

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
FALL 2017 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**ENGL 501: INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY AND CULTURAL CRITICISM AND THEORY**

**Kate Flint, Monday, 4:30-6:50 pm Course Number 32770D**

Think of this course as a tool box, a provocation to thought, a chance to experiment with new ideas. We'll be considering what literary study is, and might be today: how on the one hand it continues to be structured by categories – periodization, canonicity – and how on the other it is increasingly interdisciplinary in its methods and its objects of study. We'll discuss its relationship to institutions, including the university/college, and situate it in broader contexts of ideology, citizenship, social justice, resistance, the role of the humanities, and the demands for strategic presentism. We'll ask about literary criticism's close connection to forms of embodied knowledge and experience, as it has been articulated through feminist, queer, crip, and critical race studies. We'll interrogate the role of the personal in literary study, and how we might recognize, assess, develop and incorporate a critical "voice". We will explore types of reading – close, distant, surface, reparative, flimsy – and questions of pleasure, attention, and boredom. We'll ask what we mean when we talk about an "archive," and its relationship to big data and the digital humanities; we'll discuss questions of scale and detail, and we'll explore tensions between the particular and the abstract within literary criticism. We'll think about the materiality of literature and literary practice; ecocriticism and biopolitics; remediation; world literatures and writing for (and reading in) translation; the ordinary and the everyday; space and place; form and style; narration and description, and the speculative.

This is a chance for students on the critical and creative tracks to work together and to consider how their work informs, and will continue to inform, each other's practice. Colleagues whose work bridges the critical and the creative will visit the class to discuss how they see these different aspects of literary writing intersecting.

Throughout the course, we'll also consider, critique and practice various forms of writing that you can expect to use during your time as a graduate student: synopsis of critical argument; review of a recent imaginative work/volume/reading; a proposal for a conference paper. You can also expect to co-facilitate a couple of class discussions, and will be required to play an active part in seminars.

Readings for the class will likely include – but will not be limited to – writing by Emily Apter, Walter Benjamin, Jane Bennett, Michael Bérubé, Fiona Kumari Campbell, Teju Cole, William Cronon, Mark Doty, Rita Felski, Michel Foucault; Henry Louis Gates, Lisa Gitelman, Donna Haraway, Fredric Jameson, Bruno Latour, Henri Lefebvre, Caroline Levine, Heather Love, Sharon Marcus, Franco Moretti, Christopher Newfield, Sianne Ngai, Georges Perec, Naomi Schor, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Gayatri Spivak, Carolyn Steedman, Rebecca Walkowitz, and Raymond Williams.

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**ENGL 510: MEDIEVAL ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURES: Deferred  
Pleasures in Medieval Literature  
David Rollo, Thursday, 4:30-6:50 pm Course number 32789D**

Following her meeting with Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe believed herself to be the privileged participant in a universal economy of remunerative suffering: the more she was slandered, threatened with rape, accused of Lollardy and had chamber pots emptied on her head, the greater the invested reward that awaited her in heaven. Though many critics have dismissed Margery's testimony as no more than the ravings of an addled mind, her preoccupation with investment, accumulation and ever-deferred joy reflects a widespread medieval concern with the deferral of pleasure (often accompanied by a willful pursuit of pain), and this, in turn, reflects a widespread literary strategy of the era whereby narrative closure and the pleasure it may bring are withheld (and, indeed, on occasion denied altogether).

The course will be on, precisely, the reader's implication in narratives of misery, obfuscation, torture and longing. The obvious medieval construct that brings all these themes together has, for better or worse, become known as "courtly love." This, the desire for pleasure that can only ever be pleasurable if its consummation is indefinitely foreclosed, will be the focus of the first third of the term. As background reading we will consider, in translation, a few troubadour lyrics, since, differences in language notwithstanding, the culture of pre-Albigensian Occitania came definitively to influence the next three hundred years of western European literary production. Central to the next couple of weeks will be that massive narrative of lyric desire, *Le Roman de la Rose* (again, not composed in English, but absolutely canonical and exerting a formative influence on Chaucer and Gower). We will read all of Guillaume de Lorris' original (the first 4028 lines of the conjoined text), but will adopt a selective approach to the 17,500 lines of Jean de Meun's apparently (but only apparently) digressive continuation and consider only the discourses of Ami, La Vieille and Genius, as well as the allegory of coition that draws the poem to a close. Some attention will also be given to Jean's debts to Alain de Lille's treatise on written and sexual pleasures, the *De planctu Naturae*.

The middle of the term will be devoted to works by Chaucer (*The Legend of Good Women*, *The Clerk's Tale*, *The Pardoner's Prologue and Tale* and *The Man of Law's Tale*) and Gower (*Confessio Amantis*) all of them performative meditations on narrative poetry and some of them reworkings, in English, of aspects of the *Rose*. Among the topics of analysis will be the themes of digression, deferral, and sadism, and the reader's position vis-à-vis the object of suffering. *The Man of Law's Tale* will also serve as a prelude to that other late-medieval story of ever-impending rape, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, which we will read as a secularized variation on the conventions of female hagiography and analyze alongside some of the more celebrated *Saint's Lives* (certainly Christine and Catherine, perhaps also Euphrosina). Torture and the pornography of ever-deferred martyrdom will be our primary concerns. Finally, all of the themes considered in the earlier part of the term will be reappraised in the light of late medieval Arthurianism, with a particular emphasis on the narrativity of Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* and the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

The major requirements are straightforward and predictable: students will speak in seminars, give a formal presentation and write a fifteen to twenty page paper. There is also a minor requirement, though one that has been added by popular request: readings from Middle English literature will be accompanied by some in-class exercises on Middle English grammar (nothing difficult, just an outline of the differences between the language of Chaucer and the language we speak today). In addition to the texts mentioned above, the reading list will include: Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, *The History of Sexuality* (excerpts); Caroline Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*; Elaine Scarry, *The Body In Pain*; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Gérard Genette, trans. Jane Lewin, *Narrative Discourse*; Andreas Capellanus, trans. John Parry, *The Art of Courtly Love*; Jacques Derrida, *Plato's Pharmacy* (from *Dissemination*).

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**ENGL 610: THEORY AND CRITICISM: "Theory at the End of the World":  
Ecocriticism, Apocalypse, and the Anthropocene  
Devin Griffiths, Tuesday, 2:00 – 4:20 pm, Course number 32877D**

How do we think the end of our world? How might our writing shape the world to come? These questions will be central to our seminar, which will examine major works of ecocriticism, systems thinking, and organic theory to explore how a variety of writers have conceived the world as an integrated ecology, and how such conceptions of the world system inform our attempts to deal with climate change and the dawn of the Anthropocene.

Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru, in their recent account of the new "planetary turn" in ecocritical and postcolonial writing, argue that planetarity is fast becoming the fundamental condition of aesthetic production, because, "for the first time in human history, one single commonality involves all those living on the planet: environmental deterioration as the result of the human consumption of natural resources." In confronting the implications of climate change at the dawn of the Anthropocene, a range of writers have called for new ways to think collectively and interactively about our place in the world, which means grappling with the complex integration of that world as a dynamic system we share with the other species, things, and forces. To articulate this collective, these writers build (sometimes unreflectively) on ecology's organicist formulations, a way of theorizing the "ecosystem" which is derived from Romantic organicism. Our seminar will explore that longer history of thinking about biological and social collectivity, in light of current work by writers like Donna Haraway, Andreas Malm, and Jason Moore, in order to ask: what other forms of collectivity are available today, but also, what forms of *anticollective*, *unintegrating*, and *inorganic* organization were excluded from organic thinking? How might more open models for ecology help us to understand the Anthropocene and what Tim Morton has recently termed the "dark ecology" of our present?

Our seminar will use studies by Haraway, Malm, and Moore to frame readings from nineteenth century science and literature (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Jean Baptiste Lamarck, Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Robert Maxell, Arabella Buckley, Charles Darwin, Ernst Haeckel, and Herbert Spencer), twentieth-century theorists of ecology and ecocriticism (including Rachel Carson, Charles Tansley, Eugene P. Odum, Ursula Heise, Joan Martinez-Allier, Ramachandra Guha, Tim Morton, Isabelle Stengers, Rob Nixon, and Jane Bennet) and systems theory (Karl Marx, Louis Althusser, Antonio Stoppani, Immanuel Wallerstein, Bruno Latour, and Giovanni Arrighi). These critical readings will be explored through our extended readings of three works of modern "cli-fi": Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, Richard Jeffries's *After London*, and Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140*.

As part of the course, seminar participants will contribute to weekly discussions, select and present one additional primary source document from the historical collections of either the Huntington or Clarke libraries, and produce a 15-page critical research paper with bibliography.

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**ENGL 630: STUDIES IN GENDER**

**Maggie Nelson Wednesday, 5:00 – 7:20 pm, Course number 32880D**

Course description is forthcoming

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**ENGL 660: STUDIES IN GENRE**

**Joseph A. Boone, Thursday, 4:30-6:50 pm Course Number 32800D**

What does it mean to read a novel as a “narrative,” in addition to reading it as a work of “fiction”? What does it mean, for that matter, to read a novel as a “novel,” as part of a distinct if relatively new literary genre originating in the early eighteenth century? What are the stakes of reading novels written in English as a transatlantic phenomenon, rather than as part of discrete national traditions? How do various fictional modes—the mannered, the realistic/domestic, the gothic, the satiric, the self-reflexive, the bildungsroman, the historical, among others—interact with and rub off each other in the making of novelistic fiction? These are some of the questions this course will address in its pursuit of three goals: first, to explore what it means to study the novel as a genre; second, to give students some sense of the historical evolution of Anglo-American forms of the novel over time; and third, to expose the class to developments in narrative theory, from Ian Watt and Peter Brooks to Catherine Gallagher and Laura Doyle.

Because I want to direct our thinking and hypotheses about theories of narrative and fiction-making through a direct engagement with some of the more provocative developments in Anglo-American fiction, we’ll read as many novels as we can, interspersing these readings with forays into significant critical works on the novel as well as some by now classic standards. We’ll begin with a selection of pre- or proto-novelistic examples of early eighteenth-century writing straddling the line between the non-fictional and imaginative—such as Fielding’s “The Female Husband” and Defoe’s “The Apparition of Mrs. Veal”—before taking up a series of eighteenth-century novels including Sterne’s Nabokovian *Tristram Shandy*, Smollett’s epistolary and comically picaresque *Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*, Lennox’s deliberately melodramatic send-up of Romance in *The Female Quixote*, and Inchbald’s not-so-simple mother-daughter double-plot *A Simple Story*. Nineteenth-century novels will be selected from among Austen’s “odd-novel-out” *Mansfield Park* (with its nods to Inchbald, *Empire*, and *Cowper*), Charles Brockden Brown’s political-dystopic-gothic *Wieland*, Emily Bronte’s metaphysical-gothic “tale within a tale” *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Bronte’s proto-modernist manipulation of unreliable first-person narration *Villette*, Hawthorne’s equally unreliable first-person *The Blithedale Romance*, Melville’s literally and figuratively perverse *Pierre or the Ambiguities*, and Dickens’ not-so-subtly masochistic “Freudian masterplot” *Great Expectations*. If there’s time, I’d like to end the course with one or two contemporary masterpieces that evoke the entire history of the novel, such as Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* and Doug Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*.

Even though the reading will be weighty, I assure you the pleasures of doing it will be innumerable.

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**ENGL 696: GRADUATE POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP: “Taking Risks & ‘Enlarging the Temple’”**

**Mark Irwin, Friday, 2:00 – 4:20 pm Course Number 32796D**

“Reason forgets, the imagination never,” Peter Handke wrote. In this course we will chart the imagination and the notion that new content requires new form. Using contemporary models, including those of Anne Carson, Camille Dungy, Angie Estes, Peter Gizzi, Jorie Graham, Yusef Komunyakaa, Laura Kasischke, W.S. Merwin, Mary Ruefle, C.D. Wright, and many younger poets, we will engage new poetic strategies and risks in our own work. Critiques will focus on how subject finds form, and how surprise and tension are often found in both language and concept. We will set individual goals and new objectives by risking more of “the self” in the poem, and we will ask how artists distort the world in order to make it more vivid. Memorability, imagination, and emotional amplitude will be stressed, and many examples from contemporary painting, music, and science will be applied. Numerous essays on craft and form will also be discussed, and rewriting will play an integral part of this workshop. A final part of this course will entail archival research for a “poem of witness” (human/animal/or ecological) inspired during the class.

“If you find that you no longer believe,  
try enlarging the temple.” --W.S. Merwin

**Tentative Reading List:**

Anne Carson: *Float, Men in the Off Hours, and Plainwater*.

Camille Dungy. *Trophic Cascade*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2017.

Angie Estes. *Enchantee*. Oberlin: Oberlin College Press, November 2013.

*A Broken Thing: Poets on the Line*. Rosko & Vander Zee eds. Iowa City: University Iowa Press, 2011. ISBN 13: 978-1-60938-054-0

Peter Gizzi, *Archeophonics*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2016.

Peter Gizzi. *In Defense of Nothing: Selected Poems*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2014. ISBN-13: 978-0819574305

Jorie Graham: *From the New World: Poems 1976-2014*. NY: Ecco Press, 2014.

Laura Kasischke. *Space, in Chains*. Port Townsend: Copper Canyon Press, 2012.

Max Ritvo. *Four Reincarnations*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2017.

Mary Ruefle. *Selected Poems*. Seattle: Wave Books, 2010.

*Selections from the poetry of Ashbery, Gander, Komunyakaa, Merwin, & C.D. Wright.*

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**ENGL 697: GRADUATE FICTION WRITING WORKSHOP  
David Treuer, Monday, 2:00 – 4:20 p.m. Course Number 32802D**

Course description not available

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**ENGL 697: GRADUATE FICTION WRITING WORKSHOP**

**Aimee Bender, Tuesday, 6:00-8:20 pm Course Number 32804D**

This course will be run as a workshop, and depending on class size, participants will bring work three or four times over the course of the semester. Emphasis will be on creating a space of exploration and constructive support so that the writing can continue to surprise the writer. We will also pick a few books to read and discuss as well. Possible candidates are *Transit* by Rachel Cusk, *Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders, the new Ben Marcus anthology of short stories, stories by Helen Oyeyemi, Joy Williams, and Borges.