

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SPRING 2009 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

ENGL 520: RENAISSANCE ENGLISH LITERATURES AND CULTURES: Literature and the Liberty of Speech in Shakespeare's England
Heather James, Thursday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Number 32780D

What are the scope and limits of expression on the stage and printed page in early modern England? To what extent does censorship influence the theory and practice of writing fiction, poetry, and plays? This course examines the ways in which legal limitations to free speech encouraged Tudor and Stuart poets and dramatists to develop alternate modes of expression: if one could not use the "bold and open speech" of classical democracies and republics, one could nonetheless mark the presence of the political liberty of speech on the margins of the page and the sidelines of the stage.

The course will begin with a fresh look at theories of poetry and genre from Horace to Sir Philip Sidney and on to Derrida, alongside of key documents in the literary and philosophical study of the liberty of speech, such as Plutarch's moral essay, "How to Tell a Friend from a Flatterer" and Michel Foucault's *Fearless Speech*. We will also consider the insights as well as the blind spots of criticism that identifies the liberty of speech solely at the moments it is legally defined and punished, i.e., in acts of censorship. After establishing a theoretical and historical basis for our discussions of literature and drama, we will turn first to the literary forms we *expect* to engage the liberty of speech, such as libels, epigrams, and satires, and then to the literary forms we have been taught, especially in the wake of new historicism, to regard as profoundly conservative, such as English histories and tragedies, pastorals and lyrics.

Readings include Edmund Spenser's *Complaints* and *Shepherd's Calendar*, Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesie* and old *Arcadia*, Christopher Marlowe's erotic poetry and eccentric plays (*Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *Edward II*), Ben Jonson's lyric poetry and plays about censorship (*Poetaster, Sejanus, and Bartholomew Fair*), and a number of plays by William Shakespeare, including *Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, As You Like It, and A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the plays, we will pay particular attention to the dramatic characters that actively seek greater liberties of speech than their social positions typically allow: servants and young women. Finally, we will conclude our discussion of literature and political liberties in early modern England by examining the earliest anthologies of English literature—a series of printed commonplace books produced by the grocer, John Bodenham. We may, if we choose, compare the earliest efforts to anthologize English literature and canonize English poets with their modern counterparts, the Longman, Bedford, and Norton anthologies of English Literature.

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ENGL 530: RESTORATION AND 18TH CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURES AND CULTURES: Performing Character: Eighteenth-Century Novels and the Drama
Emily Anderson, Monday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Number 32781D

In the nineteenth century, the novelist William Thackeray would begin *Vanity Fair* with a prologue titled "Before the Curtain," in which the author becomes the "Manager of the Performance," the characters become puppets, and the first chapter begins as "the curtain rises." What does it mean to call characters in fiction an author's "puppets"? More than this—why would a novelist choose to describe his novel in theatrical terms? Where does this metaphor come from, and how does it affect our understanding of genre? Of fiction?

To answer these questions, we turn to the eighteenth century: we look at the "rise of the novel" as a phenomenon that had theatrical roots. Beginning with Cervantes' famously meta-fictional work, we examine novels and plays that reflect on their own conventions, or that reflect more broadly on the meanings of "performance." We will use these reflections to ask questions such as: what kinds of (conditional) credibility do these texts demand of their audience? What does it mean that both these genres frequently depict "character" or characters as self-consciously theatrical? How might contemporaneous acting theory thus influence our understanding of "character," in either genre? How do the novel's reflections on the stage complicate—or illuminate—a long-embraced trajectory of generic development: that flat, "type" characters of eighteenth-century drama yield to the interiority and psychological depth of the novel's protagonists? Is a novel a performance? What kind? Whose?

Primary texts will include Cervantes, *Don Quixote*; Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*, *The Rover*; John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*; Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina*; Henry Fielding, *The Author's Farce*, *Tom Jones*; Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting*; Oliver Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer*; Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*. Secondary readings include work by Joseph Roach, Judith Butler, Lisa Freeman, Terry Castle, Deidre Lynch, and Catherine Gallagher.

Course requirements will include: attendance at the theater school's productions of *The Rover* and *The Beggar's Opera*, a "keyword" assignment (modeled after Raymond Williams) on a specific term with both a theatrical and a theoretical application, a master class led by performance theorist Joseph Roach (visiting scholar-in-residence this year at the Huntington Library), an exercise in conference preparation, and a final 15 page paper. All students must read *Hamlet* in preparation for our first class.

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**ENGL 536: LITERATURES AND CULTURES OF THE VICTORIAN PERIOD: Seeing Into Everything: Refurbishing the Victorian Imagination
Hilary Schor, Thursday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Number 32882D**

At the end of The Origin of Species (1859), Charles Darwin famously remarked that “It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us.” On such sentences the world once (and perhaps still) rocked, yet notice that this is not only a powerful and revolutionary sentence, but it is also a peculiarly Victorian sentence. It imagines that we can **see** the entanglements in the world before us; that forms (however superficially different from one another) are deeply and intricately inter-connected (“in so complex a manner”); and that they, not unlike ourselves, are produced by “laws acting around us.” Forms; laws; transformation; connection; vision... From the railways to the sewers to the factories; from the most radically isolated individual to the most inter-webbed provincial village; from Parliamentary reform to feminist revolutionaries to Jewish prime ministers and intrepid world travellers, to that crazy German immigrant writing Das Kapital in the British Library, the Victorians believed they could see it all – and could make sense of it all, in writing.

Our job in this seminar will be only partly to call their bluff – to notice the necessarily fragmented, partial, idiosyncratic, and downright eccentric nature of what passed for a collective vision in Victorian England. This class will follow several paths. The first will be, particularly for readers new to 19th century British literature, to try to outline the most significant forms, genres, and examples of Victorian writing, ranging from poetry to prose to fiction. We will move from the historical essays of Thomas Carlyle and Thomas Babington Macaulay to the novels of Charles Dickens and George Eliot; from the world-altering theories of Darwin and Marx to the brilliant, lapidary observations of Ruskin and Mayhew; from Tennyson’s vision of “nature red in tooth and claw” to Browning’s sense that “a common grayness silvers everything.” We will be lost, for a time, in the lovely chaos of Victorian literature. But we will also stand back from the chaos. The second emphasis of the class will be to draw on recent scholarship and fiction (from Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s study of “the railway journey” to A.S. Byatt’s novellas of “angels and insects”) that challenges the very notion of “seeing into everything,” of making sense of a culture from within it. This class will ask us to think seriously about the necessary tensions of a culture that at least proclaimed itself able to make sense of the whole of society, the vast and spinning globe newly traversable by railways, telegraphs, balloons and newspapers and daguerreotypes, all the media that seemed to promise a world of connection. But the third strand, which I hope will appeal even to those scholars not yet entranced by the Victorians, will be to think about the nature of cultural studies in any historical period. This class draws its spirit not only from the “omnium gatherum” nature of Victorian knowledge (the infatuation with both the encyclopedic and the ephemeral; the dictionary and the attic) but from a wearier sense of what it means to study culture, that of the last great Victorian, Sigmund Freud, in the years after World War One, when he pondered “civilization and its discontents,” and drew his final tragic conclusions about the “laws acting around us.” It is from Freud’s archaeologies of the mind that this class draws its courage—and also its skepticism that one can ever, no matter how obsessively one collects, hoards, and catalogues, possess more than the fragments of a culture, out of which one creates merely (but also somehow wonderfully) a ghostly, haunted, entrancing city, which one can only hope to fill with living noise.

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**ENGL 580: 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURES AND CULTURES: "Indians":
Indigeneity and U.S. Literary Nationalism**

John Carlos Rowe, Thursday, 2:00- 4:30 p.m. Number 32786D

This seminar will continue my theorization of "Creole nationalisms" in the Western Hemisphere, but now with specific attention to how U.S. nationalism depended crucially upon the social construction of the "Indian" as both the same and different from the new U.S. "citizen." In *Cherokee Nation v. State of Georgia* (1831) the Marshall Court defined the "Indian" as the member of a "domestic dependent nation," whose paradoxical relation to the U.S. nation continues to trouble so-called "Federal-Indian Law" to the present day.

We will take a long view of how "Indians" were constructed by the dominant Euroamerican culture and how specific native peoples responded to these constructions. The seminar should provide a reasonably helpful overview of influential canonical works and an introduction to Native American Literature. We will read: Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly*; William Apess, "A Eulogy for King Philipp"; James Fenimore Cooper, *Deerslayer*; brief selections on the "Indian" question by the Transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller; John Rollin Ridge (Yellow Bird), *Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta*; Francis Parkman's *History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac* (selections); Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer* and "Tom Sawyer among the Indians." The last three or four seminars will be devoted to twentieth-century works that look back, often nostalgically, to nineteenth-century indigenous cultures: John Neihardt and Nick Black Elk, *Black Elk Speaks*; James Welch, *Fools Crow*; Louise Erdrich, *Tracks*.

Requirements: Seminar discussion leader; proposal for seminar essay; 15-25 page seminar essay.

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ENGL 591: 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURES AND CULTURES: 'As It Happens': Event, Accident, and Causality in Narrative
William Handley, Wednesday, 5:00-7:20 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 and what’s at stake --epistemologically, ethically, politically and/or aesthetically--in how they do. Narratives construct, as they represent, historical questions of accident and causality—but they also wrestle with the impossible: representing what Bakhtin calls the eventness of being, which he explores through aesthetic creation. Most of the novels and historiography in the seminar will be from twentieth-century American and western American contexts (Didion, Pynchon, McCarthy, among them), but we will also read some of Emerson’s essays, and Virginia Woolf’s *The Years* (originally titled *Here and Now*) alongside the extracted essay-portion *The Pargiters*. Theoretical texts will include works by Walter Benjamin, Slavoj Žižek, and Hayden White.

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ENGL 592: CONTEMPORARY BRITISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURES AND CULTURES: Film, Fiction, and Culture in the 1950s

Leo Braudy, Tuesday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course Number 32789D

This course explores the cultural shape of a crucial period in American life through the mediation of film, popular fiction, and "serious" fiction from the end of World War Two to the election of John F. Kennedy. We will be reading essays, poems, plays, and novels by writers such as James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, William Burroughs, Albert Camus, John Cheever, Ralph Ellison, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Heinlein, Ernest Hemingway, Jack Kerouac, Robert Lowell, Norman Mailer, Arthur Miller, John O'Hara, Sylvia Plath, Theodore Roethke, J. D. Salinger, Mickey Spillane, Lionel Trilling, and Tennessee Williams. Filmmakers represented will include Robert Aldrich, Walt Disney, Howard Hawks, Elia Kazan, Joseph Mankiewicz, Anthony Mann, Christian Nyby, Nicholas Ray, Frank Tashlin, Billy Wilder, and William Wyler.

We will also consider some of the political and social problems of America in the 1950s, to which many of these works responded and out of which they emerged: the military and political threat of the Soviet Union, the rising political consciousness of African Americans, juvenile delinquency, the changing social and sexual relations between men and women, and the expanding consumer economy that promised so much to so many.

Throughout the course we will raise theoretical issues--the nature of a cultural period (and "culture" as a concept), the various interpretations that have been made of the period's "nature" and their ideological bases--along with other such intersections of the synchronic and the diachronic.

Requirements are two medium-length papers (12-15 pages) and an oral presentation on a background topic of general interest.

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**ENGL 620: LITERATURE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES: Ambient Poetics
Bruce Smith, Tuesday, 4:30- 6:50 p.m. Course Number 32796D**

Atoms, cells, minerals, plant specimens, animal parts, psyche, base, text, image: since the 1650s it has been required that proper objects of study be clear and distinct and that the observer be positioned at an objective distance from the thing observed. From a number of angles these protocols are being called into question: the history of science (Lorraine Daston and Peter Gallison, *Objectivity*), visual studies (James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back*), cross-cultural studies of the senses (Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch: Archeology of a Sensation*), ecology (Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*), and historical phenomenology (Bruce R. Smith, *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture*, and *Phenomenal Shakespeare: A Handbook*). This seminar will provide a forum for testing out these new ideas about embedded perception. An investigation of three archetypal scenes of observation—one from Bacon, one from Descartes, and one from Husserl—will set us up for sustained consideration of four artifacts that allow us to apply principles of interpretation from the critics named above. Cast in different media, these four artifacts—one verbal (Shakespeare's collected sonnets), one visual (a cabinet picture by Isaac Oliver), one musical (Henry Lawes' masque *Comus*, with words by John Milton), and one dramatic (Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of King Lear*)—are high-cultural productions dating from about 1590 to 1635. But the direction of the seminar in the second half of the semester will be guided entirely by the interests of the participants. Projects in other historical periods, other media, and other genres will be encouraged. Each student will be required to undertake three projects: (1) a short critical essay on one aspect of *one* of the four representative artifacts, (2) a rewriting, in light of the concerns of this seminar, of a short essay that has already been submitted in connection with another class, and (3) a more substantial paper on a subject of the student's own choosing, to be presented first as a class presentation and then, one week later, as a paper.

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ENGL 697: GRADUATE FICTION WRITING WORKSHOP

Dana Johnson, Thursday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course Number 32804D

This course is an intense practicum in advanced-level fiction writing and a traditional graduate fiction workshop, concentrating on understanding and implementing the various aspects of fiction. These aspects include craft issues such as characterization, point of view, narrative structure, style, and voice.

Participants will be required to hand in two submissions of 20-30 pages (novel or short story) during the semester. In addition, there will be revisions of a scene or scenes from one of each student's workshoped submissions at the end of the semester. We will also be reading a novel and a short story collection to be announced at the beginning of the semester.

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ENGL 698: GRADUATE POETRY FORM AND THEORY: Translation – Theory, Practice, Miracles of...

Carol Muske-Dukes, Tuesday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course Number 32805D

We will address the matter of translation as theory, as process, practice, trouble and miracle. We'll look at superb, adequate, too literal, too "free", awful, brilliant, etc., translations of major poems, including poems by Catullus, Rilke, Sor Juana, Mistral and others. We'll be hearing from many authorities on translation, including Richard Howard, Jane Hirschfield, Joseph Brodsky, Michael Heim, Octavio Paz, Robert Bly, Carolyn Kizer and others. We'll be reading Rainer Schulte's *Comparative Perspectives: an Anthology of Multiple Translations*, Robert Bly's *The Eight Stages of Translation*, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* (Eliot Weinberger and Octavio Paz), Robert Hass on Tomas Tranströmer and Charles Simic on Brodsky. Students will also translate two contemporary poems into or from English.