

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SPRING 2012 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

**ENGL 510: MEDIEVAL ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURES: What is a Book?:
The Study of Early Printed Books and Manuscripts**
Joseph Dane, Thursday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Number 32773D

The course is designed as an introduction to the study of material books. Readings and topics are not period specific, and will be chosen to help students use primary sources (that is, physical books) in all areas of literary study. We will likely spend most time in those areas in which Los Angeles libraries are particularly strong: early English books, incunabula (fifteenth-century books), illustrated books.

We will meet at two principal locations: Special Collections at Doheny, and the nearly Clark Library (Adams and Cimarron). We will also schedule at least one trip to the Huntington Library, and possibly UCLA or the Getty. I can provide transportation to anyone who needs it.

There are no prerequisites. You can take the course either as an introduction to book history and the use of primary sources generally, or to develop a project in your own area of research, whatever that might be. I expect a number of student presentations, and will offer several writing exercises, but there will be no required papers, exams, reports, or anything else that might get in the way of your doing whatever research you want to do.

Reading: R. McKerrow, *Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students*; J. McGann, *Critique of Textual Criticism*; P. Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*; D. Greetham, *Textual Scholarship*.

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ENGL 530: RESTORATION AND 18TH CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURES AND CULTURES: Eighteenth-Century Literature and the Question of Character
Emily Anderson, Monday, 2:00-4:30 p.m. Number 32781D

“What is there left to say about character?” contemporary theorist Rita Felski queries in her introduction to the 2011 *New Literary History* special issue on “Character.” The answer, apparently, is “quite a lot.” As Felski’s own special issue indicates, character seems to be characteristic of much recent academic criticism. No longer code for an outdated sense of stable selfhood, character now opens up questions about the relationship between real and fictional persons, and the issues of ethics, empathy, and authority that such a relationship inspires. Why do we care about imaginary people? What does it mean to claim that something about a fictional character is true? Who creates a character’s fictional world? One goal of this course is to examine critical trends in the study of character, from its nineteenth and early twentieth century valorization, through the demotion of the concept in the 1960s and 70s, to its returning popularity today. How are current literary scholars re-approaching a study of “character,” and why are they interested in doing so?

While we will read a range of critical responses to this question, our class will approach character from a very specific literary-historical period: the eighteenth century. The trajectory of eighteenth-century literature is often plotted as a function of character development, seen in the simplified yet persistent idea of a literary shift from the “flat,” type-characters of the stage to the “round,” psychologically-complex characters of the novel. Our class will interrogate this familiar narrative. Beginning with eighteenth-century responses to Shakespeare, we will track an emergent desire to psychologize characters, accompanied by a desire to treat fictional characters as if they were real. Such investigations will explore how “character” in eighteenth-century literature stands in for broader uncertainties about the fact / fiction divide, the know-ability of other minds, and the nature of audience engagement with fictional narratives. Such investigations will also take us from the stage to the novel, from fictional characters as embodied by flesh-and-blood celebrities, to fictional characters as fleshed out in prose. We will consider, for example, how famous actors influence ideas of characterization, and what it means to encounter a character that is enacted, rather than read.

Readings will include work by Shakespeare, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, and Jane Austen; secondary material will feature formal, narratological, cognitive, and philosophical approaches to character studies. Requirements will include a book review, a short paper and accompanying oral presentation, and a longer final seminar paper.

The course should appeal to students of eighteenth-century literature, early modernists curious about Shakespeare’s historical reception, students from other periods or disciplines interested in the affective response to character, and fiction-writers concerned with critical attitudes toward character today.

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**ENGL 535: LITERATURES AND CULTURES of the ROMANTIC PERIOD
Margaret Russett, Tuesday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Number 32782D**

This seminar has a deceptively simple goal: to develop the literacies needed to read the works of William Blake. The catch is that Blake's poetry, formidably complex even on its own, was only one dimension of a form that he invented--the "illuminated" book: composed, designed, engraved, and colored by "the author and printer, Wm. Blake," better known in the late 1700s and early 1800s as an illustrator, commercial engraver, and painter. Blake's books are visual compositions as much as they are verbal ones, but they are not illustrated; learning to read them involves learning to think in non-linear ways about the interaction and interpenetration of text and image. Multimedia works long before that term was in use, Blake's illuminated books find their nearest contemporary analogs in hypertext fiction and graphic novels.

In this seminar, we will indeed read all of Blake's illuminated books, from the early *All Religions are One and There is No Natural Religion* (1788) to the late *Milton a Poem and Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion* (c.1810-20). We will read these in David Bindman's full-color facsimile edition, with help from multiple sources and resources: the online Blake Archive, maintained by the University of Virginia; the superb Blake collections at the Huntington Library; and several visits and guest-lectures with noted Blake scholars and collectors including Robert Essick and Mark Crosby, who are now preparing Blake's "unknown" last illuminated book, the Genesis manuscript, for its premiere on the Blake Archive. Contexts and intertexts will also be many, ranging from the works of 17th century mystics to 1790s radicals; along the way we will examine Blake's paintings and illustrations for other works including *Paradise Lost*, *The Divine Comedy*, *The Book of Job*, *Virgil's Pastorals*, and *Mary Wollstonecraft's Original Stories from Real Life*. Secondary readings will encompass the range of interdisciplinary emphases in contemporary Blake studies: from social, political and religious history, to visual studies and the history of the book.

Requirements for the course will include presentations on both a significant "intertext" and a significant area of historical context, as well as an interpretive seminar paper. Students interested in developing practical expertise in digital humanities may have the opportunity to make useful contacts.

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

Leo Braudy, Thursday, 4:30-6:50 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 several 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 599: SPECIAL TOPICS: Writing Articles for Publication in Humanities Journals

Susan Green, Director of the Huntington Library Press and Editor of the Huntington Library Quarterly, Wednesday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32792D

What will your prospective article look like to the editor or staff member of a humanities journal who “opens” it?—now likely to be a file rather than an envelope. The self-addressed stamped envelope is gone, but what new conventions have evolved as electronic submission becomes the rule rather than the exception? Some of these conventions are announced as requirements on the websites of publications, and we will begin by researching these, reading between the lines and adding to them where appropriate. But our main focus will be inside of the electronic envelope: ways to develop strong seminar papers into article submissions, working on structure, documentation, and style.

Prospective students should submit a completed seminar paper to the instructor before the course begins, ideally by mid-December. A major project for the participants in the seminar will be developing a seminar paper into a publishable manuscript. Although the specializations of students will differ considerably, the seminar will cover procedures and strategies common to scholarly work in varying literary and historical fields. The course will have some attributes of a workshop: some material will be discussed in class (with the permission of the writer) and all will be discussed in individual sessions.

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**ENGL 620: LITERATURE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES: Writer & Composer
David St. John, Thursday, 2:00- 4:20 p.m. Course Number 32796D**

This course will be team taught by David St. John and composer Frank Ticheli of the School of Music. It is a structured collaboration between composers and poets/writers. Activities include fundamentals of poetry, comparative analysis of poem/song settings, and creative projects. We hope that this course can foster long-term collaborative relationships between composers and writers. The course is designed for graduate students in Music Composition and English/Creative Writing (Poetry). However, other graduate students may enroll with the permission of the instructor. Be warned: this is all about collaboration in the arts. If you think of yourself as a lone wolf artist, this course may not be for you.

Please see Ms. Janalynn Bliss, Program Coordinator
PhD in Literature & Creative Writing, to obtain d-clearance.
(213) 821-0477
cwphd@usc.edu

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ENGL 630: STUDIES IN GENDER: The Aesthetics of Catastrophe
Judith Halberstam, Tuesday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32797D

This course explores the representation of catastrophe in film, literature, music and the visual arts. While we emphasize and center the Holocaust we will also consider representations of Hiroshima, the Nakba and war in general, we will ask questions about representation and its limits; the body and memory; trauma and gender; aesthetics and politics. We will read novels and watch films that speak to us of hauntings, nightmares and absence and we will consider the implications of aestheticizing trauma. We will also think about a post-humanism that emerges in the wake of the Holocaust and that forms itself around questions of rationality and modernity, negativity and chaos and an anti-redemptive understanding of both the human and the literary. Throughout we will think together about violence, subjectivity and a politics of unbecoming and we will pay careful attention to issues of gender and sexuality.

Course materials include theoretical works by Zygmunt Bauman, Marianne Hirsch, Michael Rothberg, Shoshana Felman, Primo Levi; novels by Nicole Krauss, W.G. Sebald, Adania Shibli, David Grossman, Chang Rae-Lee and Caryl Phillips; films such as *Shoah*, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, *Waltz With Bashir*.

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**ENGL 695: GRADUATE FICTION FORM AND THEORY
Percival Everett, Monday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32802D**

Though we proceed with the understanding that we can identify the forms of the novel and short story, we cannot actually offer necessary and sufficient conditions for a work being either. We will address the question of whether there is an archetypal model of any form of fiction and ask where the boundaries of the model exist. We will also explore what happens when boundaries (if they are real) are crossed.

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ENGL 697: GRADUATE FICTION WRITING WORKSHOP
David Treuer, Thursday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course Number 32804D

Life may be one thing after another and text one word after another but of the two only texts are scripted. Creative non-fiction is a vast genre and a tricky practice. Ranging from scholarly essays to travel writing and memoir creative non-fiction takes the elements of the “truth” (stated fact, event, conflict, narrative arc, the plot of “life,” the evolution of a thought or thoughts, the quote, the word, the utterance) and recombines them—sometimes carefully and with premeditation and other times in ignorance—into written narrative. These “true” narratives are meant to move, educate, convince, sway, and transport us. Our time will be spent analyzing different approaches to the practice of non-fiction, isolating the working parts, the gears, of those approaches, and then trying them out in our own attempts at the genre(s). This combined reading and workshop course is designed to investigate the ways in which we take the raw material of life and turn it into text.

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ENGL 698: GRADUATE POETRY FORM AND THEORY: *Forms of seeing, Ways of listening*

Mark Irwin, Tuesday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32805D

Beginning with Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo," we will explore poems, visual works of art, and a few symphonies, which provide unique ways of seeing or perceiving the world. Often inspired through concept, or crises in belief, these poets, painters, and composers create new boundaries in art through vision or the distortion of form. From Rimbaud's "The Drunken Boat" to Rilke's Duino Elegies, Frances Bacon's Triptychs, Ashbery's "Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror," Jorie Graham's "Pollock & Canvas," and the work of many younger poets, we will discuss works of art that arc, distort, and create new forms. Each student will write one paper, give a presentation, and produce a draft for a longer creative work in poetry.

Reading/ Viewing/ Listening Formats

John Ashbery: *Selected Poems*

Anne Carson: *Plainwater*

Angie Estes: *Tryst*

Laura Kasischke: *Space in Chains*

Rainer Maria Rilke: *The Selected Poems*, Stephen Mitchell, trans.

Jorie Graham: *Dream of the Unified Field*

American Hybrid: Norton Anthology of New Poetry, Swensen, St. John, editors.
13 Younger Contemporary Poets, Mark Irwin, ed.

Numerous Slides of Visual Works of Art

Selected recordings of Philip Glass, Christopher Rouse, Joan Tower