
Department of English

Graduate Courses

Spring 2009

581 Writers at Work: Innovations
2 credits

W 3:35-5:30

Bank, M.
13456

The course centers around discussion of various aspects in the craft of writing specifically designed for graduate writing students.

6120 *Beowulf*
4 credits.

MWF 11:15-12:05
(also ENGL 3120)

Zacher, S.
2713

A close reading of *Beowulf*. Attention will be given to relevant literary, cultural, and linguistic issues. One semester's study of Old English, or the equivalent, is recommended.

6160 The Development of Print Culture
4 credits.

W 3:35-5:30

Saccamano, N.
13593

This course will examine some of the ways that print technology and especially the marketing of books for an expanding public of readers affected literary practice and theory in eighteenth-century England. Eighteenth-century literature of various genres--especially satire, the novel, and the periodical essay--will comprise the majority of our readings, but we will also study some recent works that address the philosophical, legal, social, and cultural changes associated with print culture (such as Benjamin on reproducibility, Habermas on the public sphere, Derrida on invention, Susan Stewart on crimes of writing). Of primary concern will be to explore questions raised by the increasing commercialization of literature for its authority as a cultural institution. Some examples: When literature is first considered to be intellectual property, how does the modern legal definition of an author as the "owner" of a literary text affect the relationship of writers to their works and their readers? Is there a connection between the notion of "creative genius" and the category of intellectual property? More generally, how is modern literary culture linked to commerce and financial capitalism in the eighteenth century? What is the legal relationship between property rights and political dissent as indicated in the history of "seditious libel" cases? How does the destination of printed books for a public enable questions of aesthetic pleasure and "taste" to become criteria of literary judgment and to dislodge neoclassical formalism? How does the more widespread availability of books in print challenge traditional notions of university education, allow for alternative forms of education (for men and women), and transform what traditionally counts as literature, especially with the rise of the novel? In what ways does a print marketplace provide possibilities for women writers and readers to participate in literary culture? How do journalism and the novel--the news/novel matrix-- introduce different criteria of value with regard to cultural time? How does the novel produce a notion of social identity based not on class but on cultural "refinement" or "manners"? How is a politics of print culture related to the public status of the vernacular Bible in Protestantism and to hermeneutical practices? Authors will include Addison, Defoe, Astell, Haywood, Judith Drake, Swift, Pope, Richardson, Johnson, Young.

6221 Tragicomedy
4 credits.

R 1:25-3:20

Kalas, R.
6263

In contrast to tragedy's moral and ethical concerns, the highly artificial genre of tragicomedy seems to invite topical interpretations. Critics have often explained tragicomedy--individual works as well as the vogue for tragicomedy, such as that in the first half of the seventeenth century--in terms of a historical dialectic, identifying the decadence of an aristocratic elite in tragicomedy's impossibly happy endings, or the interests of the bourgeoisie in its generic mingling of high- and low-born characters, or otherwise seeking out real world contexts and counterpoints to fictions that, in their own right, strain credulity. This course takes a philosophical approach to tragicomedy with the aim of foregrounding the dialectic inherent in the very form of this hybrid genre and looking beyond the stage for examples of a similar dialectic in prose and poetry. We'll continue to consider the historical situation of the works that we read; our study of generic innovation and hybrid genres will concentrate on the specific case of Renaissance tragicomedy. But we will also make the tension between what is contextual and what is imaginary a subject of inquiry. The course begins with Thomas More's *Utopia*, a work that makes salient that tension, in order to establish a wider range of generically innovative works that may be called tragicomic in tone and/or mode. We will also read several dramatic tragicomedies. But the reading list is designed to test the boundaries of tragicomedy; our goal will be to define more precisely the inner logic of this hybrid genre and to explore more broadly the implications of its generic innovation. The project of the course is to consider the relationship of tragicomedy to other forms of dialectic in Renaissance literature (especially Renaissance prose) and to the materialist dialectics of Marxist criticism.

Reading will include plays (by Shakespeare, Fletcher, Massinger, Jonson), Renaissance prose (by More, Nashe, Burton, Wroth, Browne), critical and theoretical works (by Guarini, Frye, Jameson, Bakhtin, Hegel, Marx), and some poetry (by Donne, Marvell, Milton).

6275 Ghostly Returns: *Hamlet* In/As Theory
4 credits.

T 1:25-3:20

Lorenz, P.
12845

Focusing on three critical and in their own ways representative texts—Jacques Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx*, Margreta de Grazia’s *Hamlet Without Hamlet*, and Stephen Greenblatt’s *Hamlet in Purgatory*—the course explores the extraordinary role of *Hamlet* in the production of contemporary theoretical models, methodologies and/or scholarly turns: deconstruction, historicism/new historicism, and the so-called “theological turn” in literary studies. Why has *Hamlet* been so fruitful for literary theory? How has it been able to not only generate theory but also to provide a *test case* for it, continually challenging, refiguring and rearranging some of its central premises? Is there something intrinsic to this text that distinguishes it from Renaissance drama as a whole in such a global production? What is the role of theater, as medium, in this exceptional story? During the course of trying to answer these and other recurring questions we will encounter problems of psychoanalysis, political theology, Marxism, gender studies and formalism. The “ghostly returns” are to religion, to the question of history, and to the problem of the subject.

6481 Charles Dickens
4 credits.

W 1:25-3:20

Adams, J.
6249

An intensive study of Dickens as exemplary of current issues and methods in work on Victorian fiction. Though the class will be responsive to student interests, we’ll focus on *Nicholas Nickelby*, *Dombey and Son*, *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, and *Great Expectations*.

6511 Middle Passage: Theorizing the Diaspora
4 credits.

W 2:00-4:25
(also ASRC 6511)

Boyce-Davies, C.

The *Middle Passage* is perhaps the most evocative and simultaneously the most painful of transitions any people have made. Whereas for many the passage to the Americas was loaded with expectation of freedom, for Africans the passage across the Atlantic was loaded with pain, loss and separation. The *Middle Passage* (referred to as the Maafa) then becomes a journey of separation, dismemberment and dislocation. But it was also on the *Middle Passage*, for those who survived, that the transformation into African Diaspora peoples began. This course examines a range of middle passage texts such as novels, poetry, film, drama, slave narratives, and historical texts in order to explore comparatively how artists from across the African Diaspora have approached this historically and emotionally loaded event.

6512 African American Literary Theory and Criticism
4 credits.

R 2:00-4:25
(also ASRC 6512)

Richardson, R.
12522

This course examines African American literary theory and criticism. We will begin with a consideration of some of the early manifestations of this critical enterprise from the Harlem Renaissance to the Black Arts Movements and continue on to an examination of its evolution in relation to structuralism/post-structuralism, feminism, psychoanalysis, postmodernism, and cultural studies, an approach that will promote a better general understanding of these critical perspectives and their uses. As we proceed, we will consider some of the famous debates that have occurred in African American literary theory and criticism concerning the concept of “race” (remember the era during which the word was insistently punctuated with “scare quotes”?) and the relevance of theory to the black text. We will consider the impact of theory and criticism on the development of African American literature and the field of African American literary studies more generally. While working with this body of theory and criticism as one example, this course is designed to reinforce students’ general command of theory. The larger conceptual frameworks for the course reflect this goal. That is to say, in more recent years, the status of “theory” in literary studies has been an issue of great interest, and one anthology even provocatively asks what’s left of it while another considers life after it. The contours of what is sometimes referred to as a “post-theory” age, and what that means for the future of literary studies, are matters that we will give some discussion, even as we proceed on the assumption that some understanding of what might be called “canons” in theory and criticism, and of newer critical and theoretical modes that have emerged more quietly and less dramatically in their wake, is a useful complement to the study of primary literature and related archives. This course will clarify practical strategies for reading and thinking through theory, how one might interpret and critique a theoretical piece and recognize fundamental organizational strategies, how to draw on theory productively and effectively in critical academic writing and research (or even in more creative or experimental writing), and how to build one’s own critical and theoretical arguments with clarity and originality. In addition, the course will outline strategies for expanding and reinforcing theoretical knowledge and point students to a range of resources that might facilitate this process.

6540 Queer Theory
4 credits.

T 1:25-3:20
(also FGSS 6540 & COML 6540)

Villarejo, A.
13471

This seminar will examine some of the key philosophical, critical, literary, and historical currents of thought contributing to the new and emergent field of queer theory. The course is not an introduction to the field but rather an inquiry into the genealogies that contribute to its current questions and impasses. Our readings will take us from the history of sexuality to psychoanalysis, from questions of sovereignty to discourses of human rights, from film to media, from affect to poetry, from philosophy to critical theory, and so on. The seminar will meet weekly, and a seminar paper of 25-30 pages will be due at its conclusion.

6600 The Erotics of Visuality
4 credits.

T 7:30-9:30 p.m.
(also FGSS 6610 & COML 6620)

Hanson, E.
6259

A survey of theories of desire and visuality, particularly psychoanalytic, deconstructive, feminist, and queer film theory. The course will focus on films of the past dozen in an effort to explore the significance of classic theoretical texts with regard to contemporary cinematic practice. We will explore recent work by filmmakers such as Pedro Almodóvar, Olivier Assayas, Catherine Breillat, Atom Egoyan, Claire Denis, Peter Greenaway, Michael Haneke, Todd Haynes, Abbas Kiarostami, Stanley Kubrick, David Lynch, Gaspar Noé, Gus Van Sant, and Wong Kar-wai, as well as theoretical and critical texts by Jacques Lacan, Christian Metz, Michel Chion, Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Lee Edelman, D. A. Miller, D. N. Rodowick, and Slavoj Žižek, among others. Graduate students only.

6631 American Poetry: 1955-1980
4 credits.

M 1:25-3:20
(also AMST 6631)

Gilbert, R.
6251

The period between 1955 and 1980 was an especially exciting one in American poetry, as a younger generation of poets struggled to break away from the high Modernists and establish their own voices. This course will explore the wide range of styles and projects that emerge during this period. We'll begin by considering the famous "anthology wars" of the late 50s, which helped to codify the division between avant-garde and mainstream poetics that continues to shape much American poetry. We'll then focus on important individual books of poetry, beginning with two seminal volumes: Ginsberg's *Howl* and Lowell's *Life Studies*. Other poets will include Snodgrass, Brooks, Hayden, Duncan, Creeley, Olson, Berryman, Wright, Bly, O'Hara, Snyder, Plath, Sexton, Merwin, Kinnell, Ammons, Ashbery, Merrill, Bishop, Rich, and Lorde

6690 Gift and Contract in the 19th-Century United States: Social and Sexual Constructions of Whiteness, Ethnicity and Race
4 credits.

R 1:25-3:20
(also AMST 6690 & FGSS 6690)

Samuels, S.
6253

This class is concerned with contract theory and the ways in which Marcel Mauss's famous essay on the gift might be brought to bear on US literary history. Emphasizing concepts of gift and contract insofar as they help us think through matters of nationalism, race, and sexuality, we will read selected texts from the 19th-century United States and explore how they represent imperialism, slavery, and marriage. These texts may include Catharine Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, Edgar Allan Poe, *Arthur Gordon Pym*, George Lippard, *Blanche of Brandywine*, Nathaniel Hawthorne, *House of the Seven Gables*, Emily Dickinson, poems, Frances Harper, *Iola Leroy*, and Nella Larsen, *Passing*. We will also consider secondary, corollary readings such as Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, and Stephen Best, *The Fugitive's Properties*.

6695 Neo/Latina
4 credits.

W 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Brady, M.P.
9096

Could neoliberalism be said to create the condition of possibility for the recent "Latin Boom"? What might the neoliberal commitment to market discipline, austerity, law and order, privatization, and deregulation mean for Latina/o cultural production? For example, while the relationship between anti-immigrant sentiment and recent attention to the "growing Latino market" and "Hispanic voting bloc" may be clear, what is less obvious are the ways in which homophobia and the coloniality of power subtend this relationship. This course will examine both the development of neoliberalism over the past thirty-years and the coterminous emergence of Latino/a culture, particularly the work of post-nationalist writers such as John Rechy, Helena Viramontes, Junot Díaz, Sandra Cisneros, Francisco Goldman, Ernesto Quiñonez, and Cristina Garcia. We will also have occasion to consider other authors with apposite things to say about political economy and literature, possibly including William Dean Howells, William Faulkner, Kathy Acker, and August Wilson. And while our work will be focused primarily on the literary, we will necessarily pay attention to the emergence of freestyle, salsa, Selena, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* as well as visual art and independent films.

6739 Agamben (and Deconstruction)
4 credits.

M 3:35-5:30
(also Itall 6739)

Attell, K.
6255

In this course we will examine Giorgio Agamben's work from the early 1970s to the present. At the same time we will trace his ongoing engagement with deconstruction, with readings from Derrida, de Man, Nancy and others. In addition to closely following the development of Agamben's thought, as well as its relation to deconstruction, we will also seek to locate his work within the wider field of contemporary theory and consider its relation to the various disciplines in which his influence is currently being felt (e.g. literary studies, political philosophy, legal theory).

6791 Acoustic Horizons
4 credits.

T 1:25-3:20
(also COML 6791, VISST 6791, SHUM 6791)

Murray, T.
6956

The course will explore the aesthetics and politics of sound along the artistic interface of cinema, video, installation, and new media art. From analysis of synchronization of sound and image in the talking movie to its disruption in experimental film, video, and narrative sound art, we will consider the prominence of sound as a carrier of gender, ethnic and cultural difference. We also will explore the theory of sound, from tracts on futurism, feminism, new music, and glitch, to more recent accoustic applications of eco-theory in which sound merges with discourses of water, air, wind and fire. In addition to studying a wide range of artistic production in audio, sound, new media and screen arts (Duras, Marker, Akerman, Cage, Cardiff, Jones, Viola, Out-of-Sync, Eno, Ikeda, Migone) and the corollary relation of the phenomenal growth of digital accoustic horizon in the Pacific Rim (Australia, Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea). we will discuss the dialogical impact of theoretical discussions of sound in psychoanalysis and aesthetics (Freud, Laplanche, Doane, Kristeva, Bonitzer, Barthes, Deleuze, DJ Spooky, Kahn).

6920 Neoformalist Theory and Practice
4 credits.

T 10:10-12:05

Bogel, F.
6248

This is a seminar designed to explore contemporary formalist (or "neoformalist") critical theory and practice. We will devote some attention to links between the rise of The New Criticism in the 1920s and 1930s and the possibilities of 21st-century formalist criticism, but the history and reception of New Criticism will be somewhat compressed. The primary focus will be on contemporary formalist approaches to poetry and, to some extent, prose. Our work will be divided between the study of criticism and theory and an ongoing, practical testing of the potential and limitations of formalist analysis—including the incorporation of formalist methods into ideological, "political," and other contextualist modes of criticism.

Our largest goal, however implicit at times, will be to formulate for ourselves satisfactory definitions of the discipline of literary studies in the twenty-first century.

6951 Postcolonial Literature
4 credits.

T 1:25-3:20

Mohanty, S.
6257

Postcolonial theory grew out of Edward Said's work in the late 1970s, and its most prominent strand has been elaborated by such poststructuralist scholars as Bhabha and Spivak. However, postcolonial (or anti-colonial) *thought* goes back to the days of colonialism. This course will attempt to analyze both intellectual traditions together, and bring them into contact with literary works that analyze colonial culture and offer alternatives to it. Literary texts will include work from Africa (e.g., Achebe, Gordimer, Mernissi, Ngugi), Latin America (e.g., Carlos Fuentes, García Marquez,), South Asia (e.g., Arundhati Roy, Rushdie, and Senapati). Readings will include work by writers and critics from racial and sexual minority groups in the U.S. and Britain as well (e.g., James Baldwin's *Another Country*, Morrison's *Beloved*, Leslie Feinberg's *Drag King Dreams*, and Hanif Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette*). (In most cases, we will read critical essays by the writers as well.

7100 The Exeter Book
4 credits.

M 3:35-5:30

Hill, T. & Zacher, S.
6258

We will read selections from *The Exeter Book* in Old English, concentrate upon Wisdom Poetry, Elegy and Riddles. At least one semester of Old English is recommended. Students may either write an examination or write a term paper in order to fulfill the requirements for the course.

7412 Law and Humanities Colloquium
3 credits.

M 4:15-5:55
(also LAW 7412)

Meyler, B.
11068

In an era of increasing interdisciplinary collaboration, the fields that comprise the humanities are engaging in new ways with law as well as with each other, and projects developed within the context of law schools themselves bear renewed relevance to the humanities. This colloquium will bring together scholars working at the forefront of legal history, law and literature, law and culture, and critical theory from the institutional vantage points of both law and the humanities. Those who present materials will be asked to speak not only about their specific research but also to address where their work is situated within new developments in law and humanities as a whole.

The course will begin with three weeks of seminar designed to apprise students of the history of law and humanities to date and to situate current developments within this history. We will, for example, read classics of the law and literature movement by James Boyd White and Robert Cover, then inquire as to how recent work—such as the essays in Victoria Kahn and Lorna Hutson’s collection *Rhetoric and Law in Early Modern Europe*—might differ in approach. The rest of the course will be organized around a series of speakers, some drawn from Cornell and some from other universities. The students will convene for a half hour at the beginning of the session, which will then be opened to a larger community, including faculty members, for the talk itself.

Students will be required to write seven three- to five-page papers responding to the speakers’ pre-circulated talks; these will be due in advance of the class session and shown to those presenting in order to prompt and enhance discussion.

7810 MFA Seminar: Fiction
5 credits.

T 3:35-5:30

McCoy, M.
6247

7811 MFA Seminar: Poetry
5 credits.

T 3:35-5:30

Fulton, A.
6246

7850 Reading for Writers: Pairings
4 credits.

W 3:35-5:30

Van Clief-Stefanon, L.
10740

Culinary pairings are designed to help diners experience food in more complex ways, to discover nuances we might miss when tasting them alone. In English 785 we will examine and discuss paired collections of contemporary poetry. Pairings may include, for example, Thomas Sayers Ellis *The Maverick Room* with Ken Rumbles *Key Bridge*; Ilya Kaminskys *Dancing in Odessa* with Valzhyna Morts *Factory of Tears*; Claudia Emersons *Pharoah, Pharoah* and *Late Wife*; A. Van Jordans *m-a-c-n-o-l-i-a* with Harryette Mullens *Sleeping with the Dictionary*. We may also read some essays on poetry and aesthetics. Do we as writers have a literary equivalent of taste memory? If so, can we use what we understand of it to move past simple recreation and mimicry?

7940 Directed Study

11185

This course title should be used for an independent study in which one student works with the supervision of a member of the graduate faculty.

7950 Group Study

11191

This course title should be used for an independent study in which a small group of students works with the supervision of a member of the graduate faculty.

7960 Teaching and Research

11193

This course should be used for an independent study that combines a program of reading, supervised by a professor, with participation (including some teaching) in an undergraduate course.