

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
FALL 2015 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

ENGL 501: Introduction to Literary and Cultural Criticism and Theory
Viet Nguyen, Mon., 4:30-6:50 pm Course Number 32770D

As the title indicates, this course is an introduction. It requires no advance knowledge of literary and cultural criticism and theory. We will read excerpts from the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* on the major theorists and philosophers who have shaped contemporary criticism (in no particular order: Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Stuart Hall, Fredric Jameson, and others). In addition, given that half of the seminar will be composed of creative writers and the other half of literary critics (although perhaps some may cross the line and do both), we will also look at some figures who do both creative and critical work, such as Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, Claudia Rankine, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Trinh T. Minh-ha, in an effort to see how criticism can inform creative work, and vice versa. Figuring out what terms like structuralism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, feminism, Marxism, and others, do in literary and cultural theory will also be on the agenda. Be prepared to lead the seminar in discussion, to participate in the conversation both in seminar and online, and to write a research paper or an essay.

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**ENGL 536: Literature and Cultures of the Victorian Period: Inventing the Victorians: Seed-Time, Railway Time, Factory Time, Time to Die
Hilary Schor, Tues., 4:30-6:50 pm Course Number 32882D**

Isn't the modern world marked by the arrow of time? Doesn't it consume the past? Doesn't it break definitely with the past? Doesn't the very cause of the current prostration come precisely from a 'post' modern era that would inevitably succeed the preceding one, which, in a series of catastrophic upheavals, itself succeeded the pre-modern eras? Hasn't history already ended?

Bruno Latour, We Have Never Been Modern

Where does history come from? Here's one theory: "But at my back I always hear/Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near." On or about 1837 the modern world began and time's chariot suddenly became a train, "ringing down the grooves of change." But as Latour suggests, we have an awful lot riding on the notion of the modern world, and nowhere are those bets placed more fiercely than in England, at the dawning of the industrial revolution. What does it mean to invent an historical period? After all, in 1837, when Victoria came to the throne, a lot of seemingly contradictory things were happening. Charles Dickens was publishing the Pickwick Papers and Oliver Twist, J.M.W. Turner was still painting, Wordsworth was still writing poems about viaducts, the first Reform Bill had just been passed and Marx had yet to meet Engels. Darwin had been back less than a year from the voyage of the Beagle; photography was waiting for 1839 to be invented; and in case anyone is still worried about my opening sentence, yes, the train had already left the station. Women couldn't vote; nor could Jews; Catholics and dissenters now could, but they could not yet go to Oxford or Cambridge, and a workers' revolution (if not yet feminism) hovered on the horizon. Other revolutions had come and gone: again in 1837, Thomas Carlyle published The French Revolution while John Keats (born the same year as the Sage of Chelsea) had been dead for only twelve years; Arthur Henry Hallam, the subject of Alfred Tennyson's In Memoriam, had already been dead for four years, though the great elegy would not be published until 1850 – the same year that Wordsworth would die and The Prelude, on which he had been working since at least 1799, would finally be published. Where exactly in time are we?

Romantic, Victorian, Modern; history, photography, memoir; evolution, revolution, devolution; the novel and the police; the elegy and thanatopsis; and above all the novel, the single greatest invention of the 1840s and the one best called into being by the dawn of the Victorian age. This seminar will begin with a series of meditations first on the nature of historical time (Walter Benjamin; Stephen Greenblatt; Susan Stewart) and then locate the origins of these debates in the early Victorian period, when writers first began publishing essays on "The Spirit of the Age," "The Signs of the Times" and "Civilization." The seminar will travel to Tierra del Fuego with Darwin, to a factory town with Disraeli, to the slums of Manchester with Engels, and to the villages of England with Mary Russell Mitford. We will then time-travel to contemporary "Victorian" fiction: Kate Atkinson's Behind the Scenes at the Museum, A.S. Byatt's Angels and Insects, The Difference Engine. But as we are blown backwards into the future with Walter Benjamin's angel of history, we will read our story in serial fiction, the great experiment with time perfected by the Victorian novelists: the class will read David Copperfield in parts, and our readings will culminate not only in Thackeray's voyage From Cornhill to Grand Cairo and Thomas Carlyle's trip to medieval England in Past and Present, but in the three great novels of the 1840s: Gaskell's Mary Barton, Thackeray's Vanity Fair and Dickens's Dombey and Son.

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ENGL 580: 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURES AND CULTURES: Theories of the Americas

John Carlos Rowe, Wed., 5:00-7:20 pm Course Number 32786D

The seminar will focus on influential theories of the Americas, the Western Hemisphere, and the pertinent “rims” (including the Pacific, Black Atlantic, North Atlantic, Caribbean, African diaspora, et al.). The general theorization of Comparative American Studies as a field has been criticized in a number of ways in recent years, so we will try to assess the relevance, if any, of this paradigm. The geopolitical “rims,” such as the Pacific Rim and Atlantic Zone, have also been criticized, notably by cultural geographers committed to “oceanic thinking” and advocates of Transpacific and Archipelagic American Studies. We will begin with these problems, reading a variety of contemporary critical accounts and then working historically backwards to consider important theorists of the Americas like Walter Dignolo, Édouard Glissant, Edmundo O’Gorman, Enrique Dussel, C. L. R. James, and José Martí. We will use several cultural “test cases” to evaluate these theories, including: Walt Whitman’s poetry, Cirilo Villaverde’s “Cuban national novel,” *Cecilia Valdés*, or *el Angel Hill* (1882), José Clemente Orozco’s murals, *The Epic of American Civilization* (1932-1934), Alejo Carpentier’s *Los pasos perdidos* (*The Lost Steps*) (1952), and Craig Santos Perez’s Chamorro (Guam) poetry, *from unincorporated territory* [saina] (2010). Graduate students in English, COLT, and ASE are encouraged to join the seminar; a disciplinary mix will enrich our work. Requirements: lead part of one seminar; seminar essay: 20-25 pp. Anyone with suggestions of specific readings is welcome to propose them in advance of the fall semester: johnrowe@usc.edu

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ENGL 620: Literature and Interdisciplinary Studies: Sound Studies
Bruce R. Smith, Mon., 2:00-4:20 pm Course Number 32796D

The burgeoning field of sound studies will give us multiple reference points for considering sound as a factor in cultures, periods, genres, and media. Our guide will be *The Sound Studies Reader* from Routledge (2012), which brings together work on (1) hearing, listening, deafness, (2) spaces, sites, scapes, (3) transduction and recording, (4) collectivities and couplings, (5) the sonic arts, and (6) voices. In the course of reading and discussing this critical work we shall take as test cases Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony*, nineteenth-century American soundscapes, a current film, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, whatever sound art that might be currently accessible in LA, and mashups on YouTube and Vimeo. During the second half of the semester participants in the course will set the agenda by choosing objects of their own choosing, presenting those objects for class discussion, and developing a final paper. One possibility for this final project will be developing a piece of fiction or a group of poems. Along the way participants will be asked to write a critical response to one of the Routledge readings and to write a review of a current instance of sound art or a current film.

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ENGL 660: STUDIES IN GENRE: Shakespeare and the pleasures of tragedy
Rebecca Lemon, Thurs., 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course number 32800D

Richard is an enormous magnification of something we find in ourselves as well. We all think we have reason to reproach Nature and our destiny for congenital and infantile disadvantages; we all demand reparation for early wounds to our narcissism, our self-love.
(Sigmund Freud, "The Exceptions," *Some Character-Types*)

The triumph! again, *put money* after the effect has been fully produced.-- The last Speech, the motive-hunting of motiveless Malignity--how awful! In itself fiendish--while yet he was allowed to bear the divine image, too fiendish for his own steady View.--A being next to Devil--only not quite Devil--& this Shakespeare has attempted-- executed--without disgust, without Scandal!
(Samuel Taylor Coleridge, note in his copy of Shakespeare's *Othello* as he prepares his 1818-19 lectures. In *Lectures 1808-1819 On Literature 2*: 315)

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, Nietzsche and Brecht; and by encountering Shakespearean tragedy in its various forms. After an opening unit on classical tragedy (*Oedipus Rex*, *Bacchae*) we will turn to a study of Shakespeare. In addition to studying his tragedies (*Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*) we will also read plays – such as *Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Winter's Tale* – that follow a tragic trajectory, only to take a radical and arguably problematic turn in the end.

Course Requirements include:

An article-length final paper (20 pages), including an abstract and working bibliography of the final paper due week 10, a draft of final paper due week 12, and the final paper due week 15 **OR** two short papers (10-12 pages), due week 11 and week 15. If you choose to do the two papers you will have a creative option (a poetic or fictional engagement with tragedy and/or Shakespeare in whatever form you choose – we can meet individually to discuss this option, if you are interested).

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ENGL 695: GRADUATE FICTION FORM AND THEORY
Geoff Dyer, Tues, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32802D

In this course we'll look at certain classic examples of the art of fiction. Having done that – having come to recognize great fiction and to understand how we expect fiction to behave we'll then move on to less clear-cut examples. Less clear-cut not in terms of quality but in terms of how we read them, how they thwart our expectations and ideas of how they are supposed to behave. By the end we will have moved entirely into the realm of non-fiction but I suspect we will have different ideas of how, when where - and why - this increasingly permeable border was crossed.

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**ENGL 697: GRADUATE FICTION WRITING WORKSHOP
Aimee Bender, Thurs., 7:00-9:20 p.m. Course Number 32804D**

This course is a workshop, and participants will be expected to write around 100+ pages of fiction over the course of the semester, as well as read and comment on the work of their peers. Risk -- (whatever that means to you), and experimentation is encouraged. We will also read and discuss at least four books-- including work by Lydia Millet, Mary Robison, Jesse Ball, Kobo Abe, and more.

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ENGL 698: GRADUATE POETRY FORM AND THEORY: Poetry & Film, Film & Poetry

Carol Muske-Dukes, Thurs., 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32805D

This course will focus on the connection between filmic (eidetic) imagery & the poetic image. The contrast between Pound's definition of the image and Arnheim's explorations in *Art & Visual Perception* (or *Film as Art*) will be entertained, as well as examination of contemporary "cinematic" influences in recent poetry & in original student writing for the course. We will view Huston's "The Dead", based on James Joyce's short story, Ingmar Bergman's "The Virgin Spring", "The Tree of Life", Terrence Malick & Lee Chang-dong's film (South Korea), "Poetry". Poems for review will include "Swan in Falling Snow" by Denise Levertov (based on photographic images by Mary Randlett) and "poetic" fiction, William Gass' "The Pedersen Kid". Class visitors will include USC School of Cinema professor, Ted Braun, award-winning filmmaker ("Darfur Now") who'll discuss the linkage of poetry & film & School of Cinema MFA candidate Hannah Sanghee Park (recent winner of the Walt Whitman Award for her book of poems, "The Same-Different") will talk about combining poetry and screenwriting. Also visiting: Dede Gardner, co-producer of "The Tree of Life" (also produced "Twelve Years a Slave" and most recently, "Selma", with her partner, Brad Pitt through their Plan B productions.) Also, John Riccitiello, former CEO of "Electronic Arts", will discuss imagery in electronic games. We may also touch on the "carrying over" of imagery in the translation of poetry, as essentially cinematic. Student portfolios.