

Spring 2019
Department of English
Graduate
Course Descriptions



FRENCH 507S-01/ENGLISH 581S-01
SEMINAR: **MIMESIS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE**
Tu/Th: 3:05 – 4:20 PM
Deborah Jenson

ENGLISH 590S-1-01
SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR: **LITERATURE & THE ORIGINS OF CAPITALISM**
Wednesday 12:00PM – 2:30PM
Julianne Werlin

The origins of capitalism has long been the subject of controversy, with everything from its timing and geography to its economic and cultural basis up for debate. Did capitalism arise gradually, as a consequence of the medieval growth in trade and technology? Or was it a sudden cataclysm, emerging from a unique and relatively short-lived set of conditions in the sixteenth, seventeenth, or eighteenth centuries? Was capitalism the result of the birth of global trade, impelled by the momentous effects of imperialism and colonialism? Or can its origin be traced to internal conditions within Europe – or indeed, within England alone? Was it an urban phenomenon, most keenly realized within growing entrepôts? Or was it, rather, driven by the conditions of labor and ownership in the countryside among the vast majority of the population who still worked the land?

Such debates are not merely of interest to specialists in the period, but have implications for our understanding of modern

economics, politics, and culture. They are particularly salient for literary history. The rise of literary markets, the invention of copyright, and the mass production of books, pamphlets and newspapers, which transformed reading and writing, must be understood as part of a wider pattern of economic development. At the same time, literary texts provide important insights into the new social and political values that arose in the course of early modernity.

This class will introduce some of the major works of the 'transition debate' as well as literature and literary scholarship. We will read works of theory and history, including Marx, Weber, Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein, Christopher Hill, Perry Anderson, Robert Brenner, and Ellen Wood, as well as recent works of economic history by scholars such as S.R. Epstein, Craig Muldrew, Alexandra Shepherd, and Jan de Vries. Our primary texts will include *Utopia*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Locke's Second Treatise*, and *Robinson Crusoe*.

ENGLISH 590S-2-01

SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR: **BEST-SELLERS & BOMBS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE**

Thursday 3:05PM – 5:35PM

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, often sold hundreds of 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 are only recently 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.

Works will include Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Alcott's *Little Women*, and Crane's *Maggie*, *A Girl of the Streets*. Evaluation will include class participation, two oral presentations, and a final term paper.

Counts for Area II requirements

ENGLISH 590S-3-01

SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR III: “THE SOUTH GOT SOMETHING TO SAY”: REPRESENTING THE CONTEMPORARY BLACK SOUTH IN LITERATURE & POP CULTURE

Tuesday 4:40PM – 7:10PM

Jarvis McInnis

This course explores contemporary representations of the Black US South in African American literature and culture. While more than ninety percent of African Americans lived in the US South in the early 20th century, by the 1970s, more than fifty percent had fled the region, pushed by the persistent threat of anti-black violence and oppression and pulled by the promise of better socioeconomic opportunities in the North, West, and Midwest. Following the legislative gains of the Civil Rights Movement and “northern” urban decline, however, the 1990s witnessed a reverse migration, such that more than fifty percent of black Americans now reside in the South. This demographic shift has produced a cultural shift—a black southern renaissance, if you will, whereby contemporary artists and scholars are reimagining the region as a viable present and future for black Americans, even as they continue to grapple with its tortured past.

Journeying through rural Mississippi and the Carolinas to urban centers such as Atlanta, Memphis, New Orleans, and Houston, we will interrogate the geographic and cultural diversity of the contemporary Black South. We will juxtapose canonical texts—by Ida B. Wells, Richard Wright, Zora Neale

Hurston, Anne Moody, or Alice Walker—that have shaped predominant cultural representations of the region, alongside works by contemporary writers such as Jesmyn Ward, Natasha Trethewey, Randall Kenan, Tayari Jones, Kiese Laymon, and Regina Bradley. We will also examine depictions of the region in media and pop culture, e.g., TV shows *Atlanta* and *Queen Sugar*; HipHop artists OutKast, Lil Wayne, and Big Freedia; and experimental films such as Julie Dash’s *Daughters of the Dust* and Beyoncé’s *Lemonade*. We will read a range of critical and theoretical works that cut across literary, cultural, media and performance studies, African American Studies, New Southern Studies, gender and sexuality studies, geography, and sociology.

Questions we may take up include: How does the contemporary Black South inform current Black Studies debates regarding Afro-pessimism, Black Optimism, and Black Mysticism? How do the spectres of slavery, Jim Crow, and Civil Rights continue to haunt the physical and psychic landscapes of the region? How does the urban south challenge predominant depictions of the region as primarily rural and homogeneous? What is the relationship between race, region, and ecology in the afterlife of the plantation and sharecropping? Specifically, how do contemporary black southerners view farming, agriculture, and food and environmental justice? How is the South imagined as a space of black vitality and futurity in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina?

This course will culminate in a two-day conference on the art and politics of the contemporary Black South, scheduled for early fall 2019.

ENGLISH 590S-3-02

SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR III: **CULTURE, CIVILIZATION, WORLD (LITERATURE)**

Wednesday 3:05PM - 5:35PM

Corina Stan

Two important novels were published in 2015: Michel Houellebecq's *Soumission* (*Submission*) and Jenny Erpenbeck's *Gehen, ging, gegangen* (*Go, Went, Gone*)—the first about the “end of the West”, ushered in by the electoral victory of a Muslim president in France in 2022; the second about the irrelevance of the cultural foundations of European identity (Greek philosophy, Roman law, and Judeo-Christian morality) exposed in the mismanagement of the refugee crisis. Although set in the near future, Houellebecq's novel paradoxically remains attached to the past: “Eurabia” restores France its lost imperial greatness at the expense of its core liberal values, of its own cultural identity; France, and with it Europe, *submits* to Islam, in a soft “clash of civilizations” from which only one can emerge victorious. Erpenbeck's novel, by contrast, carefully cultivates an “ethics of now”: it revisits the past of colonialism in order to anchor itself firmly in the present, through an attunement of worlds—not the submission of a civilization to another, but a *surrender* to the realization of a shared vulnerability generated by global

migration. The publication of *Submission* on 7 January 2015 coincided with the *Charlie Hebdo* terrorist attacks, a sinister preface to the refugee crisis that followed, dramatized in *Go, Went, Gone*. These novels' cultural diagnoses, their remedial scenarios, and the nexus of terrorism and immigration highlight an important question: how does global migration affect cultural pessimism in the West?

Using these two novels as points of departure, this course examines the history of the uses of “culture” and “civilization”, and, in relation to this history, the emergence of “world literature” (*Weltliteratur*). Our approach to the distinction established by Kant between “Kultur” and “Zivilisation” will be interdisciplinary and cross-cultural, with readings including Petronius's *Satyricon*, Schiller, Diderot, Herder, Nietzsche, Arnold, Freud, Elias, Spengler, Marcuse, Hall, Said, Fukuyama and Huntington. Possible topics include: the uses of “culture” in the discourse of “Bildung”; the relationship between Romanticism, decadence and modernism; the anthropological critique of modernist elitism; the discourse on culture by British Left intellectuals; the so-called “cultural turn” in debates on multiculturalism; the emergence of postcolonial studies, Orientalism vs. Occidentalism. These debates will provide a broad context for considering the history of “world literature”, a discipline that, in the past two decades, has tended to replace “comparative literature.” Possible readings include Goethe, Auerbach, Casanova, Beecroft, Appiah, Apter, Damrosch, Stanford Friedman, Cheah, Siraj Ahmed, and others. Along the way, we'll watch films like Fellini's adaptation of *Satyricon*, Sokurov's *The Russian Ark*, Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor*, and

read some fictional texts (Mircea Eliade's *Youth without Youth*, and possibly Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*).

Over the course of the semester, students will work on producing a conference paper, including an abstract, an annotated bibliography, and the paper itself.

AAAS 735-01 / ENGLISH 735-01

LECTURE: **HISTORY OF HIP HOP**

Wednesday 6:15PM – 8:45PM

Mark Anthony Neal, Patrick Douthit

Co-taught by Grammy Award-winning producer 9th Wonder (Patrick Douthit) and Mark Anthony Neal, a noted scholar of black cultural studies, the course will examine the organic social, cultural and economic foundations of hip-hop culture. Students will examine the impact of fifteen recordings released during the foundational years of the culture (1973-1993) that exemplify the foundational tensions of culture vs. commerce and spirituality vs. secularism. In addition to a midterm project (producing an audio documentary) and a final exam, students will be expected to produce a review essay based on assigned readings and curriculum outline for teaching hip-hop studies for secondary education. Instructor: Neal

LITERATURE 827S-01 / ENGLISH 827S-01

SEMINAR:

THE GLOBAL NOVEL: POST WHAT?

Monday 4:40PM – 7:10PM

Anne Garreta, Nancy Armstrong

This course examines the recent emergence of novels in various parts of the globe that address a readership beyond their respective nations and regions of origins, sometimes even beyond the novelist's national language. These novels make a point of declaring that the form of the novel traditionally organized around the experience of a representative individual is now obsolete. Critics and scholars tend to describe these novels as displaying specific forms of "post-ness," whether post-modern, post-human, post-apocalyptic, post-revolutionary, and post-exotic.

ENGLISH 890S-01

SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR: **OPEN FIELD POETRY & POETICS**

Tuesday 11:45AM – 2:15PM

Nathaniel Mackey

A study of the theories and practices of a number of poets associated with ideas of open form, composition by field and projective verse that emerged at Black Mountain College in the 1950s. Poets read for the course include Amiri Baraka, Robert Creeley, Diane DiPrima, Edward Dorn, Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov and Charles Olson.

ENGLISH 890S-03

SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR:

CHAUCER: POETRY, THEOLOGY, POLITICS

Thursday: 12:00PM – 2:30 PM

David Aers

At the center of this course 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 *Romance of the Rose* (Oxford paperback) and the following works by Chaucer: *Book of the Duchess*, *House of Fame* and *Parliament of Fowls*. Please also read Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (either in Chaucer's translation or the Loeb parallel text), an extremely important work for Chaucer. 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. In relation to relevant contexts, besides work already mentioned, you may find the following especially relevant:

The Peasants' Revolt of 1381, ed. R.B. Dobson

Nigel Saul, *Richard II*

Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*

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

Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition*

Elizabeth Salter: she published two brilliant essays on the Knight's Tale and Clerk's Tale in Chaucer; also relevant work in *Fourteenth-Century English Poetry*

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).

Finally, there is a book I would like everyone taking this class to have read and thought about: it is a classic exploration of history and ethics from antiquity to modernity: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd edition.

Note on class format and 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.

ENGLISH 890S-04
SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR: **AQUATIC AESTHETICS**
Thursday 12:00 PM – 2:30 PM
Ranjana Khanna

The course will follow the Franklin Humanities Institute annual theme for 2018-2019 of WATER, and will be supplemented by events at the FHI. We will be exploring many aspects of humanistic and artistic responses to water, from oceanic voyages to lives built around rivers, from aquatic aesthetics to

refugee migration, from water shortage to floods, fluidity to flow, and from water conceived through sacred forms to aquatic lifeworlds and ontologies, and representations of them. We will be mapping something of a trajectory conceptually from studies of flow and fluidity in oceanic studies (trade, adventure, piracy, empire, slavery) to thinking about imaginary notions of the transoceanic and multispecies ontologies, oceanic law and the law of the seas. We will consider form given to water in the arts in consideration of the sacred and the profane, to climate change and what that has done to representation of water. We will also consider how water is given form in representations of it. The course will address how we have become accustomed to understanding change on land through documenting the way land is ploughed, built up, organized, and enclosed in ways that allow us to recognize cultural and civilizational shifts. We will be studying how understanding of water, and the aquatic, is reflected in the arts. Even as we may understand water to be unchangeable, inexhaustible, impervious in some ways, the course will examine how it has been given form in various moments. Form and formlessness are, of course, essential aspects of any artistic and cultural production, and we will explore this through various works of literature, film, and art that have water as their central element. What does water do for them? What are the aesthetics of water? and how do we understand the aquatic variously as element, force, life-source, backdrop, limit, border, space, and place? From our largely terracentric view of the world, we sometimes neglect

to see how water has also been given shape. This course will foreground the aquatic.

Texts will include: Films: Guillermo del Toro, *The Shape of Water* (2017); Deepa Mehta, *Water* (2005); Roman Polanski, *Knife in the Water* (1962); Art Installations: Isaac Julien, *Small Boats*; John Akomfrah, *Vertigo Sea*; Novels: Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*; Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*; Poetry: Derek Walcott, *Omeros*; political theory: Hugo Grotius, *Mare Liberum*; Carl Schmitt, *Land and Sea: A World Historical Meditation*; and many other texts.

ENGLISH 890S-05
SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR:
THE MELANCHOLY OF ART
Monday 6:15PM – 8:45 PM
Thomas Pfau

On several occasions, Theodor Adorno remarked that the illusory and ephemeral world spun in art, literary or otherwise, often tends to engulf the reader/audience in sadness simply “because all art “is bound up with semblance.” As a medium that can never coincide with what it presents or, rather, simulates, “art is endowed with sadness; art grieves all the more, the more completely it suggests meaning.” Responding to a welter of inchoate and antagonistic forces that comprise our empirical existence, art is afflicted by excessive self-

awareness. All the conflicting perceptions, desires, hopes and fears that it encapsulates it can, at best, bring into fleeting alignment. Imbued with the knowledge of its own transience as a merely symbolic world, art is bound up with melancholy. Or, as Adorno puts it, “melancholy is the shadow of what in all form is heterogeneous, which its form strives to banish: mere existence. ... In the utopia of its form, art bends under the burdensome weight of the empirical world from which, as art, it steps away.”

The focus of this seminar is not melancholy as a “theme” in art but, rather, the inherently melancholic disposition of art and representation. It is no accident that the nexus of art and melancholy becomes pronounced just as the idea of aesthetic autonomy begins to take shape – that is, of art beginning to detach itself from metaphysical and cosmological frameworks and certitudes at the threshold of the sixteenth century. – Thus, following some exploratory theological readings that frame melancholy as a sin (*acedia*) – John Cassian, Gregory the Great, Aquinas – we will consider some artworks, such as Albrecht Dürer’s “*Melancholia I*” (1514) and Lorenzo Lotto, which offer a secular echo of the *Pietà* motif. We will then move on to selections from Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), a work that both explores and embodies its eponymous condition in strangely digressive and shapeless prose. The discussion will be complemented by W. G. Sebald’s self-conscious echo of early-seventeenth-century melancholia in

The Rings of Saturn (1997). – The majority of the seminar will be taken up with constellations of melancholy in nineteenth- and twentieth-century narrative: Joseph Roth, *Radetzkymarch*

(1932); Sandor Marai, *Embers* (1942), and Giuseppe di Lampedusa, *The Leopard* (1958). The pièce de resistance will be Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947), which perhaps more than any other European novel throws into relief the melancholy intrinsic to artistic creation, while also placing the catastrophe of European fascism in intricate dialogue with the post-Schismatic, early-modern Europe of Dürer and Luther. – In addition, we will screen two films: Ingmar Bergman's *Winter Lights* (1963) and Theo Angelopoulos' modernist cinematic reimagining of Homer: *Ulysses' Gaze* (1995).

LITERATURE 890S-03 / ENGLISH 890S-06

SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR: READING FREUDO-MARXISM

Wednesday 11:45AM – 2:15PM

Catherine Reilly

MUSIC 790S-1-01 / ENGLISH 890S-07

SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR: AURALITY AND MUSIC IN CINEMA

Thursday 8:30AM – 10:45AM

Jacqueline Waeber

Aim of this graduate seminar is to introduce students to film studies and film theory through a musicological angle, and to reflect on the reappraisal in film studies of the aural components of the moving image. While film theory has been

largely dominated by oculo-centrism, recent scholarly developments in sound and music studies have brought renewed approaches to essential trends in film theory, from auteur theory to theories on spectatorship.

Our seminar understands aurality in its broadest meaning, i.e., encompassing all categories of “aural objects” that populate the soundtracks of multimediated works—noise, music, and the voice. Emphasis will be given on scholarship focused on the legacy of opera to cinema since its inception, on the role played by sound technologies since the “silent” era, on the various theoretical and philosophical responses triggered by the growing presence of aurality in cinema, and on the current transition from analog to digital and its consequences at the aural level.

English 890T-01

TUTORIAL IN SPECIAL TOPICS: ARTICLE WRITING TUTORIAL

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. 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, TBTD after Spring TA assignments have been made. You'll need a permission number from me to sign up.

ENGLISH 891-01
INDEPENDENT STUDY: **DISSERTATION WORKSHOP**
Tuesday 4:40PM – 7:10PM
Priscilla Wald

ENGLISH 996-01
TEACHING COLLEGE ENGLISH
Kathy Psomiades