

Duke English Department
Graduate Course Descriptions
SPRING 2023

ENGLISH 590S-2.01 SP TOPICS SEMINAR

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Julianne Werlin

A survey and assessment of major texts of the European Enlightenment in light of recent -- and not-so-recent -- interpretations and critiques of the era and its values. Primary texts will include writings by Bacon, Locke, Rousseau, Diderot, Voltaire, Wollstonecraft, Spinoza, Vico, Herder, Smith, and others, with a particular emphasis on works that span or synthesize fiction and philosophy or engage in storytelling or myth making. Approaches to this era, which we will also subject to analysis, will include interpretations of the Enlightenment in relation to capitalism (Horkheimer and Adorno; Wood); colonialism and slavery (Mills, Scott), religion and secularization (Israel), and book history (Darnton, Bell), among others. Along the way, we will consider the vital question of whether there was one Enlightenment or many, and examine how ideas traveled to widely varying social and intellectual contexts, changing in the process.

Codes: ALP, CCI, R

ENGLISH 590S-3.01 SP TOPICS SEMINAR III

WRITING FOR THE PUBLIC

Marianna Torgovnick

In most Duke courses, you are taught and encouraged to write in standard academic styles with the usual forms of documentation and that's fine, and good. This course taps other potentials and possibilities in critical writing that seeks a larger audience to engage the mind in a style that delights and shimmers as it communicates knowledge. The model has a long history that includes figures like Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, Margaret Mead, Lionel Trilling, Irving Howe, James Baldwin, Edward Said. Continuing up to today, one thinks of figures like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Louise De Salvo, Henry Louis ("Skip") Gates, Anthony Appiah, Jill Lepore, Wayne Koestenbaum, Te- Nahisi Coates, and Jesse McCarthy. We will read and study examples of essays by such writers, with an eye to content, methodology, and style. The course will include classes on these and similar writers but will feature group writing exercises and workshop sessions in which we write, workshop in writing groups, and share reactions.

ENGLISH 590S-3.02 SP TOPICS SEMINAR III

THE NOVEL AFTER THE INTERNET

Aarthi Vadde

Scholars of the novel have long understood it as a baggy monster – capable of absorbing high and low genres into its evolving shape. The genre developed and reached the height of its influence during the 18th-19th centuries as cheap print and growing literacy rates increased access to books. But where does the novel stand now in a contemporary media ecology driven by digital culture? Can the twenty-first century novel formally contain the roiling seas and endless rabbit holes of the Internet or is that not its representational role in our post-Web 2.0 world? This course will center on a subset of contemporary fiction that is self-reflexive about the novel in its relationship to digital media. This fiction asks what the novel is *for* now and whether it is still capable of illuminating zones of experience that other genres are not. “The Novel after the Internet” can mean many things, but some questions it designates here: how is the novel form changing in light of the proliferation of Big Data, machine learning, and computational thinking? How has the rise of social media and user-generated content changed the novel’s efforts to capture everyday life? What does having an “authentic voice” mean after living under constant practices of self-display and against the horizon of a “post-truth” society?

We will read works of so-called autofiction that thematize and defamiliarize the formal devices of the novel (such as character, plot, and narrative voice); novels that theorize and sometimes try to reproduce the feelings and experience of being online as a new form of “everyday life”; computationally-driven projects that extend and appropriate the novel form. Possible novels: Rachel Cusk, *Outline* trilogy; Ayad Akhtar, *Homeland Elegies*, Patricia Lockwood, *No One is Talking About This*; Lauren Oyler, *Fake Accounts*, Kazuo Ishiguro, *Klara and the Sun*, others. Criticism and theory by the likes of Mikhail Bakhtin, Zahid Chaudhari, Kris Cohen, N. Katherine Hayles, Lilli Irani, Mark McGurl, C. Thi Nguyen, John Durham Peters, others.

ENGLISH 890S.03 SP TOPICS SEMINAR

POETRY AND/AS THEOLOGY II

Thomas Pfau

Poetry & Theology, Part II

In this second part of our seminar, we will explore the relationship between poetry and theology from 1922 to 2004. Readings in the second semester will explore works of lyric poetry and prose writings of T. S. Eliot and Czeslaw Milosz in relation to issues in theological aesthetics and philosophical theology either contemporary to the authors or part of their intellectual and spiritual inheritance and formation.

Following the cataclysm of World War I, a remarkable surge in post-liberal theology coincides with the period of high modernism, with the 2nd edition of Barth’s *Römerbrief* and Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (both published in 1922) constituting the ground zero for these developments. Eliot’s passage from *TWL* to *Four Quartets* coincides with his wide-ranging work as essayist, reviewer, and editor

of *The Criterion* – with numerous essays focusing on the reorientation of post-WW I theology, ecclesiology, and the role of literature in relation to these shifts. During the two decades from 1922- 1943, Eliot’s extensive work as reviewer and editor of *The Criterion* (1922-1939) finds him engaging the work of leading theologians and intellectuals (John Middleton Murray, Irving Babbitt, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, C. S. Lewis, Karl Barth, Christopher Dawson, among many others).

Born a generation later, Czeslaw Milosz (1911-2004) begins his career as a published poet (in 1931) with a series of short poems that not only exhibit a remarkably cogent moral imagination but also reflect on the perennial threat of Polish Catholicism being coopted by a rising tide of nationalism and anti-Semitism in Poland during the 1930s. Having already sparred with his hardline Thomist teachers in school, Milosz’s evolution as a poet is characterized by a gradual (though never uncritical) rapprochement with the Catholic intellectual tradition culminating in his translations of several books of the Old and New Testament. Concurrently, his poems and essays often focus on heterodox Catholic thinkers (Pascal, S. Weil) even as Catholicism continues to play a steadily growing role in Milosz’s attempts to balance his century’s catastrophic history against ineluctable and inescapable moments of beauty.

ENGLISH 890T.01

ARTICLE WRITING

Kathy Psomiades

This is a workshop for advanced graduate students in English who want to work on writing an article for publication. Ideally, you’d have something—a conference paper, a dissertation chapter, a paper from coursework—that you’d like to turn into an article. You and your dissertation committee should be in agreement that this workshop is a good use of your time at this point in your graduate career. We’ll be working our way through Wendy Belcher’s *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks* (2nd edition). We’ll also be making use of Eric Hayot’s *Elements of Academic Style*. You’ll be workshopping your article, as well as various exercises from Belcher and Hayot, and you’ll be giving feedback to others about their articles as well. We will meet every week for the standard 2.5 hours. You’ll need a permission number from me to sign up.

ENGLISH 996.01

TEACHING COLLEGE ENGLISH

Provides graduates students in the English department with pedagogical training in the teaching of college-level composition and English department courses. Open only to English department graduate students in years 4 and above. Department consent required.

Cross-listed courses by English Faculty originating in other departments

English 590S-2 SP Seminar II

Postcolonial Studies

Ranjana Khanna

Wednesday 8:30-11:00am

Postcolonial Studies analyzes cultural texts from the period of modern European colonialism and after. It emerged from the political, literary, psychological, and sociological struggles for decolonization from the 1940's to the 1960's. In Britain, it was related to Commonwealth Studies, but departed from this largely literary field, which often resisted political interpretation and historical contextualization. In France, it was called postcolonial studies only recently, even as many of the foundational texts we associate with the field in the US were written by those involved in decolonization movements in French colonies. Drawing on the history of colonialism, and on the way in which that manifested itself in cultural products (whether literary, artistic, political, or structural), critics from the 1970's on began to analyze processes of coloniality in the historically colonial and postcolonial periods of colonies and colonizing nations alike. Questions began to arise about the disciplinary formations, intellectual and sociological, which seemed profoundly shaped by the colonial enterprises of the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

This course will be an introduction to the field of postcolonial studies through readings involved in the critique of colonialism from the periods of modern colonialism, decolonization, and its aftermath. It will also address its relation to the related fields of Black Studies, Marxism, Decolonial Studies, Marxist thought, and Gender and Sexuality Studies today.

AAAS 690

BLACK MARXISM

Joseph Winters

Wednesday 3:30PM – 6:00PM

In this course, we will examine a set of world-structuring intersections, including anti-blackness and capital, racialism and class antagonism, and Marxism and black radical thought. The course will focus on figures affiliated with black radical thought and black feminism that draw from and remix Marxist ideas to respond to slavery, coloniality, racism, and sexism and to imagine radical alternatives to a world organized by various modes of subjugation and exploitation. Throughout the course, we will pursue a series of difficult questions: What is racial capitalism? What is the relationship between anti-black racism and capitalist accumulation, imperialism and capitalism, race and socio-economic class? How does the exploitative logic of capital work through race, gender, and sexuality? What are the possibilities and limitations of a Marxist framework for interpreting and changing the world? What resources does black radical thought provide us for confronting the mechanisms and arrangements that threaten to destroy the earth? Sample authors: Karl Marx, Cedric Robinson, Angela Davis, Claudia Jones, Wahneema Lubiano, Walter Rodney, WEB Du Bois, Ruth Gilmore, Stuart Hall, CLR James, Sylvia Wynter, Charisse Burden-Stelly, Silvia Fedirici, Adolph Reed

Non-English courses that may be of interest to English Grad Students

LIT 618S

THEORIES OF THE VISUAL

Markos Hadjioannou

Thursday 10:15am – 12:45pm

With the aim of exploring visuality and its pervasiveness in contemporary cultures, this course turns to the long history of visual media and to primary theoretical and philosophical debates that have come to frame our understanding of the “visual.”

Looking at the impact of linear perspective in Renaissance painting as a starting point, the course will explore, in the first instance, early primary figures and how they are taken up by the philosophical/theoretical critique of visuality in the 19th and early-to-mid 20th centuries. Here, we will be concerned with the work of thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Brunelleschi, Alberti and Descartes, Bergson and Sartre, Foucault and Lacan, Benjamin and Kracauer, and Adorno and Horkheimer. In addition, we will focus on the effect photographic and cinematic technologies had on the thought of this time. From here we will expand to the post-war period focusing on the height of cultural theory and criticism, especially regarding matters of subject formation, representation, and the spectacularization of society, especially with the invention and dissemination of amateur recording devices and the television set. Our focal point will be major works of political and feminist theory, e.g. Krauss, de Lauretis, Haraway, Butler, Silverman, Doane, Althusser, Debord, Baudrillard. This will be followed by a turn to a series of seminal thinkers (not necessarily located just in the latter part of the 20th century) for whom vision has always been a more complex modality of existential experience. Examples will range from Bataille to Derrida, from hooks to Hall, from Merleau-Ponty to Barthes, from Artaud to Brecht, and from Rancière to Deleuze and Guattari. The course will end with recent work that aims at decentralizing Western thought from within the debate on the “visual,” offering transdisciplinary and transnational perspectives that allow for interpretations that are dedicated to the diversity of humanity and culture/thought, and that are open to more nuanced complexities of existential/perceptual modes of being.