGUAGE IN IMMIGRANT AMERICA
Dominika Baran

This course examines the crucial role of language in the story of the immigrant experience in America – a story marked by searching for a path between assimilation and preserving one’s heritage culture. Learning English, speaking with a foreign accent, choosing which language to use at home, bridging cultures by creating new ways of speaking through code-switching or hybrid language forms, responding to political challenges – the controversial bilingual education programs, the US English movement – have all shaped the making and remaking of immigrant identities. In this course, we will explore these issues by drawing on case studies in linguistic anthropology, on personal stories such as autobiographies and memoirs, and on public debates surrounding language and immigration. We will also consider the discursive construction of “the immigrant” in the media, in literature, and in ethnographic interviews to see how these discourses produce racial, ethnic, and linguistic hierarchies. NOTE: this is a Service-Learning course that involves 10 semester hours of work with local immigrant communities.

ENGLISH 420S.01 ADVANCED WORKSHOP IN POETRY
Nate Mackey

Advanced Writing Workshops build on the work done at the intermediate level, and intended for the most well-prepared and gifted creative writing students. Pre-requisite: One 300-level course in the corresponding genre or consent of the instructor if prior work merits admission to the class (as judged by the instructor).

ENGLISH 482S.01 CONTEMPORARY THEORY
Ranjana Khanna

Course description forthcoming.

ENGLISH 490S-10.01 SPECIAL TOPICS CRITICISM/THEORY/METHODOLOGY
ULYSSES IN THEORY
Aarthi Vadde

James Joyce's Ulysses turns 100 years old in 2022! The novel to end all novels, the influence of Ulysses on twentieth century literature and theory is unparalleled. In this seminar, we will dedicate ourselves to reading Ulysses in its entirety alongside canonical works of literary theory and criticism that were inspired by Ulysses or responded directly to it. Possible theorists and critics include T.S. Eliot, Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous, Karen Lawrence, Leo Bersani, and Vincent Cheng. No prior exposure to Joyce is required to take this course or do well in it. What is required is a willingness to read slowly, to reread, and to take the plunge of discussing a writer who said this about Ulysses: "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality."

Assignments will include a midterm paper (5-7pgs), final paper (10-11pgs), and four response papers to complement class discussion.

ENGLISH 590S-1.01 SP TOPICS SEMINAR I
CHAUCER: POETRY, THEOLOGY, POLITICS
David Aers

At the center of this course open to graduates and advanced undergraduates is a close reading of Chaucer's work. Chaucer's writing engages with an extraordinarily wide range of issues (hermeneutic, theological, political) in an extraordinary diversity of genres and forms. Preoccupied with questions about authority, gender, power and the grounds of human claims to knowledge his work includes profound theological explorations. It also offers us a shifting, often fragmentary series of meditations on the formation and contingency of identities and the virtues. We will study these meditations and changes in his thinking. In doing so we will find that the political and religious conflicts of the later fourteenth century are extremely relevant. So students will have to do work to discover what these were. It would be very helpful for all taking this class to have read Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars* (2nd edition) before class.

Before the first class you should have read the Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* and *Parliament of Fowls*. Graduate students should also have read the *Romance of the Rose* (trans. Frances Horgan, Oxford UP) and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (either in the Loeb parallel text, or Joel Reilhan's translation published by Hackett): both these texts were extremely popular in the Middle Ages, and Chaucer himself translated the whole of Boethius's work and parts of the *Romance of the Rose*. The aim of the course is to explore much of Chaucer's work (including *Troilus and Criseyde*) so the more you have read before class begins the better. For an introduction to Chaucer's historical contexts, besides Duffy's work already mentioned, you may find the following especially relevant:

Marion Turner, *Chaucer: A European Life*

Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography*

Elizabeth Salter, *Chaucer: The Knight's Tale and The Clerk's Tale*; see also relevant work in her
Fourteenth-Century English Poetry: Contexts and Readings

Lee Patterson, *Temporal Circumstances: Form and History in the Canterbury Tales*

Caroline Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*

Hester Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise*

Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to Medieval Theology*.

Required Texts

The Riverside Chaucer (ed. Benson); this edition is now marketed as *The Wadsworth Chaucer*. There is also the *Norton Chaucer* (ed. Lawton).

Class Format, Expectations, and Grading

This class is a seminar, so attendance and participation are mandatory. Laptops (and other electronic devices) are not to be used in class. A seminar is a dialogic form of learning, very different to a lecture class. In my experience, laptops act as an impediment to the kinds of attention and communication I consider essential to a flourishing seminar. Also, since we will have more than enough to chew on already, please refrain from eating during class.

For graduate students, the grade will come from one essay of not more than 25 pages to be handed in on or before the last class. The grade for undergraduate students will come from two essays (8-10 pp) which must be submitted by given deadlines. There will be no exams.

ENGLISH 590S-1.02 SP TOPICS SEMINAR I

OUR WORD IS OUR BOND: THE COMMITMENTS OF SPEECH IN LITERARY HISTORY, PERFORMANCE STUDIES AND CRITICISM

Sarah Beckwith

J.L.Austin called his mode of analysis “linguistic phenomenology” and its radical implications for the speaking animal (zoon politikon) have barely been addressed in literary studies. Austin’s work is not confined to a narrow range of “speech acts” called “performative” but extends to the variety and history of language use, “all the distinctions we have cared to make”, as he put it. It offers an understanding of linguistic agency that is socially responsible, and historically sensitive, putting questions of responsibility and freedom (hence ethics) at its heart.

This class examines the nature of this philosophy, exploring its roots and philosophical targets, and its availability for literary studies.

We’ll explore the picture of linguistic agency at its heart, especially as inherited by Stanley Cavell, and in relation to his great contemporary Wittgenstein. Austin’s works offers a powerful resource for investigating and exploring the history of our concepts. Hence we will also be doing our own fieldwork –exploring words and concepts through our (historical) use of them, thus how we do things with words.

Key texts of Austin will include his classic posthumously published *How To Do Things with Words*, and a selection of stunning essays from his *Philosophical Papers* (A Plea for Excuses, Other Minds, Three Ways of Spilling Ink. Pretending, and Truth). Key interpreters of Austin in literary studies—Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, Shoshana Felman, Stanley Fish, and Paul de Man, will be put into conversation with a second wave of Austin inheritance: Stanley Cavell, Avner Baz, Sandra Laugier, Nancy Bauer, and Richard Moran, whose recent book *The Exchange of Words* will be a key text along with Cavell’s writings.

We’ll track particular speech acts: cursing, blessing, thanking, forgiving, promising, slandering, ordering, entreating, lying, confessing, and so on, but we will also be thinking about some of Austin’s key distinctions—what we do in virtue of speaking, and what we do by virtue of speaking (perlocutionary) as the latter was a wholly undeveloped aspect of Austin’s writing, dealing not so much with the orders of law as the disorders of desire. This is where we might take up the legacy of Austin’s interest in the errors, abuses, failures, and difficulties that attach to the bonds we make (and unmake) in giving our word, and to the complex ways in which we are bound by recognition to each other.

Our literary and performance archive work will be chiefly playwrights and film makers whose focus is the talking animal, hence, Shakespeare (living through a revolution in ritual practice)¹, The Dardennes Brothers, Denys Arcand, Hollywood re-marriage comedies.

¹ Histories, Comedies, some tragedies.

ENGLISH 590S-2.01 SP TOPICS SEMINAR
18th CENTURY: INVENTION OF HEALTH
Charlotte Sussman

Eighteenth-century Britain witnessed the invention of the concept of health as both an individual responsibility and a population-wide concern. Some important texts from the period explore the individual experience of madness, trauma, and disability, while others consider the ethics of quarantine, vaccinations, and state-generated health statistics. We will pay particular attention to situations in which a concern, or even demand, for physical health coexists with conditions of un-freedom, such as the naval ship, the slave ship, the plantation, and, in some instances, the bourgeois home. We will also follow the deployment of ideas of health in British colonial encounters with indigenous people in the Atlantic and Pacific worlds. At least one assignment will be done in conjunction with Duke Library's large History of Medicine collection. The course will explore the intersection of eighteenth-century texts and recent theoretical developments in the health humanities, including disability studies, the problem of cure, and the ideology of health itself.

Possible primary texts include: James Cook, *Journals*; Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*; Earle, *Obi, or the History of Three-Fingered Jack*; Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*; Richardson, *Clarissa*; and Wollstonecraft, *Maria: or, the Wrongs of Woman*.

No previous knowledge of either eighteenth-century literature or health humanities is required.

ENGLISH 590S-2.02 SP TOPICS SEMINAR
BESTSELLERS & BOMBS IN 19th CENTURY AM LIT
Michael D'Alessandro

In 1855, Nathaniel Hawthorne famously wrote, "America is now given over to a damned mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash." Of course, it wasn't just women writers working in the sentimental mode who were crowding Hawthorne out of the marketplace. Popular works of sensation literature, often written by exposé journalists and hack authors, sold thousands upon thousands of copies by offering readers vicarious thrills about America's hidden underbelly. While writers like Hawthorne, Poe, and particularly Melville often struggled to find readerships with "trash" literature circulating, these renowned authors occasionally borrowed from such pulpy genres in attempts to sell books.

This course is an investigation of the canonized writers—whose works are lauded now but were often ignored upon first release. But it is also an examination of forgotten popular authors—whose texts dominated the marketplace in the nineteenth century but now are being taken seriously by literary critics. In addition to a full-length novel that anchors each week, secondary criticism focuses on print culture and history of the book. Regardless of the book's popularity then or now—whether it's a book you've read several times before or one you've never heard of—we will attempt to historicize its importance within an evolving canon of American literature.

Works will include Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*, and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, among others. Evaluation will include class participation, two oral presentations, and a final term paper.

Counts for Area II requirements for undergraduates. Graduates and undergraduates (juniors and seniors) welcome.

ENGLISH 590S-3.03 SP TOPICS SEMINAR

AFRICAN FUTURES

Tsitsi Jaji

60% of today's African population is under the age of 25. This generation will live through painful environmental degradation, radical shifts in gender and kinship relations, unemployment and more. This course is structured to take age studies as an optic to study African expressive cultures in the 20th and 21st centuries as generating ideas about futurities in vernacular, formal, and popular culture. African literary studies have long been haunted by the tension, between tradition and modernity, often figured in fiction as a tug of war between generations. Oral literature is perceived to be the domain of tradition, the written word aligned with "modernity." However, tradition is always dynamic, and the borders between world views are always fluid. What is more, traffic between rural and urban areas ensures a generative instability of such surprisingly durable dichotomies, as the plethora of research on popular forms from pamphlet literature to new media demonstrate. In this course we will consider a different optic, age studies, as a lens through which to examine shifting aesthetic and political priorities in African expressive cultures.

We will attend to how concepts around age have shaped the periodization of African literature – as the familiar designation of writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi waThion'go, and Ama Ata Aidoo as "first-generation" African writers, for example – with pre-independence writing and contemporary popular cultures often quarantined in nebulous categories that defy such framing. Rather than reinforcing this approach to periodizing, valuable as it may be, this course will track how selected African artists have figured the future with innovative approaches to temporality and to a range of possibilities in an ongoing practice of "decolonizing the mind." How have writers, film makers, and other artists used the impact upon different age groups to imagine alternatives to crises including colonial subjugation, nationalism, environmental degradation, gender and sexuality studies, notions of home and migration, and new medias? Key primary texts may include J.E. Casely-Hayford's utopian novel *Ethiopia Unbound* (Ghana, 1911), *African Jim* (South African musical film, 1949) alongside popular magazines emerging in the 1950s, Ama Ata Aidoo's play, *Dilemma of a Ghost* (Ghana, 1965), Bessie Head's *Maru* (Botswana, 1974), Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (Zimbabwe, 1988), Abderrahmane Sissako's film *Life on Earth* (1998), Wangari Maathai's *Unbowed* alongside science fiction short *Pumzi* (Kenya, 2000s), Zakes Mda's *Heart of Redness* (South Africa, 2000), Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu* (Uganda, 2014), and Novuyo Tshuma's *House of Stone* (Zimbabwe, 2018).

**ENGLISH 590S-4.01 SP TOP SEMINAR IN CRITICISM, THEORY OR METHODOLOGY
ROMANTICISM IN THEORY & PRACTICE**

Thomas Pfau

A comparative survey of English and German Romanticism, this class will have three distinct areas of concentration. During the first four sessions, we will explore the role of political and philosophical writing in the early phase of Romanticism (1789-1800) by considering selections from Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, followed by discussion of writings by J. G. Fichte, Novalis, and Friedrich Schlegel. – The next five sessions will focus on the Romantic idea of self-cultivation or *Bildung* in Goethe and Jane Austin (with a glance at F. Schlegel's "Dialogue on the Novel"). – During the final part of the course, we will explore Romanticism's culture of mourning and the construction of an idealized past (and present) in various lyric forms (ballad, romance, hymn, and elegy). Principal readings here will be by Schiller (*On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*), Wordsworth (from *Lyrical Ballads*), Hölderlin (late hymns and fragments), and Keats (Romances and Odes). – A selection of secondary materials will supplement our readings and discussion.

**ENGLISH 590S-4.02 SP TOP SEMINAR IN CRITICISM, THEORY OR METHODOLOGY
MODERNISM ACROSS THE ARTS**

Corina Stan

This course explores modernism as a rich mosaic of intermedial aesthetic practices, focusing closely on intersections between music, visual, and literary arts. This exploration will often take us behind the scenes of modernism, listening in on conversations in literary salons that inspired composers, or looking over the shoulder of writers jotting down ideas in diaries, while listening to music. Consider, for example, the lively portraits of artists emerging from Gertrude Stein's unusual Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas; or *Parade* (1917), produced by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, with costumes by Pablo Picasso, music by Erik Satie, and a scenario signed by Jean Cocteau; or Oskar Schlemmer's eccentric piece of Bauhaus brilliance, the *Triadic Ballet* (1922), partly inspired by Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1913), both emancipated from the constraints of theatrical and operatic traditions that had dominated Western art for centuries. And Schoenberg, of course, acknowledged that his musical style had changed dramatically when he composed to Stefan George's poems from *The Book of the Hanging Gardens*, which, in turn, were influenced by the synaesthetic qualities pursued by the French symbolists (Mallarmé was a great inspiration).

How do we account for these intermedial practices, and how do they enrich our understanding of literary modernism, as well as of the ways modernism has constantly reinvented itself – all the way to the present day? Can we understand "the contemporary" if we do not engage with modernism?

In keeping with the insistence, in *New Modernist Studies*, on broadening the framework of modernism spatially, temporally, and conceptually, in this course we will map out some of the major networks of artistic influence that have generated intermedial artworks. Our excursus will be presided by two major figures of the second half of the nineteenth century, Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche, whose asymmetrical friendship was born under the auspices of their shared fondness for music and philosophy, and later ruined by aesthetic and ideological differences. "Wagner sums up modernity. There is no way out, one must first

become a Wagnerian,” Nietzsche wrote. We will see that, where Wagner’s aim was to absorb all arts into the grand spectacle of the music drama, many later modernists thought of their work as an index to other arts.

We will explore Rimbaud’s “methodical confusion of all the senses,” Gauguin’s work in Tahiti and his influence on German expressionists, O. Dejours’ *Song of the Blue Rider* (inspired by the painter Franz Marc), A. von Zemlinsky’s *Lyric Symphony* (to lyrics by Rabindranath Tagore), Aimé Césaire’s dedication of his *Notebook...* to Wifredo Lam (and the latter’s closeness with Breton’s circle), the work of El Lissitzky in Soviet Russia, and his influence on Bauhaus and De Stijl figures. In addition to the indispensable manifestos that punctuate the period we think of as “modernism” (from Luigi Russolo’s *Art of Noises* and Tristan Tzara’s *Dada*, to de Andrade’s *Cannibalist Manifesto*), we will also engage with some major literary texts that intersect other art forms, such as the Sirens episode in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Virginia Woolf’s final section of *The Waves* (partly inspired by Beethoven’s quartets), Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice* (we will watch Luchino Visconti’s film, and analyze the use of Mahler’s *Adagietto*), excerpts from Gertrude Stein’s *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, from Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* and possibly from Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*.

ENGLISH 890S.03 SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR
QUANTIFYING LITERATURE
Aarthi Vadde, Julianne Werlin

Contemporary literary scholarship is increasingly preoccupied with number. Computational analysis has made it possible to make literary claims on a new scale, encompassing tens of thousands of books. The digital world has built metrics into our own practices of reading, writing, and citation. In addition to these novel features of the current environment, however, there is a much longer history of quantitative methods in the humanities, which continues to inform scholars’ research. Book historians’ counts of editions, techniques of authorship attribution, and prosodic analysis, among others, have always relied on the use of figures.

This course offers a wide-ranging survey of quantitative methods for literary study, from long-established modes of inquiry to new techniques. Possible subjects may include the analysis of book markets and publishing platforms; programs and tools for interpreting literature at scale; patterns in the history of authorship; and problems of classification and category formation. We will also consider some of the aesthetic and epistemological questions raised by quantitative approaches. How can quantitative analysis complement the qualitative interpretation of individual literary works? Does a quantitative approach change our understanding of texts as unified or bounded objects? Can quantitative methods lend clarity to longstanding debates about literary change across periods or give precision to the examination of differences between literary contexts?

Even though this class will show how quantification has always been part of the history of literary study, thinking in this way can feel quite new and we welcome those with little or no experience in the area. Further, to help students gain foundational knowledge in literary history, we plan to bring these methods into conversation with major works across periods. Possible readings include Milton’s *Areopagitica*, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, W.E.B. DuBois’s *The Souls of Black Folk*, selections of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and scholarship by James F. English, N. Katherine Hayles, Hugh Kenner, Franco Moretti, Ted Underwood, Matthew Jockers, Richard Jean So, Katherine Bode, Hugh Craig, and Johanna Drucker, as well as readings from the sociology and economics of media and the arts.

ENGLISH 890S.04 SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR
THE NOVEL AS THEORY: THE CITY NOVEL
Nancy Armstrong

I can think of no comprehensive theory of the city novel that compares with our favorite theories of the domestic novel, the historical novel, the realist novel, or the modernist novel. I cannot say why we lack such a theory. But I want to seize on this undertheorized form—one about which the novelists would seem to know more than the critics--as an opportunity to try answering some stubborn literary historical questions, which are what theories are supposed to do.

This course begins with a simple proposition: Let us assume that the British novel began with Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* instead of his *Robinson Crusoe*. We would then have to consider a plague-infested city, and not the uninscribed space of an uninhabited island, as the birthplace of the major narrative form of modern culture. Let us consider further that if Defoe's maritime adventurer had not established and fiercely defended a space for his personal life and a point from which to sally forth and put the island under his cognitive control, Crusoe would not have become the "new man" and prototypical protagonist. We shall begin by looking at what happens to Crusoe's urban counterpart when the narrator of *A Journal of the Plague Year* attempts to defend his person and perform a cognitive mapping of London under plague conditions. With our findings in mind, we turn to two clusters of interrelated texts:

During the 1840s and 1850s, according to Raymond Williams, the question of the relationship between the country and the city became *the* burning question for novelists. Williams identifies this as the moment when the relation of country to city rapidly transformed the way readers imagined both, as the utopian image of the country house was displaced by the ideal of a renovated city as the beginning and end of the process responsible for circulating people, goods, and information to the farthest reaches of the Empire. Williams would agree that no other novelist shows us what this reversal of spatial form and narrative process cost in terms of common culture than Charles Dickens. The question is how he made a world out of a society in pieces and did so in a way that appealed to an expanding popular readership, as well as the queen herself. To address this question, I believe, we need to consider his city novels in relation to the hugely popular, more journalistic *Mysteries of Paris* (1842-43) by Eugénie Sue and *Mysteries of London* (1844) by George Reynolds, from which I shall supply excerpts. Thomas Mayhew's *London labor and London Poor* was first printed in journalistic pieces throughout the 1840s and similarly lends itself to sampling. To add to the mix, we'll take a look Hausmann's plan for a renovated Paris, as explained in a chapter from James Collins's *Paris: The Biography of a City*, and examine the photographic techniques specifically designed to compose spatial images of Victorian cities that were infiltrating the English countryside and waterways.

The second half of the course will focus on modernism and postmodernism as experimental transformations of spatial form that adapt the image of the city for an acceleration of the urbanization process. Readings include Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, James C. Scott's "The High Modernist State," and Jameson's iconic encounter with Los Angeles in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Those, by way of preparation for focusing on selected novels post 1990, in which the urbanization process has done away with the difference between country and city. Possible readings include W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, Tom McCarthy's *Remainder*, Teju Cole's *Open City*, Colson Whitehead's *Zone One*, China Miéville's *The City & the City*, and Rachel Cusk's *Transit*.

Potential takeaways: 1) the experience of formulating major research questions, 2) a sense of how to put novels in dialogue with critical theory enabling each to expose the limits and blind spots of the other, and 3) a way of locating the past in the present (or vice versa) so that we can explain the curious worlds that novels are now imagining as the legacy of Victorian fiction.

Requirements: consistent class participation and a 15-page seminar paper that addresses a problem directly related to class discussions of the city novel.

ENGLISH 890S.06 SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR

WEST INDIAN AVANT-GARDE

Nathaniel Mackey

This course addresses the work of the anglophone Caribbean's three most formally and stylistically radical writers: Guyana's Wilson Harris (1921-2018), Barbados's Kamau Brathwaite (1930-2020), and Tobago's M. NourbeSe Philip (b. 1947). Noting Paget Henry's bifurcation of Caribbean discourse into two definitive strains, the historicist and the poetist, in his landmark work *Caliban's Reason*, the course asks whether the questing, experimental temper and tactics found in their poetry, fiction, criticism and generically indeterminate texts might represent a synthesis of the two. It attends to such matters as Harris's positing of a "novel of fulfillment" against an inherited "novel of consolidation," his call for "perspectives of renaissance which can bring into play a figurative meaning beyond an apparently real world or prison of history," his commitment to "a continuous inward revisionary and momentous logic of potent explosive images" and its manifestation in his poetic, theory-poised fiction and his lyrical, symbologist criticism; Brathwaite's concurrent focus on the majority status of Africans and Afro-Caribbeans in the West Indies since the 1650s and the processes of creolization that make for cultural pluralism, his academic background as a historian and its bearing on his New World trilogies and his "history of the voice," his advocacy and use of "nation language," "Calibanisms" and the typographical practice of "Sycorax video style" as revolutions of the word in the process of decolonization and postcolonial repair; Philip's long preoccupation with a multiply-signifying "silence" and the trials of the tongue imposed by and resulting from slavery and colonization, her reclamation and revivification of ecstatic traditions of possession/non-possession and their translation to the act of writing, her recourse to new deployments of typographical imprint and spatial arrangement, her aim "to release the story that cannot be told, but which, through not-telling, will tell itself."

ENGLISH 890S.07 SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR

VERSIONS OF CHARITY & ITS IMPEDIMENTS: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, WILLIAM LANGLAND, AND THE LATE 14TH-CENTURY POEM *PEARL*

David Aers

In this course we will explore the theological virtue of *Charity*. We will study three medieval versions of charity and its impediments across widely different genres. As the title indicates, I want us to consider both the forms this virtue takes, and the specific impediments each writer considers. This means we will be thinking about charity as a form of life in specific communities (church, polity, society) with their own impediments to the virtue, their own habitual sins. Our third work is an exquisite poem written around the

death of a child by the devastated father: what might charity be in the midst of such a catastrophe? This is therefore a course which involves close engagement with texts by three profound and complex Christian writers, across different genres.

We set out with the innovative, dazzling account of Charity offered by Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* II-II.23–46. You should have read this BEFORE the first class. We will begin our exploration of Aquinas's teaching by considering his "modi loquendi," the way he leads us to understanding through a dialectical account of arguments against the positions he favors. His modes of writing are inseparable from what he teaches, just as they are for poets like Langland and the *Pearl*-poet. We will also need to think about what virtues, habits and vices are in Aquinas's *Summa* and the place of the teaching on Charity within the whole work, especially in relation to Faith and Hope. We will certainly conclude our study of Aquinas by some consideration of Part III, the Life of Christ and the Sacraments. You will want to read Aquinas in one of the parallel-text (Latin/English) editions.

From Aquinas we will jump over a hundred years to Langland's great poem, *Piers Plowman*, in which the exploration of Charity (Deus Caritas, as Holy Church proclaims in Passus I) and the impediments to Charity are central. This is a demanding allegorical, dialectic, and visionary poem which I hope to introduce carefully to those unfamiliar with it, as well as introducing some of the differences between the contexts of Aquinas and Langland, writing in late 14th century England during the Great Schism. If you have not studied Middle English, read the poem in an excellent modern translation by George Economou, William Langland's *Piers Plowman: The C Version* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996, paperback). We will be studying the final version of the poem, known as the "C Version," and this is edited in a superbly but simply annotated version by Derek Pearsall: *Piers Plowman: A New Annotated Edition of the C-Text* (2nd edition, Liverpool University Press/Exeter University Press, 2008, paperback). Even if you are reading the poem in Economou's translation, you will find it well worth reading this alongside Pearsall's edition because of its thorough "Introduction" and annotations. Langland's *Piers Plowman* explores a very wide range of issues, showing the scope of charity in medieval Christianity: from "Deus Caritas" to vexed questions concerning almsgiving, mendicancy, and the treatment of the working poor. Above all, the poem is an extraordinary search for Charity: a contemplative, satirical, allegorical, and visionary search deploying Scripture and shaped by the liturgy from Passus XVIII.

We conclude the course with a reading of the great late fourteenth-century poem *Pearl*. The set text, edited by Jane Beal, is *Pearl: Text and Translation* (Broadview Editions, 2020). For a modern translation of all the poems by this outstanding writer, see *The Gawain Poet: Complete Works*, ed. Marie Borroff (Norton, 2011).

The best introductions to Aquinas for this course are probably the following: Mark Jordan, *Teaching Bodies: Moral Formation in the Summa of Thomas Aquinas* (Fordham University Press, 2016)—a superb example of how to read Aquinas's *Summa*, and much else; Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford University Press, 1993). He also has published an excellent guide to the *Summa Theologiae*: *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Guide and Commentary* (Oxford University Press, 2014). I urge all participants in this seminar to have read, before the first meeting, Eamon Duffy's great book on "traditional religion" and its smashing in the English Reformation, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 2nd edition with a new preface (Yale University Press, 2005, paperback). For Langland, the best introduction to *Piers Plowman* remains an essay by Elizabeth Salter, "Piers Plowman: An Introduction," chapter 5 in the collection of her essays entitled *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art, and Patronage of Medieval England*

(ed. Pearsall and Zeeman, 1988); together with Nicolette Zeeman, *The Arts of Disruption: Allegory in Piers Plowman* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

A note on class format, expectations, and grading: This class is a seminar, so attendance and participation are mandatory. Laptops (and other electronic devices) are not to be used in class. A seminar is a dialogic form of learning, very different to a lecture class. In my experience, laptops act as an impediment to the kinds of attention and communication I consider essential to a flourishing seminar. Also, since we will have more than enough to chew on already, please refrain from eating during class.

The grade will come from one essay of not more than 25 pages to be handed in during or before the final class.
