Graduate English Course Descriptions

Maymester 2008

ENGL 566M-001 Mating Game in Hollywood Film

This course studies comedies and melodramas from the first three decades of the sound era. Films will be analyzed in terms of features that define them as these kinds of films and in terms of their preoccupation with relations between the sexes. In light of these American "talkies," what constitutes a genuine marriage or makes such an alliance impossible? Do such questions require public and/or private responses? Films will include It Happened One Night, The Lady Eve, His Girl Friday, The Philadelphia Story, Adam’s Rib, Stella Dallas, Gaslight, Now, Voyager, Letter from an Unknown Woman, Vertigo, and North by Northwest. Some films will be analyzed in tandem with literary texts and film criticism. Grades will be based on regular journal entries and a final exam. Graduate students will be expected to read additional theoretical essays and to write a longer and more substantive final research paper.

ENGL 795M Teaching of Business & Technical Writing

The purpose of this course is to introduce you (as future composition teachers) to the special demands placed on language and writers in the worlds of work and science and to help you prepare to teach these courses at the college level. The course will include a careful and critical examination of the principles of business writing, the effectiveness of various rhetorical strategies and language patterns in writing, the relationship of ethics and language in the business world, and the bibliographical tools and information sources available for research in technical and scientific disciplines.

Fall 2008

ENGL/FILM 566F Masculinity in Contemporary Film

This is a course about contemporary cinema and its portrayals of modern manhood. Its aim is to acquaint students with films that offer critiques of conventional masculinity. We will examine these films’ portrayal of what James Baldwin once called “the male prison”—i.e., a masculinity rigidly delimited by its commitment to power and to the sanctity of its borders. We will discuss the toxic, even murderous character of the identity Baldwin identified. And we will listen to what these films have to say about imagining alternatives to conventional manhood. Because of this interest in critiquing normative manhood, and because the structures of male power and resistance exceed national boundaries, we will look at relatively “offbeat” American films (i.e., not your standard Hollywood fare) as well as some international titles. The course will ask you to think about how the category of manhood intersects or interacts with “femininity,” (queer) sexuality, whiteness and racial “otherness,” national identity, and transnational modes of identification. It will explore how specific film genres produce particular versions of contemporary masculinity—and also how they at times subvert those versions from within. Finally, the class will examine the psychology of male violence, its relation to the category of trauma, and the question of how the nuclear family serves as a site for transmitting (and at times resisting) male destructiveness.

Required Films

Fight Club (1999; dir. David Fincher)
Lone Star (1996; dir. John Sayles)
Brokeback Mountain (2005; dir. Ang Lee)
In the Cut (2003; dir. Jane Campion)
Old Boy (2005; dir. Park Chan-Wook)
Velvet Goldmine (1998; dir. Todd Haynes)
Thumbsucker (2005; dir. Mike Mills)

Mysterious Skin (2004; dir. Gregg Araki)
Spring, Summer, Winter, and Spring Again (2004; dir. Kim Ki-Duk)
Magnolia (1999; dir. P. T. Anderson)
Affliction (1997; dir. Paul Schrader)
Jungle Fever (1991; dir. Spike Lee)
Jarhead (2005; dir. Sam Mendes)
Tao of Steve (2000; dir. Jennipher Goodman)

Required Readings

Critical and theoretical essays by Sigmund Freud, Kaja Silverman, R. W. Connell, Tania Modleski, Cathy Caruth, Hazel Carby, Mary Ann Doane Susan Courtney, Linda Williams, Ben Singer, Richard Dyer, Judith Butler, and others
Written Requirements

Undergraduate:
- a close reading exercise
- two five-page papers
- one ten page paper

Graduate:
- read and write responses to at least four additional critical essays over the course of semester
- two five-page papers
- a final, 20-page research paper

ENGL 610  Writing the Novel  Th  2:30 - 5:00  Hospital
English 610 is the first part of a full year course in which students produce a book-length manuscript (a novel, a memoir, or a tightly interconnected set of stories). The course involves a number of assigned readings which will be analyzed in class. Special attention will be paid to techniques of structure, narrative voice, tone, characterization, plot pacing, and style. Students will be guided in blocking out an outline of the projected book, and will submit 30 revised and polished pages of the manuscript at the end of term. Two chapters of the manuscript will be workshopped in class.

ENGL 650K  Special Topics in Literature  MW 11:30 -12:45  Barilla
This course is a workshop in nonfiction prose in which we will focus on the memoir. We will spend the bulk of our time in workshop, discussing student work, but we will punctuate our discussions with classes devoted to the consideration of technique in outside reading. We will also spend considerable time on exercises, both during class and at home. You will turn in a portfolio of your revised work at the end of the semester, in which I expect you to include two essays, at least one of which should be ready for submission to journals by the end of the semester. Please note that while I will provide detailed written analyses of your workshop submissions, I will be unable to respond in writing, beyond assigning a grade, to your revisions.

ENGL 700  Intro to Graduate Study of English  TTh  12:30 – 1:45  Jackson
Daunted by graduate study in English? Don’t be! Engl 700 offers an introduction to the skills and theories necessary to negotiate your program of study effectively. Topics include: the dominant models of literary theory and literary history; the history and sociology of English as a discipline; research skills and methodologies; the art of professionalization; and the major genres you will need to master, such as the seminar presentation, research essay, conference paper, book review, thesis abstract, dissertation, and bibliography. A series of theoretical, historical, and interdisciplinary readings will be combined with literary case studies and practical exercises designed to introduce graduate students to the field and prepare them for coursework, research, and, eventually, a successful academic appointment.

ENGL 701A  Teaching of Composition in College  TTh 9:30 – 10:45  Friend/Mucklebauer

ENGL 712  Shakespeare II: The Tragedies  TTh 11:00 – 12:15  Rhu
A survey of Shakespeare's major tragedies and romances from Hamlet to The Tempest. Attention to genre and other matters of literary interest will be set against the background of Renaissance thought and English political history. A range of current critical and creative responses will also be explored. There may be, in addition, some discussion of Shakespeare's non-dramatic poetry.

ENGL 724  English Prose and Novel of the Romantic Period  T  5:00 - 7:30  Jarrells
Empire, Enlightenment, and the Genres of Romanticism
In this course we will survey a number of Romantic-period genres – mostly prose but some verse – by looking at how these genres extended, challenged, and in general engaged with Scottish Enlightenment theories of history and modernity. Our primary aim will be to understand something about the specific social, historical, and ideological pressures exerted on and by genres in the period. But we will also pay close attention to connections that challenge the national and period-specific configurations that have long dominated Romantic studies – to the Enlightenment and pre-1707 Scotland and England, for instance; and to India, North America, and the West Indies. The course will be organized in part to correspond with Ian Duncan’s visit to USC for the Victorians Institute conference in the fall. Thus we will be reading
selections from Duncan’s newest book, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh*, along with other critical works by Katie Trumpener, Ina Ferris, Murray Pittock, Srinivas Aravamudan, Franz Fanon, and Dipesh Chakrabarty. Primary texts will include works by David Hume, Walter Scott, James Hogg, John Galt, Susan Ferrier, Washington Irving, Mary Shelley, Lord Byron, and a number of periodical reviews and tales from the 1810s and 1820s. Students will be required to write weekly responses, a critical summary of scholarship on a writer, text, or issue from the period, and a conference-length essay.

**ENGL 725 The English Novel of the Victorian Period**

This class will provide an in-depth survey of major genres in the Victorian novel. We will read across a range of fictional modes (realism, sensation, detective fiction, historical fiction), and will attend to the relationship between the novel and other literary forms. Our primary texts are likely to include novels by Austen, a Brontë or two, Collins, Dickens, Eliot, Stoker, Trollope, and Wood. Required secondary readings engage with current debates about form, genre, gender, and material culture. Course requirements include weekly responses, roughly 25 pages of professional quality writing, and an avid sense of intellectual curiosity.

**ENGL 729 British Poetry Since 1900**

This course will be a survey of British poetry since 1900. Topics to be addressed will include: decadence and aestheticism, modernism and modernist poetics, Georgian and Imagist poetics, Ireland and Irish politics, the use of myth, poetry of the Great War, the relation of the poetic to the political, postcolonial poetry, and issues of gender, sexuality, race, and class.

**ENGL 733 Classics of Western Literary Theory**

A survey of norms and innovations in literary theory from Plato to Edmund Burke, with attention given to ideas of artistic form and social process that have informed literary theory. Three exams and one 20-page paper.

**ENGL 745 American Realism and Naturalism**

It is probably more true of this period (1865-1915) than any other in American literary history (except perhaps the 1930s) that its writers watched, read about, and commented on the events of their day – social, political, technological, philosophical, artistic, historical, literary. In this course, so will we. In addition to the readings and a final exam, each student will be responsible for two presentations/papers: one based on 19th-Century archival material and social history, the other on her/his reading of an assigned critical text related to the writer or mode of writing currently being discussed. These two short papers may or may not form the basis of a final article-length paper. Writers covered will include De Forest, Howells, Jewett, Freeman, Zitkala-Sa, Chesnutt, James, Twain, Crane, Norris, Chopin, Harper, and Wharton. We’ll also try to squeeze in a Dime Novel, since, for reasons we’ll want to examine, at the time these typically outsold any of the above writers’ works.

**ENGL 757 20th Century African American Lit**

This intensive survey will focus on issues of “canon formation” in black literary studies as we work to understand why certain authors and texts receive attention in particular historical moments - while others languish in the bargain bin. Our reading schedule places classic texts alongside a lesser-known selection by the same author, allowing students to deepen their exposure to each writer and raise critical questions about how we judge the quality and relevance of African-American literature. We will investigate Dunbar’s early poetry and his novel, *Sport of the Gods* (1902); Hurston’s, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948); Wright’s *Native Son* (1940) and *The Long Dream* (1958); Brooks’ *A Street in Bronzeville* (1945) and *In the Mecca* (1968); Morrison’s *Sula* (1973) and *Paradise* (1998); and Whitehead’s *The Illusionist* (1999) and *Apex Hides the Hurt* (2006). Students will also be required to select an additional text of their choice for a presentation. Grades will be determined by active class discussion, weekly response papers, two presentations, and two research papers (10-12 pages each).

**ENGL 759 Southern Literature After 1900**

This course will focus on the interplay of the South and the West in Southern literature. We will begin by looking at notions of the frontier as established by the Nashville Agrarians and W. J. Cash, and then we will explore literature that brings the West to bear upon Southern culture. Works we will read include (the list is tentative): Twelve Southerners, *I'll Take My Stand*; W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South*; William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses*; Eudora

**ENGL 760 American Poetry Since 1900**

M 5:30 - 8:00 Vanderborg

The course offers a selection of twentieth-century American modernist poetry, along with a few examples of post-World War II responses to modernism. We will focus on what happens to genres such as epic or lyric and to practices of citationality and collage. The course examines the authors’ constructions of a poetic subject and object as well as of a literary tradition.

Johnson, James Weldon. *God’s Trombones.*  
Course reader at Universal Copies, College Street.

Assignments

1. Each week there will be a response paper (approx. 500 words) on the primary reading.
2. A shorter literary paper, approx. 5-7 pages, on a poem or on selected passages from one of the weeks’ reading selections, as well as an annotated bibliography of the secondary sources you used.
3. One oral presentation on an assigned critical/theoretical reading, analyzing its insights and methodology (about 8 minutes, accompanied by a 2-3 page handout).
4. A 15-20 page literary research paper, which may build on preceding work.

Grading:

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<td>Literary analysis paper</td>
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<td>Final research paper</td>
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<td>Critical presentation and handout</td>
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<td>Weekly response papers and participation</td>
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**ENGL 790 Survey of Composition Studies**

TTh 4:00 – 5:15 Smith

Introduction to Composition Studies is designed to prepare both MA and PhD students to do scholarly work in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. To that end, we will read about the contested history of composition pedagogy and research; the development of the field within contemporary American colleges/universities and English departments; and the major intellectual movements within the field. Students will be expected to complete weekly reading responses/posts, a major class presentation and short paper (8-10pp) on a book/study not covered in our course readings, as well as a final bibliographic essay (10-12pp).

**ENGL 792 Classical Rhetoric**

MW 1:00 - 2:15 Holcomb

This course surveys the major thinkers and practitioners of rhetoric in ancient Greece and Rome—from the proto-rhetorics of Homer and proverbial formulations offering guidance on speaking up to and including Quintilian and Tacitus. As we read the works of these thinkers and practitioners, our primary focus will be on constructing an historical pragmatics or sorts: that is, we will try to extrapolate from course readings the concrete and material conditions of persuasiveness in western antiquity. The assumption informing this process of extrapolation is that “persuasion” is not a trans-historical phenomenon; rather, it is invariably linked to available arenas for oratory and broader cultural contexts. Accordingly, we will be especially interested in the “strangeness” and “unfamiliarity” (from a modern point of view) of rhetorical theory and practices in ancient Greece and Rome.

*Course Assignments:* 1 Paper Proposal (7-10 pp.); 1 Final Paper (15-20 pp.)

*Required Texts*

Plato’s *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, Isocrates (selections), Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, Cicero’s *De Oratore*, Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* (abridged version), Fantham’s *The Roman World of Cicero’s De Oratore*, and selections from Ober’s *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, Hawhee’s *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece*, and Walker’s *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*. 

Most of the primary texts are available online through the Perseus Digital Library, and all of those (except George Kennedy’s translation of Aristotle’s Rhetoric) are acceptable substitutes for the hardcopy versions I will order through the bookstore. There may also be a course packet, but I will use .pdf versions when I can to minimize costs.

ENGL 830I Imagining Human Rights  
(meets with CPLT 703)  
M 3:00 – 5:30  Steele

This class will look at human rights not just as principles and laws but as shared imaginative constructions or social imaginaries. We often think of human rights in terms of the principles found in political documents, such as the Bill of Rights or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but these rights are inescapably bound together with the stories that make up who we are. This course presupposes no prior study of literary or political theory, and in the opening section of the class, we will study the emergence of two different Western social imaginaries for understanding rights, the American and French. (We will pay particular attention to the role of the novel in the shaping of the imagination of human rights.) This will give students a common philosophical and historical background. In developing the particulars of these different cultures of rights, we will examine recent controversies over secularity and religion, over the politics of national histories and colonial legacies, over the relationship of universal rights, ethnocentrism, and identity, and over economic and social rights. This will mean looking at texts of various kinds, from government documents to newspapers, histories, films and court cases. We will then look at international human rights issues and the political difficulties surrounding their implementation. Students will be encouraged to bring their own interests to the class--e.g. postcolonialism and globalization, genocide, gender, the environment, transnational imaginaries, etc--and we will adjust the second half of the syllabus to accommodate these interests. The class will be interdisciplinary, drawing on philosophy, law, literature, and social science, and there will be guest lectures by faculty in these disciplines. This course will prepare students to participate in a conference entitled “The Futures of Human Rights,” which will be held in February, 2009.

Students will develop their own projects, and the nature of these projects will depend on the level and interests of the student. Students may do preliminary development for a long-term project or they may bring one to closure. They will present their research to the class and submit a 20 page paper.

ENGL 840B Modernism and the Aesthetic  
Th 5:00 – 7:30  Glavey

Recently a number of critics have pointed to a “return to the aesthetic,” identifying a variety of “new formalisms” that are animated by an investment in the literariness of literature but that also resist the elitist or apolitical commitments often associated with the notion of form. This course will explore these critical developments through case studies of modernist poets (Hart Crane, T. S. Eliot, Langston Hughes, Marianne Moore, Richard Bruce Nugent, Gertrude Stein, Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams). We will also be reading a good deal of modernist aesthetic theory, especially work by Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin but also including selections from Irving Babbitt, Peter Berger, Clive Bell, Benedetto Croce, Joseph Frank, Michael Fried, Roger Fry, Clement Greenberg, Frank Kermode, and George Santayana. Throughout our reading, we will attempt to think through the gender, sexual, and racial politics of modernist aesthetic categories such as imagism, significant form, imagism, classicism, autonomy, allusiveness, and impersonality.

ENGL 890E Rhetoric and Democracy: The Politics of Communication  
T 5:30 – 8:00  Gehrke  
(meets with SPCH 790T)

The relationship between rhetoric and democracy has been largely taken for granted in the advocacy of free speech and valorization of the Ancients. This course will interrogate that relationship and the particular forms or limits that both rhetoric and democracy take up as they interact. Four primary thinkers will serve as the entry points for this investigation: John Dewey, Jurgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. Each represents a nuanced consideration of the role that communication might play in governance and how rhetorical strategies constitute democracies, enabling and limiting juridical and political practices. Through these thinkers we can expand the rhetoric/democracy relationship beyond the mundane celebration of free speech and deliberative reasoning to find how inclinations, forms of thought, and communicative practices give shape to political organization and the possibility of democratic life.