

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
FALL 2018 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

ENGL 501: INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY AND CULTURAL CRITICISM AND THEORY: History and Trends in Graduate English Study
Devin Griffiths, Monday, 2:00-4:20 pm Course number 32770

How did we get here, and what are we supposed to do now?

Rather than surveying the history of critical theory, we will be thinking about the wider history of academic thought, and asking what its future might be.

This seminar gives a practical and historical introduction to graduate literary study. First, it's a toolbox, crammed full of advice on how to think about and write about the humanities. We'll talk about the basic tools of literary study, from writing academic articles and conference talks, to using archives and digital resources. We'll also be thinking about voice and ethos, the styles and aims of literary study, from recent trends in critical theory and practice (including the Anthropocene, autotheory, affect studies, digital humanities, strategic presentism and post-critique), to thinking about the forms of networking and professionalization – on and off-line – that structure the business of being an academic.

But we'll also explore how that business came to be thought of as a business, and where it is going. What is the history of the modern university? What are the roles and functions that make up its daily activities? Where did English departments come from? What is the nature of the university's corporate turn? And where is it headed? From alt-ac to the public humanities, we'll be exploring the variety of approaches both to the future of academic study, and the various ways that graduate degrees are used, both on campus and in the wider world. Throughout, we'll be studying the university, graduate study, and our seminar as ongoing experiments -- invitations to think creatively about what graduate study can do.

Required Books: Eric Hayot, *Elements of Academic Style*, Gregory Colon Semenza, *Graduate Study for the 21st Century* (2nd edition. Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010), Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Recommended: Stephen Eric Bronner, *Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), eds. Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004)

Topics: Academic Writing, The History of Universities and Arts & Sciences Institutions, The Institutionalization of Creative Writing, Critical theory, Autotheory & the personal turn, Alt/Ac and the Public Humanities, Globalization and World Literature, Digital Humanities and Critical Media Studies, Disciplinarity, Archives and Book History , Professionalization and Networking.

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ENGL 520: RENAISSANCE ENGLISH LITERATURES AND CULTURES: On Words
Rebecca Lemon, Tuesday, Thursday, 12:30 – 1:50 pm Course number 32793D

Polonius: "What do you read, my lord?"
Hamlet: "Words, words, words."

Hamlet: "This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,
And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,
A scullion!"

Hamlet's response seems at once dismissive and exhausted. And his attitude to words is indeed famously vexed: if words might move him to tears, he also condemns himself for the response. Words are the province, so his argument problematically reasons, of the "whore," "drab," and "scullion." This course will, by contrast, take words seriously, investigating their etymologies and their histories in order to illuminate the texts they live in. Drawing on Raymond Williams's approach to "keywords," this class begins by investigating the recent flourishing of scholarship on words, following what Jeffrey Masten has called a "renewed historical philology." In his appeal to attend to words and their histories, he writes, "We have not sufficiently attended to *etymology*—the history of words (the history *in* words)." Then, energized by readings and manifestos by Williams, Masten, Roland Greene, William Empson, and others, we will to begin our primary investigations: studying keywords in early modern literature. We will concentrate each week on a play or poem(s) in tandem with a critical piece that illuminates our keyword. Beginning with *Richard III*, we will study the words "now," "determined," and (following Ramie Targoff's essay on the play), "amen." For *Othello*, keywords include "possession" and "delate" (following the work of Paul Yachnin on possession and Patricia Parker on delation/dilation). Our study of *The Merchant of Venice* will concentrate on the words "bond," "conversion," and "blood" (reading the work of Amanda Bailey on bonds, and Janet Adelman on blood). For *Twelfth Night* we will consider the word "baffle" (reading Adam Zucher on this term and phenomenon). For *The Tempest*, we will study "wonder," "slave," and "service" (next to work by Mary Nyquist on slavery and tyranny). In a week on Shakespeare's sonnets, I invite you to select our keywords. Indeed, as the course unfolds, I am open to your own reading interests, as we decide what keywords we study, in what texts. This course will also incorporate your voices in the form of your presentations on keywords of your selecting. Assignments will include a long critical paper; or two shorter papers; or, for some of you, a shorter paper and a creative piece that is built out of your investigations or engagements with keyword(s).

Readings will include selections from:

Anthony Grafton, *Worlds made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West* (2011)

Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976; 2014)

Roland Greene, *Five Words: Critical Semantics in the Age of Shakespeare and Cervantes* (2013)

William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951; 1995)

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Jeffrey Masten, *Queer Philologies: Sex, Language, and Affect in Shakespeare's Time* (2016)

Primary texts include:

Richard III, *Othello*, *The Tempest*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, and likely *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, and/or Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. But we might also include Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, John Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* or *Holy Sonnets*, Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, or even Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Indeed, we could range into more contemporary readings, especially if they resonate with our Shakespeare plays in some way. I am leaving a good portion of the syllabus open for our group to select and design together.

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ENGL 536: LITERATURES AND CULTURES OF THE VICTORIAN PERIOD: From Bleak House to To the Lighthouse: Form, Feminism and Law in the Victorian Novel, or, Living in a World Made of Paper
Hilary Schor, Tuesday, 4:30 – 6:50 pm, Course number 32882D

How accustomed we have become to the Victorian novel! We can still recognize the sheer savagery of Oliver Twist, the experimental layering of The Pickwick Papers, even the generic clashes of Mary Barton, the disruptive energy of Wuthering Heights and the propulsive movements of Dombey and Son. But we have succumbed too easily, I suspect, to the happy marriages and domestic settlements of the novels that follow the Hungry Forties, the Chartists in the streets and the madwomen in the attic. Once Jane Eyre reassured us (“Reader, I married him”) we assume that the novel settled down with her. A class in the Victorian novel is the last place we would go to find post-modern, radical, sexually divergent and legally unstable explanations of persons, property and plot, right? Even supposing...

Let the novel do it for us. “I have a great deal of difficulty in beginning my portion of these pages, for I know I am not clever.” ““Changed hotel, very bad, impudent clerk, address here. Taken sister’s girl, died last year, go to Europe, two sisters, quite independent.”” “Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty.” “The principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other...” – Wait! That is not a novel! Or is it? For, as John Stuart Mill goes on to say in the second sentence of The Subjection of Women, “The very words necessary to express the task I have undertaken, show how arduous it is.”

This seminar is not designed only or even primarily for students of the 19th century novel, though it is going to make them happy. It takes as its motivation this “arduousness,” the connection between legal formalism, parliamentary reform and the form of the novel – or rather, the attempt of persons, living, legal or fictional, to find a home in a world made of words. The argument of this class is that the novel did not stop changing after “the industrial reformation of English fiction,” in Catherine Gallagher’s memorable phrase, but went on mutating through subsequent political, social, sexual and legal revolutions. It was all upheaval, all the time, across genre, gender and every (great) expectation. As my opening examples suggest, we will take as our core texts Charles Dickens’s Bleak House, Henry James’s The Portrait of a Lady, Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse, and add to them other uncomfortable houses of fiction: The Small House at Allington, Howards End and the ultimate novel of homelessness, Daniel Deronda, which ends by unhousing everybody, sailing into several different and incompatible futures. We will draw on historical readings from William Blackstone’s Commentaries on English Law and subsequent critiques by Jeremy Bentham and Barbara Bodichon Smith; on theories of property and personhood, including C.B. Macpherson and Walter Benn Michaels; narrative theorists from Roland Barthes to D.A. Miller and Gerard Genette; feminist critics from Frances Ferguson to Catherine Gallagher and Ariella Azoulay; and theorists of literary form including Caroline Levine, Sandra Macpherson, Sianne Ngai and Eugenie Brinkema. Yet as we range from the subjection of women to the expansion of the suffrage, from the Crimean War to World War One, from workers marching to women dying in the streets, from theory to practice and back again, we will follow the forms of fiction, remembering always, as D.A. Miller quotes Dickens, “Bleak House has an exposed sound” – or, as he further quotes Queen Victoria, “I never feel quite at home when reading a Novel...”

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**ENGL 580: 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURES AND CULTURES:
Transnationalism and 19C U.S. Nationalism
John Carlos Rowe Wednesday, 5:00 – 7:20 pm, Course number 32786D**

This seminar looks at canonical and non-canonical U.S. literature and culture as a response to U.S. imperialism in the period of nation-building. The paradox that U.S. nationalism is deeply *transnational* is explained simply by the fact that the United States legitimated itself as a nation by immediately turning to a wide variety of colonial projects inside North America and on a global scale that by the end of the century, marked by the Spanish-American and the Philippine-American wars, had been systemized into what we term “imperialism.” The seminar will provide excellent coverage of the main nineteenth-century literary classics – selections from Emerson, Margaret Fuller’s *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, Whitman’s poetry (selected), Henry James’s *Daisy Miller*, and selections from Henry Adams (*The Education* and *Tahiti*) – all of which help support popular notions of U.S. nationalism. We will also consider lesser known works that will transform our understanding of these canonical authors and texts – Martin Delany’s *Blake, or the Huts of America*, Frederick Douglass’ *The Heroic Slave*, Sarah Winnemucca’s *Life among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, and selections from Sui Sin Far, all of which challenge the existing boundaries of U.S. nationalism in the period. Requirements: each seminar participant will lead the discussion in one part of a seminar, submit a 3-5 pp. proposal for a seminar essay, deliver a brief progress report on the seminar essay, and complete a seminar essay (20-25 pp.).

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ENGL 599: SPECIAL TOPICS: Latinx Aesthetics

Elda Maria Roman Thursday, 4:30 – 7:00 pm, Course number 32885D

This course will explore the *forms* of Latinidad in multiple ways. First, how do we understand the formal elements in Latinx literature and cultural production? That is, how do we analyze literary and cultural works and are any formal strategies and narrative traditions ethnically specific? Relatedly, in what forms is Latinidad rendered legible, considering that Latinxs comprise a heterogeneous population with variations in national origin, time and circumstance of migration, citizenship status, race, class, and regional location? To answer these questions, we will read primary and secondary works showcasing a range of representations and theorizations, giving students a sense of the Latinx literary tradition as well as foundational and emerging scholarship. Designed to help students develop expertise in Latinx cultural studies broadly, this course will discuss issues such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, feminism, transnationalism, media studies, and comparative ethnic studies.

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****ENGL 695: GRADUATE FICTION FORM AND THEORY (NONFICTION)**
Maggie Nelson, Tuesday, 4:30 – 6:50 p.m. Course Number 32803D

This will be the inaugural graduate seminar in form and theory for the nonfiction track. We will be examining a wide range of nonfiction forms, from memoir to journalism to poetic prose to criticism to experimental scholarship. We will discuss issues of form, ethics, style, and audience. This is primarily a reading and discussion seminar, but we will also try our hand at a few nonfiction experiments. Students from other tracks who wish to learn about an array of nonfiction possibilities for their writing are welcome.

**This course will give preference to Creative Writing students in the nonfiction track. Other English graduate students who wish to enroll should get in contact with Janalynn Bliss, to be added on the waitlist. jbliss@dornsife.usc.edu

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ENGL 697: GRADUATE FICTION WRITING WORKSHOP
Danzy Senna, Tuesday, 2:00 – 4:20 p.m. Course Number 32804D

In “Lightness,” Italo Calvino discusses the opposing forces of lightness in weight in fiction. In this graduate workshop, we will explore the idea of lightness in our own work. How are the white spaces and omissions as much a part of the story as what is spoken? How can they allow for movement and tension? And how much can we withhold while retaining complexity and depth? Along with your own work, we will look at some contemporary writers who illustrate a spirit of heavy lightness, including Lydia Davis, JM Coetzee and Rachel Cusk. We will also read selected *Paris Review* interviews that include Toni Morrison, Amy Hempel and James Baldwin.

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**ENGL 698: GRADUATE POETRY FORM AND THEORY: Poetry as Séance:
modernism, ghosts and ruins**
Susan McCabe, Wednesday, 5:00- 7:20 pm Course Number 32805D

We will read deeply from several “modernists” (H.D and Eliot, namely) who during World War II especially take a “vatic” stance in their writing. Who are they writing to? My sense is that many poets in this turning-point in the twentieth-century were writing to the dead and for the dead. How does such a poem find new permutations? What are the difficulties in writing with “ancient rubrics” (H.D) in mind? We will read H.D’s *Trilogy* and Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, Toomer’s *Cane*, and Merrill’s *Book of Ephraim*.

What are the dangers and attractions of the vatic stance? As we read H.D, Eliot, Toomer, Sitwell, and Merrill, we will write poems back to them as well as explore how “formal” invention depends upon cultural or political context. How does modernism’s “failure” to “make it new” stimulate us to new relationships with our living and our dead? What happened to the “new criticism”?

A presentation, a 10-12 page creative essay, and at least five new poems responding to readings. Along with the poets, we will read at least one creative-critical long essay— Helene Cixous’ *Phillipines*. Essays by Eliot, and a novel on séances by H.D (*The Majic Ring*) will also be interspersed.