Welcome to the Department of English. For fall semester 2014 we offer a rich selection of introductory and upper-division courses in English and American literature and culture, as well as Creative Writing workshops. Please feel free to talk to David Roman (director of undergraduate studies), Rebecca Woods (departmental staff adviser), or other English faculty to help you select the menu of courses that is right for you.

All Department of English courses are “R” courses, except for the following “D” courses: ENGL 303, 304, 305, 407, and 490. A Department stamp is not required for “R” course registration prior to the beginning of the semester, but is required for “D” course registration. On the first day of classes all courses will be closed—admission is granted only by the instructor’s signature and the Department stamp (available in Taper 404).

Departmental clearance is required for all “D” class courses.

Be sure to check class numbers (e.g., 32734R) and class hours against the official Fall 2014 Schedule of Classes at www.usc.edu/academics/classes.

All students who want to major, double-major, or minor in English must take three lower-division courses in the 200 range, of which AT LEAST TWO must be from the 261, 262, 263 sequence. The third course may be from that sequence, OR from 290, 298, or 299.

ENGL 105 is designed to introduce you to the basic elements of writing poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction. During the next few months you will be writing two poems, one 3-5 page lyric essay, and one 5-7 page short story, and various exercises in these genres. Some of you will have arrived in ENGL 105 having already written a good number of stories, essays, and poems; others of you will have had no experience writing in any of the genres. Don’t worry about lack of experience. The main things you’ll need to bring to this course are an eagerness to learn, a willingness to work hard on your writing, and a similar willingness to read with care the assignments in your texts. There are no prerequisites for this course and it does not count toward the English major in Literature or in Creative Writing.
ENGLISH LIT TO 1800

Intensive reading of major writers to 1800.

Through the close analysis of literary works written in English before 1800, the course will address: the implications of authorship at various times in English and Irish history, with a particular emphasis on the theme and practice of political exclusion; the development of literacy and its initially restrictive force; the rise of empire and the attendant questions of dynastic legitimacy, religious determinism, gender empowerment and colonial expansion; urban foppery. Texts studied will include: selections from the Book of Margery Kempe and Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales; Shakespeare’s Macbeth; lyric poetry by Donne, Marvell, and Aemelia Lanyer; Milton’s Paradise Lost; Congreve’s The Way of the World; Aphra Behn’s The Rover and Oroonoko; Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe; and Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels. Students will write three papers, take a final exam, attend class and participate in discussion.

ENGLISH LIT TO 1800

English 261 is an introductory course that will familiarize students with medieval and renaissance literature. The course will follow the development of English poetry, drama and prose, and it will also examine the translation of the Bible into English during the Reformation. In addition to the study of aesthetic, the course will employ an examination of the various social, cultural, and political movements that influenced literature during the key centuries between the Norman Conquest and the English Civil War. Authors will include Marie De France, Chaucer, Spenser, More, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Milton. Texts will include the Norton Anthology of English Literature vol. A (edition to be announced), plus handouts. There will be five papers, all 5-7 pages in length.

CREATIVE WRITING FOR NON-MAJORS

ENGL 105 is designed to introduce you to the basic elements of writing poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction. During the next few months you will be writing two poems, one 3-5 page lyric essay, and one 5-7 page short story, and various exercises in these genres. Some of you will have arrived in ENGL 105 having already written a good number of stories, essays, and poems; others of you will have had no experience writing in any of the genres. Don’t worry about lack of experience. The main things you’ll need to bring to this course are an eagerness to learn, a willingness to work hard on your writing, and a similar willingness to read with care the assignments in your texts. There are no prerequisites for this course and it does not count toward the English major in Literature or in Creative Writing.

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English 262 is a survey of English Literature. It is an introduction. It promises to build on and extend the nodding acquaintance that most readers have with English writers of the past; (e.g., Jane Austin might be well known to you, but have you met William Morris, etc., etc). As an introductory course, English 262 is wedded to breadth of study not depth. The course intends to move from the Romantics to the Post-Moderns, introducing students to a variety of texts and authors, periods and genres, and the many questions writers and texts raise about literature and its place in the world. We will even look at some of the answers. The course’s goals are many; for instance there is the sheer pleasure of the texts; secondly there is the desire to prepare a foundation for further studies in literature and art; and finally there is the simple celebration of literature’s challenge to doxa and all the uninformed opinions that rule and regulate our everyday.

The title for this course comes from the Romantic poet John Keats and his notion of “negative capability”—how we live with uncertainty, how we cope with that reality, how we move forward from it. That problem—or reality—is something that will come up for us throughout the term in various ways.

Can we cover two hundred years of British culture in fifteen weeks? Yes, especially if students take an active role in researching and presenting ideas and topics that help contextualize what we’re reading and thinking and talking about. This course traces various literary movements and historical and social contexts for British literature since 1800. That means we’ll be reading Romantic poetry and talking about the role of the poet in society; Victorian poetry and fiction and thinking about the rise of the middle class, anxieties about gender, family, and modern science and technology; turn of the century texts dealing with the transition into a more urban and internationalized world and the demise of the British empire; poetry, fiction, and film about the devastation of World War I and II and the rise of modernism, feminism, and postmodernism, and closing with texts of the last twenty-five or so years, including music, film, and other aspects of British popular and literary culture.

The material in this class helps provide a solid foundation for further exploration of literature and culture, and it will definitely give students a real understanding of the development of British culture and society in the modern era. We will read novels by Dickens, Conrad, Woolf, and others, and a reasonable amount of prose, poetry, and drama to give us a strong sense of the literature and culture of this era.

Students will do one research project/presentation and will write two critical essays.

263 (American Literature) 32635R 11-12:20 TTH Gordon

Designed for majors, this class introduces students to key figures, periods, texts, and issues in American literature, history, and culture. Students will engage a range of genres (including poetry, short story, the novel, film, political essay, and autobiography) to develop a critical understanding of some of the aesthetic, cultural, social, and political concerns taken up by many American writers. While developing a working knowledge of important literary forms, strategies, and movements, we will explore the politics and processes of canon formation and literary criticism. As a group, we also will investigate important elements and strategies of academic writing and literary analysis, including argumentation, close reading, organization, and of course, revision. Some central themes and questions will help us explore literary approaches to the conflicts and contradictions embodied in the so-called “American Experience.” Key themes and categories of analysis will include, but are not limited to: democracy and freedom, violence and self-expression, dissent and repression, home and (im)migration, dreams and creativity, labor and power, justice and the ethics of Americanization. Authors will range from Frederick Douglass to Margaret Fuller, Kurt Vonnegut, and Gloria Anzaldúa.
English 263 is a survey of American Literature. As an introduction, the course intends to develop and extend the nodding acquaintance that most students have with American writers and their works. Since it is an introductory course, English 263 is wedded to breadth of study. The course is historically constructed moving from the time before the Republic to our own moment. Students will confront a variety of texts and authors, periods and genres. We will look at how American authors and their works define and re-define our national character; we will look at the many questions these works raise about America, about its sense of itself, about its place in the world, and about literature. – American and otherwise. We will even look at some of the answers they give. The course’s goals are many; first, there is the simple celebration of literature’s challenge to doxa and all the uninformed opinions that rule and regulate our everyday; secondly there is the desire to offer a foundation for further studies not only in literature and art, but also in other fields; thirdly, there is the wish to recognize and indulge the pleasure one takes from these works: and finally … the list goes on.

This course explores key themes and genres in the literature of the United States. The course begins in the 19th century with the foundational writings of Emerson and Thoreau. It then turns to three classic 19th century authors (Walt Whitman, Frederick Douglass, and Kate Chopin) who will set us up for an extensive reading of John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, for me, the most powerful novel of the 20th century. The rest of our twentieth century readings will move us away from the primacy of narrative and towards the performing arts. This section includes Tennessee Williams and Lorraine Hansberry, two extraordinary playwrights who changed the nature of American theatre, and Joni Mitchell and Stephen Sondheim, two seminal musical composers whose emergence in the 1960s and 1970s radically altered American popular music. The course concludes with a unit on contemporary fiction, specifically works by Sapphire and Philip Roth, which will invite us to consider the status of American literature in the late twentieth century and the time of the now.

Most of our readings identify and address sites of social struggle. Many of our readings dwell in the tragic undercurrents of American culture. Rather than obscure this social reality, this course foregrounds the tragic and its distinct American contexts.

Reading List:
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar”
- Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government”
- Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
- Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*
- John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*
- Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*
- Joni Mitchell, *Ladies of the Canyon*
- Stephen Sondheim, *Company*
- Sapphire, *Push*
- Philip Roth, *Indignation*

The course is designed as an introduction to literary and cultural studies. Course requirements include two 7-9 page papers, in-class presentations, and exams.

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- Stephen Sondheim, *Company*
- Sapphire, *Push*
- Philip Roth, *Indignation*

303 (Intro to Fiction Writing) 32645D 2-4:20 M Everett

Introduction to the techniques and practice of writing prose fiction.

How do you take the vision of the perfect story that you carry around in your head and get it out—intact—onto the page? This course begins to answer that question by introducing the novice writer to the craft of fiction writing, with an emphasis on the literary short story. We will also try to answer the “how do they do it?” question that plagues us when we read wonderful work. By studying a combination of student-generated stories and many published works, we will examine and learn to integrate the elements of fiction into our own work. We will also wrestle with the eternal question of how to show rather than tell what we want to say. Everyone is expected to read, write comments on, and discuss in depth each story that passes through the workshop.
303 (Intro to Fiction Writing) 32649D 2-4:20 W Segal
How do you take the vision of the perfect story that you carry around in your head and get it out—intact—onto the page? This course begins to answer that question by introducing the novice writer to the craft of fiction writing, with an emphasis on the literary short story. We will also try to answer the “how do they do it?” question that plagues us when we read wonderful work. By studying a combination of student-generated stories and many published works, we will examine and learn to integrate the elements of fiction into our own work. We will also wrestle with the eternal question of how to show rather than tell what we want to say. Everyone is expected to read, write comments on, and discuss in depth each story that passes through the workshop.

304 (Intro to Poetry Writing) 32657D 2-4:20 T Bendall
*** Blow, Break, Burn: Misbehaving with Words
In this course we will read and study a wide range of contemporary poetry in order to become acquainted with many styles, trends, forms, and other elements of poetry. Students will write poems exploring some particular strategies. The class is run as a workshop so lively and constructive participation is necessary. Hopefully, each person will discover ways to perfect and revise his or her own work. There will always be lots of room for misbehaving in poems and other adventurous pursuits. Written critiques are required. Poets include Frank O’Hara, Elizabeth Bishop, Alberto Rios, Laura Kasischke, Pablo Neruda, Matthew Dickman, Harryette Mullen, and others.

303 (Intro to Fiction Writing) 32653D 2-4:20 F TBA
Introduction to the techniques and practice of writing prose fiction.

304 (Intro to Poetry Writing) 32655D 2-4:20 M TBA
In this reading and writing intensive introductory poetry workshop, we will defy the limits imposed by that old, well-meaning adage, “Write what you know.” We will explode any such limit on our creativity through prioritizing invention over fact, through fabulation, tall-tale-spinning, yarn-weaving, outright lying, and various other risky imaginative adventures. You’ll write a variety of poems in this course, such as a poem based on a childhood memory, an elegy, a dramatic monologue, and a poem that contemporizes a fairytale or fable. Because all good writers are also good readers, you’ll read copiously from an anthology, a craft manual, and four single collections of contemporary poetry. You’ll post your responses to the readings on Blackboard every week.

304 (Intro to Poetry Writing) 32661D 2-4:20 TH Bendall
*** Blow, Break, Burn: Misbehaving with Words
In this course we will read and study a wide range of contemporary poetry in order to become acquainted with many styles, trends, forms, and other elements of poetry. Students will write poems exploring some particular strategies. The class is run as a workshop so lively and constructive participation is necessary. Hopefully, each person will discover ways to perfect and revise his or her own work. There will always be lots of room for misbehaving in poems and other adventurous pursuits. Written critiques are required. Poets include Frank O’Hara, Elizabeth Bishop, Alberto Rios, Laura Kasischke, Pablo Neruda, Matthew Dickman, Harryette Mullen, and others.

304 (Intro to Poetry Writing) 32663D 2-4:20 F TBA
Introduction to the techniques and practice of writing poetry.
In this reading and writing intensive introductory nonfiction workshop, you’ll write a variety of prose pieces representative of creative nonfiction’s many exciting subgenres, including personal essays, lyric essays, and braided essays. Because all good writers are also good readers, you’ll read copiously from a range of primary and secondary texts and post your responses to the readings on Blackboard every week.

Science fiction overtly weaves “technology” with “fiction” and “knowledge” with “imagination” to mark its genre as distinct. This course will consider the generic specificity of science fiction via the range and scope of science fiction’s designs on reality. We will analyze selected texts from more than a century’s worth of science fiction, both British and U.S., to ask questions about the different stories that we tell ourselves about space (both outer and inner), desire, identity, and otherness. We will examine different periods, modes, genres and styles (the Cold War, pulp, utopian/dystopian, New Wave, feminist, cyberpunk), along with different sub-genres (“cosmic horror,” space opera, post-apocalypse, time travel). The working assumption of this course maintains that science fiction constitutes an especially rich literary genre, not only in its verbal and formal innovations but also in its imaginings of temporality, geopolitics, ecology, gender, race, nationality, culture, society, and the nuclear. We will read texts from Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, H.P. Lovecraft, and Clark Ashton Smith, H.G. Wells’ The Time Machine, Theodore Sturgeon’s The Dreaming Jewels, Ray Bradbury’s The Martian Chronicles, J.G. Ballard’s The Drowned World, Octavia Butler’s Kindred, William Gibson’s Neuromancer, Samuel Delany’s Babel 17 and Empire Star, Angela Carter’s The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman, and Colson Whitehead’s Zone One.

Students will have both a mid-term and a final exam and will write three short papers (3 pages each) in the course of the semester. Informed and prepared class work is also required.

What does language look like? What impact does the physical appearance of a text have upon the reader? In this course, we will be begin to propose answers to these questions by looking at words not only as abstract conveyors of significance, but also as viewable, malleable objects that shape and are shaped by broader forces at work in our everyday lives. In addition to reading novels, literary criticism, design theory, and cultural history, we will also devote substantial attention to expressive forms (including graffiti, comics, artists’ books, film, interactive media, and installation art) that will help us think about language as a richly embodied mode of communication. In the process, we will investigate and generate new possibilities for the design of information, stories, and scholarship.

In addition to traditional written assignments, students in ENGL 392 will produce scholarly projects in alternative forms. During the course of the semester, students will learn about the theory and practice of multimedia authorship in a supportive, collaborative environment. No prior experience with multimedia design (web, video, image, or sound) is expected.

Readings will include:
Chabon, Michael. The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay; Egan, Jennifer. A Visit from the Goon Squad; Hayles, Katherine. Writing Machines; Hustwit, Gary. Helvetica (documentary); Jackson, Shelley. Skin; Levin, Golan. The Dumpster; Lupton, Ellen. Thinking With Type; Maeda, John. Tap, Type, Write; McCloud, Scott. Understanding Comics; Rose, Aaron. Beautiful Losers (documentary); Stewart, Susan. “Graffiti as Crime and Art”; Tufte, Edward. “The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint” and Envisioning Information (excerpts); Ware, Chris. Jimmy Corrigan, the smartest kid on earth; Winterson, Jeanette. Written on the Body.
This is an intermediate course in fiction writing. Students should have successfully completed earlier course requirements. We will be concentrating on how to write a short story as well as a brief examination of the mystery novel. Our focus will center on two examples of these genres: BARK, a new collection of short stories by Lorrie Moore, OBJECT LESSONS, Paris Review short stories, and THE BLACK-EYED BLONDE by Benjamin Black (pseudonym of the English novelist John Banville, who assumes the persona of Raymond Chandler’s Philip Marlowe in this book.) Students will assemble a portfolio of short stories and mystery novel chapters (plus revisions of these writing exercises) over the course of the semester. Presentations, quizzes re reading, portfolio completion.

A practical course in composition of prose fiction. Prerequisite: ENGL 303 or 305.

This is an intermediate workshop in fiction. In addition to writing two short stories that will be discussed or “workshopped” in class, you will be expected to read and comment on each other’s work during each workshop. Throughout the semester, you will be reading several short stories and completing exercises to experiment with the craft of fiction.

Using contemporary models of poetry, including those of John Ashbery, W.S. Merwin, and Jorie Graham, three poets whose work has successfully evolved through numerous forms, students will hopefully engage new poetic strategies and risks in their own work. Critiques will focus on form and new forms reinforce content. Several writing exercises that focus on heightening language and creating a range of tone will be assigned. Memorability, imagination, and emotional amplitude will be stressed, and numerous examples from contemporary painting and music will be applied. Several essays on craft and form will also be discussed. Rewriting will play an integral part of this workshop, and revisions of well-known poems also will be discussed. Additionally, we will examine the work of several award-winning, younger poets.

405 (Fiction Writing) 32679R 4:30-6:50 W Wiggins

405 (Fiction Writing) 32680R 2-4:20 TH Johnson

406 (Poetry Writing) 32686R 2-4:20 T Irwin

407 (Advanced Fiction Writing) 32841D 4:30-6:50 M Everett

Prerequisite: ENGL 405 and instructor permission.

420 (English Lit. of the Middle Ages) 32709R 10-11:50 MW Rollo

*** The Legacy of Eve

As a result of early Christian commentaries on the Book of Genesis, women were considered throughout the medieval period as sensual agents of deceit who scarcely deserved the privileges of education and social autonomy. By the High Middle Ages, however, a secular countercurrent to these views had developed: Representatives of the male hierarchy that perpetuated this tradition and monopolized the prerogatives of knowledge and literacy themselves came to be seen as the true inheritors of the devil’s gifts, demonic agents of falsehood who manipulated their superior (indeed, largely exclusive) erudition as a device of control. This course will be a detailed analysis of these two trends as they are manifested in 14th and 15th century English literature, with a particular emphasis on: Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, The Legend of Good Women, and Troilus and Criseide; Thomas Malory, Le Morte D’Arthur; Margery Kempe et al., The Book of Margery Kempe; and the anonymous Sir Gawain and The Green Knight.

425 (English Lit of the Victorian Age) 32714R 10-11:50 WF TBA

Selected studies in the prose and poetry of such figures as Tennyson, Dickens, the Brontes, the Brownings, Hopkinks, Arnold, Ruskin, and Newman. Prerequisite: ENGL 262.
***“Shakespeare the Plagiarist”***

From where did Shakespeare get his stories and his ideas? What did he do with that material? What did he choose to keep, what to discard, and why? How did he put his plays together? How would his audiences have understood his plays? What was common knowledge for his London audiences, and how did he take advantage of that knowledge? These are some of the questions we will explore in this course.

Sometimes Shakespeare rewrote published novels, poems, or short stories (both “ladies’ fiction” and “manly adventure stories”). Sometimes he rewrote government propaganda and official history. Sometimes he refashioned reports of current events. And he even rewrote plays by other dramatists. We will study Shakespeare’s plays as well as the materials on which he drew, and our approach may invite you to rethink some plays you thought you already knew, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Richard III*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest*.

Two papers of research and interpretation, two essays in class, and exercises to help you understand how Shakespeare and his audiences together learned how to read, write, listen, and watch.

This course will focus on Shakespeare’s histories and tragedies. In our discussion of these plays we will pay special attention to the ideals of kingship and nobility, and of dynastic politics during the middle ages and/or Roman imperial era (when the plays take place) and the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras (when the plays were performed). Plays will include *King John*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV, Parts I and II*, *Henry V*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *King Lear*. In addition, we will discuss the legacy of Shakespeare in English and American culture from the 17th century to the present. Text: Greenblatt, et al., eds. *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008. Comparable editions to Shakespeare’s plays are also acceptable. Other texts TBA. Handouts: TBA. There will be three papers, 8-10 pps each.

American poetry and prose to the Civil War with special attention in Irving, Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, and Whitman. Corequisite: ENGL 263.

American literature from the Civil War period to the 1920s, with particular emphasis on three movements: dark romanticism, realism, feminism. We will treat the beginning and ending dates liberally, reserving the right to look at the precursors of American romanticism, optimistic and dark—Emerson, Poe, Melville—and the ex-patriot inheritors of dark romanticism—Eliot, Fitzgerald, Djuna Barnes. Between these temporal book-ends, we will consider Mark Twain, Henry and William James, Emily Dickinson, Henry Adams, Kate Chopin, Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

American poetry, fiction, and drama since World War I with special attention to Eliot, Frost, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, O’Neill, Stevens, Faulkner, and Nabokov. Corequisite: ENGL 263.
To register, enroll in AMST 448m.

This course is designed to give the student an opportunity to study the commonalities and differences of the literatures produced by Chicano/a and Latino/a writers in the United States. The term Latino/a has been used inclusively to identify a population that many assume is homogenous. This is far from true. In fact, this group of people is characterized by a number of profound differences in history, culture and the literature that has been produced by them. This course will examine these differences while at the same time will explore the commonalities between Chicanos, Cuban Americans, Central Americans and other Latino cultural groups. We will pay special attention to issues concerning the construction of race in these communities and in the U.S., as well as the complexity of representations of gender and sexuality. All of these issues will intersect in each of the texts we will read.

What is contemporary drama? When did it start? Where is it found? And what does it look like? Is it different from the drama that preceded it? Is it just Modern Drama with a ‘new’ twist? Is it all only a post-modern commercial parody of all that came before? Is it global and transnational? Rhetorical questions all, but nonetheless with some import. This course will not attempt to answer any of them, but these questions set the stage for the course. They remind us that contemporary drama draws from the past even as it speaks about our present moment. They remind us contemporary drama and theater are caught up with the commercial as well as the historical and political. Finally, they tell us that contemporary drama in English is not exactly the same as English drama. In order to investigate contemporary drama, the course will work the intellectual space these questions open up. The course will focus on theatrical texts that are political, engaged and confrontational. We will be concerned not only with the ways that dramatic performance shapes contemporary and current issues, but also the ways the political and historical reshape drama and theater.

This course will consider the ultra-contemporary era of 1994 to 2014 – a time period that corresponds to the lifetime, so far, of the average USC undergraduate. As we read select works of fiction, memoir, personal essay, and poetry, we will map out the shapes and themes of the literature of here and now. Which experimental and traditional forms has American literature taken during our lifetime? What cultural contexts, anxieties, and aspirations are reflected in recent writing?

Class discussions will focus on a range of topics, including postmodernism and other “isms,” family and community, politics and dissent, trauma and memory, gender and sexuality, and race and migrations. Course requirements include active participation in discussion, reading logs, a short paper, a long paper, and an oral presentation.

This course will examine the films of Alfred Hitchcock, once called the Master of Suspense, and now regarded simply as one of the greatest masters of cinema the world has known. In fact, in a recent poll conducted by the British Film Institute, 846 critics, scholars, programmers and distributors named Hitchcock’s Vertigo the best film ever made. In the course, we will look at some of the works Hitchcock adapted, often very loosely, to make them truly his own. Beginning with a relatively late work by Hitchcock, Rear Window, based on a story by Cornell Woolrich, we will look at significant films from all periods, including the silent era. Novels such as The Lodger (about Jack the Ripper) The Lady Vanishes, Rebecca, Strangers on a Train, and Marnie will help us consider the art of adaptation and will simultaneously throw into relief Hitchcock’s originality and stylistic daring. Much of the important critical work on this filmmaker has focused on gender and sexuality, and these will be emphasized in the course. In addition to reading a handful of novels and a couple of short stories, students will be asked to read critical essays posted on Blackboard. Requirements: three short papers, a scene analysis, a midterm, and a final research paper.
Shakespeare and the pleasures of tragedy

Why do we enjoy tragedy? What are the ethical implications of watching a tragedy unfold from the comfort of a cinema or theatre seat? Are we cold-hearted in paying to see tragic events onstage or onscreen? Or, alternately, are we ostrich-like when we ignore tragedy in favor of sitcoms and rom-coms? This class takes up questions posed by the art of tragedy. We do so by reading classic theories of tragedy by Aristotle, Hegel, Freud, and Nietzsche; and by encountering Shakespearean tragedy in its various forms. In addition to studying Shakespeare’s four great tragedies (Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and King Lear) we will also read plays – such as Measure for Measure, Pericles and The Winter’s Tale – that follow a tragic trajectory, only to take a radical and arguably problematic turn in the end. Depending on the interests of the class, our final unit will explore rewritings of Shakespearean tragedy in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Here we might read Stoppard’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Jane Smiley’s A Thousand Acres, or Josephine Tey’s Daughter of Time; or we might see Kurosawa’s Throne of Blood or Ran, Reilly’s Men of Respect, or Bhardwaj’s Maqbool or Omkara.

Body ← Poem → Self

Through reading and discussion, as well as attendance at a poetry reading and a dance performance, we shall explore the proposition that first-person poems give us unique access to what it feels like to inhabit another person’s body and how that person experiences being a “self.” That proposition becomes all the more interesting when the poem in question was written several hundred years ago. The poems that we shall be considering range in date from 1520 to right now. We shall get our bearings from Raymond Martin and John Barresi’s recent book The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self, which provides historical reference points for changing ideas of selfhood from the pre-Socratics to Derrida and from videos of social dances since the fifteenth century. In the process we shall consider first-person poems as forms of choreography that make designs on our bodies as readers. Participants in the course will be asked to write a 1500-word response to one of the chapters from Soul and Self, to attend one poetry reading and one dance performance and write a 1500-word review of both events, and to work throughout the semester toward a final 3500- to 5000-word project, which can take the form of original first-person poems as well as or in addition to a critical essay.

The Ethnic Novel

This course takes an in-depth look at the dynamic world of ethnic novels. The twentieth century witnessed radical changes in this genre as ethnic minorities gained greater access to education and publishing outlets and were able to produce literary works in ways that had not been previously possible. We will examine the resulting experiments in story telling by Native Americans, Chicana/os, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, and African Americans. We will pay attention to the narrative strategies that enable authors to portray race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and social class. Students will gain a deeper understanding of the novel as a genre, theorizations of race and ethnicity, and the social and political contexts giving rise to the formal and thematic concerns of US ethnic literature in the past century. Possible authors include D’Arcy McNickle, Zora Neale Hurston, Abraham Cahan, Américo Paredes, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, John Okada, Tomás Rivera, Toni Morrison, Philip Roth, Leslie Marmon Silko, Karen Tei Yamashita, Coleson Whitehead, and Salvador Plascencia.

For current and upcoming events visit the Department of English website:
http://dornsife.usc.edu/engl/