

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
FALL 2009 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**ENGL 501: HISTORY OF LITERARY AND CULTURAL THEORY**

**Emily Anderson and Heather James, Monday, 2:00-4:20 pm Course Number 32770D**

This course, taken by all entering Ph.D. students in English, serves as an introduction to critical communities, ranging from those of the writers, theorists, and critics we will engage in class to the community of the class itself and graduate school more broadly. As part of our process of exploring critical communities—and shaping our own—we will focus on how the objects and methods of literary and cultural studies are adapted and transformed over time and across geographical space. We will consider, for example, both fresh and traditional forms of literary analysis—what’s in, what’s out, and what’s at stake in deciding what’s in and out? Such explorations will advance students’ knowledge of the methodologies and resources that shape literary scholarship generally, as well as sketch out the paradigms that will govern their own future research both through and beyond the qualifying exams. Readings, discussions, practicums, class presentations, response papers, and a variety of other writing assignments will be complemented by presentations by guest visitors.

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**ENGL 504: THEORIES OF RACE, CLASS AND GENDER: Case Study: The Harlem Renaissance**

**Michelle Gordon, Thursday, 2:00-4:20 pm Course Number 32773D**

This seminar takes up the Harlem Renaissance as a particularly fertile site for the study and application of theories of race, class, gender, and sexuality developed over the last 80 years. The Harlem Renaissance itself was a period in which black artists from around the nation and world widely theorized and experimented with the complex plays of race, class, gender, and sexuality in art and society. The renaissance helped produce an array of critics and artists concerned with questions of racial, sexual, and gendered identities, with class divisions, imperialism, and capitalism, and with the elevation of “the race” from the depths of slavery and Jim Crow. The renaissance also drew a range of white patrons and artists who engaged in these debates, and who particularly impacted the art and criticism of the period’s primitivism, music scene, and public reception of black arts. Our approach to this case study is designed to familiarize students with the range of cultural production during the period, as well as open new avenues of inquiry into Harlem Renaissance scholarship and into students’ own developing research agendas and specialized areas of study.

The course begins by exploring the period’s critical writings about culture, race, class, gender, and sexuality in its little magazines and the landmark anthology, *The New Negro* (1925). We will pair these readings with more recent scholarship to challenge conventional understandings of the renaissance, and of early-to-mid-twentieth century literary, cultural, social, political, and economic life. From there, the course will engage a range of cultural productions from the period’s literary, musical, and visual cultures. Our readings will prompt us to take up larger questions of periodization, canonization, and (trans) nationalism, as well as of the marginalization of women writers, artists’ concerns with sexuality and gender, and engagement with radical politics and freedom struggles. Throughout the semester, we will explore the ways in which renaissance writers and their critics bind these issues to practical and theoretical questions of power, place and space, urban consumer culture, black folk culture, modernist aesthetics, proletarian art, social movements, publishing politics, migration, exile, and the mechanics of recuperative scholarship.

Renaissance theorists and authors will include Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Nella Larsen, Zora Neale Hurston, Alain Locke, Sterling Brown, Carl Van Vechten, Gwendolyn Bennett, Helene Johnson, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Jean Toomer, Bruce Nugent, and Dorothy West. Critical and theoretical readings will include work by Melvin Tolson, Nathan Huggins, Cheryl Wall, Anthony Dawahare, William Maxwell, Cherene Sherrard-Johnson, Brent Edwards, Jihee Han, Nikki Giovanni, Paul Gilroy, Alan Wald, Judith Butler, Maureen Honey, Gloria Hull, Hazel Carby, Margot Crawford, James Smethurst, and Stuart Hall. Course requirements will include: regular participation in class meetings, leading a one-hour discussion in seminar, one outside film screening (*Looking for Langston*), a 15-20 minute conference presentation, and a final 20-25 page seminar paper developed out of the conference presentation.

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**ENGL 510: MEDIEVAL ENGLISH LITERATURES AND: The Emergence of Print and the History of the Book**

**Joseph Dane, Thursday, 2:00-4:20 pm Course Number 32778D**

The course will study the history of the book in terms of material resources available in USC Special Collections, the Clark Library, and other Rare Book libraries in Los Angeles (Huntington Library, Getty Research Center). Weekly meetings will cover basic topics in book history: paper; editorial issues; binding structures; provenance; manuscript study; the implications of electronic facsimiles and cataloguing. Students will be encouraged to develop projects in their major areas of interest. There are no prerequisites; students of all areas and interests are welcome. Most meetings will be at the nearby Clark Library; I will provide transportation for anyone needing it.

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**ENGL 535: LITERATURES AND CULTURES OF THE ROMANTIC PERIOD: The 1790s: Revolution, Revelation, Repression**  
**Margaret Russett, Tuesday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course Number 32782D**

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. It was a period of euphoria and despair; of radical democracy and brutal repression. Perhaps no single decade has been more turbulent for those who lived through it, or more momentous in its long-term consequences, than the 1790s in Europe. Dominated, both at the time and in the later historical record, by the French Revolution and the meteoric rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, this was also the period in which the feminist and abolition movements took hold in Britain—even while the Tory government, continuously at war with France after 1793, pursued a repressive domestic policy exemplified by the Treason Trials of 1794.

As the culminating decade of a century also remarkable for rapid increases in literacy and the consolidation of print culture, the 1790s witnessed the birth of “literature” (and even “theory”) from the political and philosophical ferment of the period. This seminar will attempt to grapple with the diversity and complexity of late-eighteenth-century political expression, and—especially—with the novelty and variety of the literary experiments that arose from, and helped define, the “spirit of the age” that inaugurated modernity. Focusing mainly on writing in English, we will also read (in translation) selected essays by German and French authors such as Immanuel Kant (*Project for a Perpetual Peace*) and Benjamin Constant (*Of the Effects of Terror*) that altered the intellectual climate of the times. Major authors and works to be considered include: Jane Austen (*Northanger Abbey*); William Blake (*Songs of Innocence and of Experience; The Marriage of Heaven and Hell; Visions of the Daughters of Albion; America; Europe*); Edmund Burke (*Reflections on the Revolution in France*); Samuel Taylor Coleridge (*The Watchman; Consciones ad Populum*; “conversation” and “mystery” poems); Olaudah Equiano (*The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*); William Godwin (*Political Justice, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*); Mary Hays (*Memoirs of Emma Courtney*); Matthew Lewis (*The Monk*); Mary Wollstonecraft (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*); and William Wordsworth (*A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff, Salisbury Plain, The Ruined Cottage, Lyrical Ballads*). We will also read selections from some other important political texts, by writers such as James Mackintosh, Thomas Paine, John Thelwall, Horne Tooke, Helen Maria Williams, and Wollstonecraft, that shaped the “revolution controversy” and its aftermath. As this list should make obvious, our approach will be broadly interdisciplinary, negotiating among philosophy, visual art, and intellectual, social, and literary history. Participants will be asked to report on, and write brief papers about, 1) a significant historical “context” or lesser-known writer, as well as 2) one week’s secondary (critical/theoretical) readings. The final project will be an approximately 15-page seminar paper focusing on one or more literary/philosophical text(s).

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**ENGL 591: 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CULTURES: 'As It Happens': Event, Pastness, and Causality in Narrative**  
**William Handley, Tuesday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32788D**

Narratives are as inescapably retrospective as they are temporal—including novels written in the present tense, histories of the current moment, utopian literature, and “breaking news.” This seminar will explore not *what* certain novels and theoretical or historiographical texts say about any past, but *how* they represent it or theorize doing so, and what’s at stake --epistemologically, ethically, politically and/or aesthetically--in how they do so. Narratives construct, as they represent, historical questions of causality and accident, of the past and its meaning—but they also wrestle with the impossible: representing what Bakhtin calls the eventness of being, which he explores through aesthetic creation. We will explore such narrative topics and problems as sequence and consequence, repetition and irony, beginnings and endings, disjunctures and fissures, reading for and against the ostensible plot, modernist and postmodernist narrative conventions—and the causal problem of interpretation itself (e.g., does interpretation make texts or do texts cause interpretation?).

Most of the fiction in the seminar will be from twentieth-century American and western American contexts (Faulkner, Morrison, Cather, Didion, Pynchon, McCarthy, among them), but we will also read Emerson, and two novels by Virginia Woolf. Theoretical texts by Walter Benjamin, Mikhail Bakhtin, Peter Brooks, Hayden White, Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and others.

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**ENGL 595: LITERARY STUDIES ACROSS CULTURES: Relocating Empire**  
**Karen Tongson, Wednesday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32790D**

In his preface to the Routledge Classics Edition of *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha offered new notes on what he famously and paradoxically, called “Vernacular Cosmopolitanism”: a confluence of the local and the translocal, or in his own words, “the cultural mix of language and lifestyles” that bring regional vernaculars into conversation with global cultures like “American slang picked up from the movies or popular music” (x). We have continued in our contemporary studies of empire, race and nationalities to use cosmopolitanism” as our primary coordinate. And yet there is also a marked shift in recent cultural studies, gender and sexuality studies, and ethnic studies towards regional imaginaries that confound our attachment to cosmopolitan paradigms. This course invites graduate students to participate in an intellectual project of relocating empire, of reconsidering other transcultural flows through more seemingly mundane built environments and spatial coordinates like the sprawling global suburbs. What does relocating empire to the suburbs accomplish in our literary and cultural imaginaries? What role does the rural play in narratives of spatial migration to and from cities and suburbs? What historical and archival labor is accomplished through literary and cultural representations of shifts in immigration and migration patterns to non-urban or exurban environments? How does gender and sexuality frustrate the narratives of nationalism created in both colonial and post-colonial contexts?

Our objective in this course is not only to begin answering some of these questions, but also to experiment with different comparative apparatuses—between methodologies, between genres and media, and between theory and (literary) history. Readings will include theory and criticism from a range of disciplines, but focused on discussions of empire, cosmopolitanism, globalization and regionalism *vis a vis* race, gender and sexuality. While we will encounter so-called “ethnic literatures” about space within a comparative framework, there will be some emphasis on Asian American and Filipino/Filipino-American literatures and cultural production, especially in our considerations of U.S. Imperialism, and the vestiges of Spanish colonialism. Students will be expected to offer brief written responses and presentations on a rotating basis, and asked to compose a final seminar paper of approximately 16-20pp.

Course Materials will include\* (but are not limited to):

Victor Bascara, *Model-Minority Imperialism*  
Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*  
Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*  
Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*  
Mike Davis, *Magical Urbanism*  
Clint Eastwood, dir. *Gran Torino*  
Alex Espinoza, *Stillwater Saints*  
Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities*  
Raquel Gutierrez, *Malathion (Low Human Toxicity)*  
Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*

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Jessica Hagedorn, *Dogeaters* (Theatrical Edition)  
Allan Punzalan Isaac, *American Tropics: Articulating Filipino America*  
Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake*  
Chang Rae Lee, *Aloft*  
Bienvenido Santos, *The Scent of Apples*  
Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis*  
Gayatri Spivak, *Other Asias*  
Monique Truong, *The Book of Salt*  
Gayle Wattawa, ed. *Inlandia: A Literary Journey through Southern California's Inland Empire*

And articles by:

Pheng Cheah, David Eng, Theo Gonzalves, Gayatri Gopinath, Bliss Cua Lim, Martin Manalansan, Jasbir K. Puar, Richard T. Rodriguez, Sarita See, Neferti X. Tadiar and Prina Werbner, among others.

\*This list is subject to modification until the start of the fall 2009 semester.

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**ENGL 599: SPECIAL TOPICS: Chapbooks and Artist Books  
Joseph Dane, Tuesday, 2-4:20 p.m. Course number 32792D**

In this special topics seminar, we will examine the history of the chapbook; consider information about book arts, book-making, and small presses; and learn to make our own chapbooks. This course will merge scholarship and creative work, with the goal of enlarging each participant's understanding of the relation between print media and the written word. We'll visit hand-made book collections and find out about letterpress printing, taking advantage of the abundant local resources in the Los Angeles area. Each student will read about the history and current state of book arts, give a presentation about some aspect of book & literary culture, and produce 3-5 hand-bound chapbooks, using a variety of techniques. The final project will consist of a limited-edition chapbook (approximately 10 copies), one of which will be donated to the department. The chapbook may contain work in any genre, including poetry, fiction, literary scholarship, or some hybrid form.

Readings will include selections from *A Book of the Book* (Rothenberg & Clay, 2000), *The Century of Artists' Books* (Drucker, 2004), *The Elements of Typographic Style* (Bringhurst), and *Bookbinding without paste or glue* (Smith), among others.

Field trips will include the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library (Los Angeles), the International Print Museum (Carson, CA), Otis Laboratory Press (Los Angeles), Aardvark Letterpress (Los Angeles), Scripps College Press (Claremont, CA), and The Getty Institute (Los Angeles), among others.

This class might be of particular interest to creative writers, as chapbooks and small presses represent both a way to engage with the larger literary community and a potential medium for presenting one's own work. However, all students interested in the chapbook form and the history and future of print media are welcome.

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**ENGL 695: GRADUATE FICTION FORM AND THEORY**  
**Aimee Bender, Monday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course number 32802D**

This course will be half workshop/half non-workshop. We'll read several books, short novels and short story collections, probably including work by Haruki Murakami, Joy Williams and Kevin Brockmeier, and we'll use these works as diving boards into further discussions of form. There will be brief writing assignments and longer talks about craft and process. Students are required to turn in two stories or novel excerpts for workshop plus a range of other, shorter writing. We will also talk about novel writing and the various pitfalls of bringing novels into workshop. As Flannery O'Connor says, "writing a novel is a terrible experience, during which the hair often falls out and the teeth decay." So, we may also share shampoo secrets and schedule appointments with the dentist. All of this and more will be the core of our work together fall semester.

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**ENGL 696: GRADUATE POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP: Series, Sequences, & the Parts of a Whole**

**Susan McCabe, Monday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32803D**

The class will meet to workshop poems in progress that are either solitary (but may feel like part of a larger group) or are written specifically as a projected part of a sequence or series, as well as some longer poems. How do parts work with a sense of an ongoing whole? Does a book require sections? How do the pieces of a manuscript fit together?

In addition, we will read several contemporary poets that fall into an important category of poetics these days—the research-driven book—including the latest volumes by Cole Swenson (derived from research on ghost stories), Brenda Hillman’s last book in her quartet on the elements (*Practical Water*), and Mary Jo Bang’s latest book, structured by the letters of the alphabet. I want to consider how these “concept driven” poets might or might not mesh with what Stephen Burt dubbed in the 90s “elliptical poetry” or what Swenson and St. John now call “hybrid.” More importantly, how do your poems diverge or exist within this emerging scene?

We will read these texts with an eye to examining notions of poetic arrangement, or architecture, with a backward glance at earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century “collections” such as T.S. Eliot’s *Prufrock & Other Poems* and Marianne Moore’s *Observations*, as well as mid-century poets who organized their poetry along different lines of thought and feeling, Lowell’s “confessional” *Life Studies* and Bishop’s *Questions of Travel and Geography III*.

The focus of the course then will be on interconnections within your own poems, developing themes or framing devices, kinds of appropriations, methods of organization, and questions of how sensibility emerges in a series, set, or sequence of poems. What governs the connections between poems, or frames a set of poems? Is there a developing thematic or ongoing drive, a through-line of emotion or experience? We may not know this at once, but will seek to conceptualize the relationship between process and architectonics (in individual poems as well as in groups).

Students will be required to attend every class meeting, participate in discussion and peer-review, and submit a group of poems (about 10-18 pages) in an ongoing cycle.

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**ENGL 697: GRADUATE FICTION WRITING WORKSHOP**  
**T.C. Boyle, Monday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course Number 32804D**

This course provides a forum for writers to present their work for class interpretation and to assess the effects of their techniques on an audience of willing and engaged readers. Depending on the size of the class, each student will have the opportunity to present from two to three original works of fiction per semester—either short stories or chapters from a longer work—according to an agreed-upon schedule. All students will be required to read and comment in writing on the workshop pieces. During the class sessions, we will examine student work with the same interpretive rigor we will devote to the readings from professional writers; the hope is that the student writer will be able to learn something of the effects of his/her work on an audience, with an eye to improving it. Our readings will be in contemporary fiction, both the short story and novel.

Book list:

*The Road*, Cormac McCarthy  
*Fiskadoro*, Denis Johnson  
*Doubletakes*, ed. T.C. Boyle