

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
SPRING 2011 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

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

**Michelle Gordon, Thursday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. 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 520: RENAISSANCE ENGLISH LITERATURES AND CULTURES: The Poetry of Exile: Ovid in Early Modern England (and Beyond)**  
**Heather James, Tuesday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Number 32780D**

For the writers and readers of early modern England, the poetry of exile was inextricably tied to Ovid, the greatest love poet of imperial Rome, who was known for both a huge success and a massive failure. The success: he changed the course of literary history with his bold innovations in poetic form, a redefinition of the project of poetry in a world of empire. Ovid's ambition to infuse himself into the poetic imperative to "make it new"—in contrast with the poets of the previous generation, who acceded to the idea of Empire—has influenced writers from Christopher Marlowe to Ezra Pound, Edmund Spenser to Zbigniew Herbert, Wyatt and Donne to Rilke and Spicer. The failure: he was exiled by Augustus Caesar to Tomis on the Black Sea in 8 A.D., and nothing that he wrote in his exile changed the minds of Rome's emperors. If anything, the exile and Ovid's unhappy invention of a poetics of exile sealed the case for his cultural significance in the geographical and temporal worlds affected by the Empire. Invention became the necessary and ethical response to the effort of empire to control the meaning of a given poem.

We will read Ovid in connection with early modern responses to his erotic elegies, verse epistles, calendar poem, counter-epic *Metamorphoses*, and poetry of exile. We will attend to the ways in which writers at the origins of the English canon were using Ovid to think about how poetry does, and doesn't, conform (or lend form) to the projects of empire and Crown. Above all, we will read literature in terms of its efforts to find a cultural place for fiction that is not defined by censorship. If the poetry of early modern England has extended to the present day, it is partly because it is pervasively concerned with the voices of subalterns—such as the Irish, Old Irish, Africans, barbarians, women, and servants — and political and religious exiles. In short, it is both the style and content of Ovid's poetry that has led outsiders of all descriptions to take his words and "make them new" in later centuries.

The lion's share of the class will focus on readings of poetry, poems, and plays by Ovid, Spenser, Whitney, Wyatt, Surrey, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Wroth, Sandys, Milton, and Wharton. Early modern periods under consideration run from the Tudors and Stuarts to the Civil War and Restoration.

Yet this course description has deliberately emphasized the responses to Ovid and the poetry of exile that continue well beyond the early modern period. The final portion of the course will be devoted to readings and discussions of both the poet and the poetry of exile chosen by students in the class. Medievalists may wish to bring Chaucer or *The Romance of the Rose* to the table, while 18<sup>th</sup>-C students may bring in, for example, Aphra Behn or Lady Mary Wortley Montagu or Samuel Richardson (Lovelace thinks he's Ovid). Comparatists may focus on Mandelstam or Brodsky. The English and American literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is wide open. Early modernists, too, may choose their issues at will.

Requirements include a short presentation of an early modern text or issue and a longer presentation of your work-in-progress; a short paper on Ovid and/or Ovidian adaptation in early modern literature and a longer paper (to be written with publication in mind) on a topic of your choice, that should arise from your presentation and consultation with me as well as members of the class.

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Note on textbooks: I have ordered the books listed below, all of which can be ordered used through Amazon.com. I will also put together a course reader for some material, which does not seem to be inexpensively available.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. David Raeburn (Penguin).

Ovid, *Poetry of Exile*, trans. Peter Green (U of California OR Penguin: it's the same).

Edmund Spenser, *Shorter Poems*, ed. Richard McCabe (Penguin).

Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* III and IV, ed. D. Stephens (Hackett). Other editions of the FQ, such as the Longman or Norton, are fine.

Christopher Marlowe, *Complete Plays*, ed. Burnett (Penguin)

William Shakespeare, *Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, eds. Orgel and Braumuller. Other good editions of the complete works will do. But this one is cheap and good.

Ben Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass and Other Plays*, ed. Mary Jane Kidney (Oxford). You need a good edition of *Poetaster, or the Arraignment*. This is the cheapest.

*English Sixteenth-Century Verse*, ed. Richard Sylvester (Norton OR Anchor). You may find either the *Anchor Book of English Sixteenth-C. Verse* or the Norton reissue online. This is a great old collection, featuring complete sonnet sequences.

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**ENGL 591: 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURES AND CULTURES: Post-Western Representations**

**William Handley, Tuesday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32788D**

Haunted by colonial and imperial history, twentieth-century western American fiction, historiography, and film exhibit a broad range of aesthetic and political responses to the question of how the western past can be represented -- of what is at stake in the formal means by which writers, historians, and other cultural makers render history's legibility of illegibility, particularly when western history is marked by trauma and loss. If all histories are narrative constructions, as Hayden White argues, are any less or more "true" than others? (In what ways is that not the most germane question to ask?) Emerging from a literary history quite different from that of the European avant-garde, western modernist writers approached the problem of representation and reality in western American contexts in ways that make it difficult to categorize the politics of their aesthetics (as compared to, say, Woolf and Joyce), particularly since they aimed to create what readers wanted: something authentically "real." And yet it was the American West that later seemed readily to supply European postmodernist theorists such as Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco with grist for their critical mills (under such categories as the "simulacrum" and the "hyperreal"). We will explore such topics as "postindian simulations"; ecocritical politics and the narrative construction of nature; Los Angeles, postmodernist theory, and *noir* as invisible history—and the ongoing frontiers of race and sexuality in a postfrontier West. Writers include Sherman Alexie, Wallace Stegner, Gerald Vizenor, Joan Didion, Judith Freeman, Annie Proulx, Cormac McCarthy, Nathanael West, and Brian Hall.

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**ENGL 620: LITERATURE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES: Three Modernists:  
Poetry & other Media and Genre  
Susan McCabe, Thursday, 4:30- 6:50 p.m. Course Number 32796D**

We will examine three diverse modernists in depth: Gertrude Stein, T.S. Eliot, and Samuel Beckett. How do forays in drama, opera and cinema shape these writers? The material for the class will encompass Stein's *Tender Buttons*, her *Lectures in America*, *Stanzas in Meditation*, *Late Plays & Operas*; we will also study her fascination with popular culture-- detective fiction and Charlie Chaplin. With Eliot (like Stein, he wrote some "film scenarios" and was drawn to melodrama), we will traverse the low and the high in his early poetry, *The Waste Land* (a montage poem composed of many fragments from Elizabethan and Jacobean plays as an important strand), *Four Quartets* as well as his play *Family Reunion*; we will read Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, *Fizzles*, *Murphy* and *Watt*, and study his *Film* (1965) with Buster Keaton. How does this strand of modernism transform poetics in the process of developing new ways of dramatic and gestural representation? In attentively reading these writers from more than one generic perspective, we will explore how the very character of consciousness shifts the poet away from inherited conventions. Similarly, poets who wrote drama were shaped by the presence of film as new medium. As counterpoint, we will view the modernist Chaplin and Keaton in earlier incarnations as well as other avant-garde films formative or instructive for reading these three poets, including Rene Clair, Bunuel, Maya Deren and others. Along with primary texts and visual materials, you will be expected to read major critical work on each figure, including Perloff, Laura Marcus, Deleuze and Dydo. Students will give weekly reports, and several short papers along with a final longer one. The reading list and syllabus will be available by the end of November. Interested students can contact me at [mccabe@usc.edu](mailto:mccabe@usc.edu).

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**ENGL 660: STUDIES IN GENRE: American Theatre**  
**David Roman, Monday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32799D**

This course is designed as a survey of American theatre and an introduction to theatre and performance studies. Students will read major works by leading figures in American theatre including Eugene O'Neill, Thornton Wilder, Lillian Hellman, Clifford Odets, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and Lorraine Hansberry. We will also study the American musical including such classic texts as *South Pacific*, *Gypsy*, and *West Side Story*. The first half of the course will focus on plays and musicals from the 1930s to the 1950s. The second half of the course will focus on more contemporary playwrights and performers, which will be decided by those enrolled.

The goals for the course are multiple. Obviously, this course is centered on the study of genre. We will address the problem of genre from various angles including the formal, theoretical, and historical. What is to be gained by the study of genre? The course is also meant to interrogate the idea of literary history and periodization. Our second goal, therefore, will be to confront the challenge of the archive. How do we do historical work? Third, we will confront the anti-theatrical prejudice as it permeates American culture including the actual study of American literature and culture. Why is drama presumed to be a marginal genre in literary studies? The course will also engage in socio-political methodologies. Thus a fourth course goal will be to consider the role of theatre in society. What role does theatre/drama/performance play in the national culture? What might we learn about American history and culture if we foreground the role of theatre? In this sense, the course is conversant with the new currents in American Studies.

Syllabus:

Eugene O'Neill, *Long Days Journey Into Night*

Thornton Wilder, *Our Town*

Clifford Odets, *Waiting for Lefty*

Lillian Hellman, *The Little Foxes*

Tennessee Williams. *The Glass Menagerie*

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Arthur Miller, *All My Sons*

Arthur Miller, *Death of A Salesman*

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

Rodgers and Hammerstein, *South Pacific*

Arthur Laurents, *West Side Story*

Arthur Laurents, *Gypsy*

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**ENGL 695: GRADUATE FICTION FORM AND THEORY**  
**Aimee Bender, Monday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course Number 32802D**

This course will be 2/3 workshop/1/3 other. We'll read several books, short novels and short story collections, probably including work by William Maxwell, Mary Robison, Kobo Abe, and commentary by Scott McCloud, and we'll use these works as diving boards into further discussions of form and function. There will be brief writing assignments and longer discussions about craft and process. Students are required to turn in two or three stories or novel excerpts for workshop plus a range of other, shorter writing and a likely additional piece that is as of yet undecided. 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 form a flossing community. All of this and more will be the core of our work together spring semester. Limit 12.

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**ENGL 696: GRADUATE POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP: "Cloud Corporation",  
Manuscript to Book  
Carol Muske-Dukes, Thursday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course Number 32803D**

We will be focusing on the content of style in assembling a book manuscript -- from the starting point of view that an unsorted list of poems does not make a book. Our "guidance" in addressing the architecture of the book of poems -- in partial or "complete" manuscript -- will include Robert Lowell's LIFE STUDIES and FOR THE UNION DEAD, DON'T LET ME BE LONELY by Claudia Rankine and finally, Timothy Donnelly's, CLOUD CORPORATION. Poems will be considered individually in the workshop but as well in the larger context of these architectures. For needed relief from this inquiry and to live in another "present": John Keats' Selected Letters, always.