

Duke English Department Graduate Course Descriptions

Spring 2022

ENGLISH 590S-1-01

CHAUCER: POETRY, THEOLOGY, POLITICS

David Aers

Tuesday & Thursday 10:15 - 11:30am

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

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

Sarah Beckwith

Wednesday 3:30 – 6:00pm

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, slander, 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.

ENGLISH 590S-2-01

18th CENTURY: INVENTION OF HEALTH

Charlotte Sussman

Tuesday 12:00 – 2:30pm

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 University'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
BESTSELLERS & BOMBS IN 19th CENTURY AM. LIT.
Michael D'Alessandro
Thursday 1:45 – 4:15pm

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

AFRICAN FUTURES

Tsitsi Jaji

Thursday 1:45 – 4:15pm

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 21 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 "firstgeneration" 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**ROMANTICISM IN THEORY & PRACTICE****Thomas Pfau**

Monday 3:30 – 6:00pm

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**MODERNISM ACROSS THE ARTS****Corina Stan**

Wednesday 12:00 – 2:30pm

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

QUANTIFYING LITERATURE

Aarthi Vadde, Julianne Werlin

Wednesday 3:30 – 6:00pm

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**THE NOVEL AS THEORY: THE CITY NOVEL****Nancy Armstrong**

Monday 12:00 – 2:30pm

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 Eugène 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 at 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

WEST INDIAN AVANT-GARDE

Nathaniel Mackey

Thursday 12:00 – 2:30pm

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 poeticist, 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 (XTIANTHE 890-02)

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

David Aers

Thursday 3:30 – 6:00pm

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.

Crosslisted Courses of Interest

ENGLISH 571S-01 (AAAS 511S-01)

DYSTOPIA, SPECULATION, & THE TRANSHUMAN: OCTAVIA BUTLER

Joseph Winters

Wednesday 3:30- 6:00pm

This course will examine the work of science fiction writer, Octavia Butler. Critically engaging her novels and short stories, we will discover and work through a series of themes and tropes - dys(u)topia, the transhuman, temporality, the apocalyptic, survival, and hierarchical thinking as the root of racism and sexism. We will ask questions in this course about the relationship between sci-fi, speculative fiction, and the imagination of the present. In addition, Butler's fiction, which imagines various forms of miscegenation and interspecies contact, will invite us to deconstruct and re-imagine the figure of the human. Instructor: Winters

ENGLISH 590-4-01 (AAAS 690-01)

BLACKNESS, TRAUMA AND THE REAL

Joseph Winters

Monday 3:30 - 6:00pm

This course will investigate the connections between black studies and psychoanalytic thought. More specifically, we will examine how authors have drawn from the lexicon of psychoanalysis to diagnose anti-black racism, coloniality, and the violent underside of the Human. The course is an opportunity to discern the uses and limits of certain tropes - unconscious, drive, repetition, trauma, the unassimilable, melancholy, libidinal economy--for studying the interconnections among race, gender, and sexuality and imagining what liberation might be, if achievable at all. Overall, we will consider how black studies both incorporates elements of psychoanalytic thought and contests some of its basic assumptions. Authors may include: Frantz Fanon, Hortense Spillers, Claudia Tate, Toni Morrison, David Marriott, Ranjana Khanna, Antonio Viegas, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Frank Wilderson III, Anne Cheng.

ENGLISH 590S-3-01 (ROMST 590S-01)

LATIN-AFRICA & GLOBAL SOUTH

Sarah Quesada

Tuesday & Thursday 12:00 – 1:15pm

This course introduces students to a “Latin-African” literature in the Global South. Students will engage with the buried African history in some of the most widely read World Literature authors of Latin American descent in the last fifty years and their ties to Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone African writers and theorists. From exploring the resurrection of zombies in Benin, to African exoticism in Cuba, to García Márquez’s travels in Angola, to the discussion of removal of monuments of White nationalists in the Global South, this course is interested in thinking about the ways that Latinx and Caribbean authors *memorialize* a solidarity with Africa and the Global South more widely. To understand where this solidarity emerges, we will also engage archival multilingual records at its source, in Africa, to understand how anti-black discourses originated not only in the American plantations but even prior to the Middle Passage. Through a historical survey of the Slave Trade, the 19th century “scramble for Africa,” the decolonizing wars, Black internationalism and the neoliberal turn, we will see how this period is embedded in all texts read throughout the course. These include works by Junot Díaz, Achy Obejas, Gabriel García Márquez, Dahlma Llanos-Figueroa, Tomás Rivera, Rudolfo Anaya, Sandra María Esteves, and Alejo Carpentier, comparatively with African or African Diasporic texts by Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Camara Laye, Wole Soyinka, Sony Labou Tansi, Oндjaki, and theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe, Paulin Hountondji, and Amílcar Cabral, among others. Lastly, at times pairing these texts with physical memorials, we will reflect on the role of literature and the arts in memorializing a history of the Global South and the various ways this history contests notions of eurocentrism in World Literature, transatlantic studies, Latin American studies, and even the notion of Latinidad.

ENGLISH 620S-01 (LIT 620S-01)

FILM-PHILOSOPHERS-FILM-MAKERS

Markos Hadjioannou

Thursday 3:30 – 6:00pm

What is film philosophy? Is it a philosophy about films—that is, a philosophy invested in the narratological reading of filmic examples and traditions? Could it be a filmic philosophy understood as an analysis of processes of filmmaking—that is, thinking about the act of filmmaking as analogous to other practices of aesthetic creation? Or is it a philosophical mode of discovering the effects of spectatorial

practices on our senses and our own sense of selfhood?

What if film philosophy meant a philosophy *of* film, a philosophy belonging *to* film, one that arose from how film thought and expressed the world, from how it presented ways of manifesting the world, of being and belonging within the world, of becoming world? That is, what if film philosophy was film's philosophy of existence? And what if every film *was* philosophy?

These questions have been central to the interpretation of film by philosophers or other theoretical thinkers who have relied on philosophical systems to address cinema's complex relationship with qualities of knowledge, reality, existence, and the world of ideas. From Henri Bergson to Gilles Deleuze, and from Maurice Merleau-Ponty to Stanley Cavell and Jacques Rancière, these and other film-philosophy thinkers have proposed thinking about film as a uniquely mediated sound-image system, one that offers and creates interpretations of thought, perception, expression, creation, being and becoming. More so than this, they have opened new and unexpected ways of reflecting on film, leading to a fruitfully productive practice that has reinvigorated the theoretical engagement with cinema during the past four decades. Taking their lead from both Film Theory and Philosophy, these thinkers have produced a new branch of knowledge for film analysis and interpretation, what has come to be termed "Film Philosophy."

Offering a deep dive into this field of inquiry, this course turns to some of the major works of film philosophy. Starting with examples of philosophical thinking in the work of early film theorists, it then moves to the major interventions associated with the work of the philosophers mentioned above, before ending with contemporary trends in the field. Additionally, weekly sessions will close in on the works of some of the most representative filmmakers of film-philosophical study, treating their films as aesthetic forms of thought and philosophical investigation in and of themselves.

NOTE: While there are no prerequisites, this is a course designed with graduate students and *advanced* undergraduate students in mind, ones who have had some prior training in similarly demanding theoretical/philosophical topics. Of course, we will spend time finding our way through the material together, however difficult this may be; but do come ready for the challenge. It will be worth it!

ENGLISH 890S-01 (CULANTH 890S-02)

THEORIES OF VIOLENCE

Nima Bassiri

Wednesday 3:30 – 6:00pm

This course explores the concept of violence from a number of disciplinary and scholarly standpoints. Violence is itself a relatively capacious idea that differs widely in terms of the context of its deployment. It can refer, for example, to expressions of state and legal authority, policing, and carceral practices; it can take on symbolic and epistemic forms in terms of processes of racialization, structures of

social exclusion, and forms of bodily regulations; it can reflect the everyday enactment of injuries, entitlements, and power differentials; or it can designate the emancipatory force of revolutions, uprisings, and strikes. This course will attempt to explore these various facets of the concept of violence from a number of disciplinary standpoints — including political philosophy, social theory, historical sociology, postcolonial studies, and critical race theory — but also with respect to a number of pressing uncertainties: How do we name violence? Does violence have a determinable historicity and ontology? How do we distinguish violence from non-violence?