



FALL 2020

GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

USCDornsife
Department of English



History of Literary and Cultural Theory

Handley, William
Nelson, Maggie

T | 2-4:20P.M. SECTION: 32773

This course will introduce first-year graduate students to each other and to literary and cultural studies. We will think creatively and critically about what we do as writers and academics and about what literature, culture, and interpretation are. By reading and discussing a range of genres, rather than a survey of literary theory, we will reflect on the profession's past and present so as to prepare each of you for an active and meaningful engagement in your graduate work, in your communities, and in humanistic professions.

Theories of Race, Class, and Gender:

From Representation to Decolonization

Nguyen, Viet

M | 4-7:20P.M.

SECTION: 32776

Representation has been a crucial aesthetic, cultural, and political concept for minorities of all kinds in the United States and elsewhere. In literary and other artistic contexts, representation has been a key demand for marginalized populations who wish to see more stories about themselves, as well as more images, reflections, etc. "Representation matters!" has become a rallying cry, and the political stakes are high, given how the opposition to such a demand is sometimes couched as a defense of the Western canon, culture, and even civilization against the inclusion of artistically unworthy works (and the culturally unworthy populations these works represent).

A "representative" aesthetic that has been called "multicultural," "ethnic," "minority," "diverse," and more makes significant political

claims about equality and justice. But is representation enough? Would "decolonization" be a more effective term that draws attention to how the problems of representation for minorities of all kinds cannot be separated from the history of colonization? What would a decolonizing aesthetic that includes an engagement with the material history of colonization (warfare, land appropriation, sexual violence, labor exploitation, geographical marginalization, and the symbolic violence of erasure) look like?

This course attempts to answer these questions by beginning with some of the core texts on colonization and anticolonialism by Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Edward Said, Sylvia Wynter, Amílcar Cabral, Gayatri Spivak, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. The

contradictions of the "postcolonial" intellectual are explored in work by Spivak and Rey Chow, while the uses and limits of multiculturalism and its representative politics are taken on by Charles Taylor and Nancy Fraser. Subsequent units look at Native Hawaiian sovereignty and Asian settler colonialism in Hawaii and the rest of the United States (Haunani Kay Trask, Dean Saranillio, Candace Fujikane, Manu Karuka); colonization and Native American resistance (Glen Coulthard, Jodi Byrd, Steven Salaita, linkages to Palestine and the activism around Standing Rock and other events); Latin American and Latinx decolonization (Walter Dignolo, Maria Lugones); Asian decolonization (Kuan-hsing Chen); and the challenges for decolonization entailed by rejecting mastery (Julietta Singh) and embracing nonviolence (Judith Butler). Besides scholars, some writers and artists who take on decolonization will also appear, possibly including Carlos Bulosan, Jessica Hagedorn, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Kamel Daoud, Natalie Diaz, Gloria Anzaldúa, Deborah Miranda.

All texts and authors are subject to change. Look for a more detailed syllabus shortly before the start of the semester.



ENGL-535

Literatures and Cultures of the Romantic Period

Russett, Meg

TH | 2-4:20P.M.

SECTION: 32782

Recent debates in critical theory have placed renewed emphasis on the concept of the aesthetic, not as an alternative to politics, but as a mode of ethical/political engagement itself. Responding to this critical turn, but not beholden to it, we will focus on Romantic-era philosophical and literary texts which either foreground or theorize aesthetic experience. The emphasis will fall on texts written in English, but we will also make forays from time to time into the German philosophical tradition

from which the modern sense of the aesthetic derives. English-language works will include: Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Notions of the Sublime and the Beautiful and Reflections on the Revolution in France*; William Gilpin, *Observations on...Picturesque Beauty*; William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *The [First] Book of Urizen*; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*; William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* (with its prefaces) and *Essays Upon Epitaphs*; Jane Austen,

Northanger Abbey; Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*; or, *The New Prometheus*; Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defense of Poetry*; William Hazlitt, selected essays and *Liber Amoris*; or, the *New Pygmalion*. These will be supplemented by shorter selections, in translation, from Lessing's *Laocoon*; the Schlegel circle's *Atheneum*; Kant's third *Critique* and his earlier essay "Observation on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime"; Goethe's *Kunst und Altertum*; and Schiller's "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry." There will be a fair bit of contemporary theory thrown into the mix. Written work for the seminar will be geared toward the writing of an article-length final essay, with short (two- or three-page) close readings due at three-week intervals throughout the semester.



19th Century British Literatures and Cultures:

Writing Cultural History 1880-1915

Flint, Kate

T | 9:30-11:50A.M.

SECTION: 32784

What does it mean to write the cultural history of a discrete period – in this case, 1880-1915? During this period, England was at the center of global networks that ensured the circulation of people and ideas, capital and culture, and material goods. Excitement was generated by contact with the new and the different; by the idea of the “modern.” On the other hand, many aspects of national culture were inward looking, parochial, and blindly complacent to broader changes in the world – or rather, were seeking to pretend these changes are not happening, or were anxious about such change. Literature and art were simultaneously experimental – looking to break with verbal and visual traditions; speculating about the future – and steeped in nostalgia. Both stances were modes of acknowledging and addressing the unprecedented amount of social and cultural change that marked these thirty-five years. This course will address some pressing questions in literary and visual studies: periodization, chronology and

asynchronicity; regional, national and global identities and connectivity; the politics of race and gender; form, style, medium, and materiality; the impact of scientific and mechanical innovation; the natural world and environmental change.

In 1896, literary critic George Saintsbury claimed that it was his constant aim to take an “achromatic” view of literature – by which he meant as objective an account as possible. By contrast, I start from the position that all our readings, spectatorship, and histories are deeply colored by our own personalities, intellectual and political positions and prejudices, and the contexts in which we encounter cultural work. To this end, I’m going to organize the course in the most achromatic way possible: expect classes on black and white, blue, yellow, and green, silver, grey and gold.

Primary texts are likely to include works by Oscar Wilde, Arthur Conan Doyle, Arthur Symons,

Henry James, Charlotte Mew, May Sinclair, Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf, and examples by writers who are commonly referred to as “new women,” “decadents,” “symbolists,” “Imagists,” and “Georgian poets” – even as we’ll also be questioning the problems and limitations that are set up by established labels and categories when it comes to writing cultural history with fresh eyes. In visual terms, we’ll range from Newlyn School realism to Vorticism, by way of photography and early cinema, the Arts and Crafts movement, illustrated magazines, and suffrage pageantry.



(L) John Singer Sargeant,
“Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose,”
1885

(R) Wyndham Lewis,
“Portrait of an Englishwoman,”
1913 or 1914





ENGL-593

Practicum in Teaching English and Narrative Studies

Freeman, Chris

W | 5-6:20P.M.

SECTION: 32793

English 593 is a course designed to help advanced PhD candidates with their teaching and with their shift from graduate school to first job. We will do some reading and discussions around those issues, but we will spend more time talking about your teaching and your work as a scholar. You'll observe members of the English department, watching them teach from your point of view as a TEACHER, rather than as a student. The course will be a workshop on

the profession; we will have guest speakers who will also share their wisdom. The class will meet seven or eight times during the semester. You'll keep a journal based on your teaching, our sessions, your reading, etc. There is main text, *THE PROFESSOR IS IN* (Karen Kelsky, 2015)--we will work on this book both fall and spring semester.

ENGL-610

Theory and Criticism

The Politics of Aesthetics/The Aesthetics of Politics

Jackson, Zakiyyah Iman

TH | 4:30-6:50P.M.

SECTION: 32810

The aesthetic is currently a lively site of contestation and dissent due to recent challenges, to received aesthetic categories and tastes, issuing from minoritized subjects. Highlighting the burgeoning aesthetic renaissance in black studies and queer of color critique, the texts in this course reposition aesthetic experience by foregrounding its centrality to the politics of racialization and the ordering of

difference more generally. Traversing the haptic, olfactory, gustatory, visual, sonic, synesthetic, and anesthetic, this emergent critique seeks to demonstrate that sensation and its evaluation are relational and a crucial determinant of value and therefore a matter of politics, economy, and integral to the life and death struggles of minoritized subjects.

Multicultural Literary Studies: *Latinx Literature and Cultural Production*

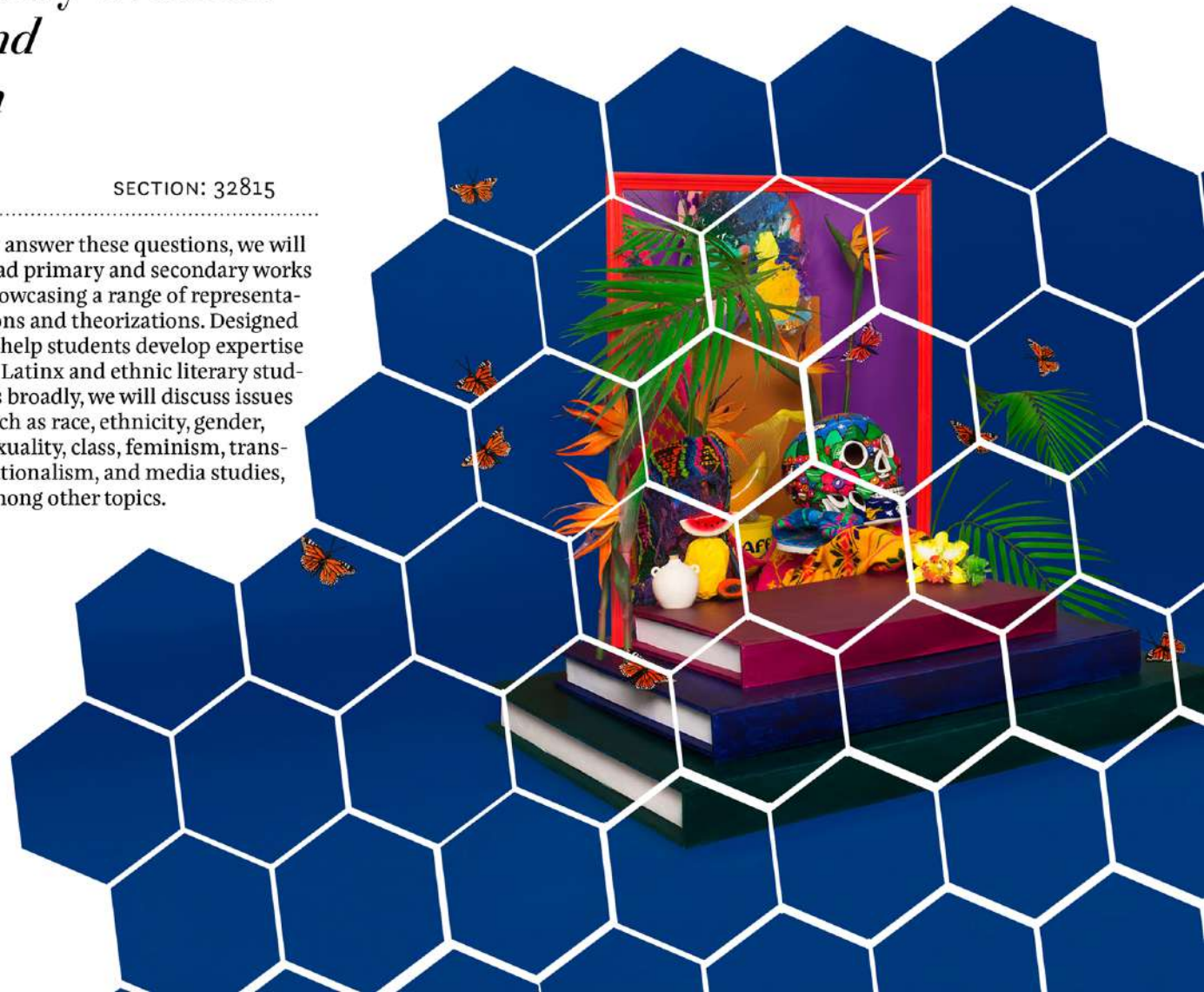
Román, Elda María

W | 4:30-6:50P.M.

SECTION: 32815

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. Designed to help students develop expertise in Latinx and ethnic literary studies broadly, we will discuss issues such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, feminism, transnationalism, and media studies, among other topics.



Studies in Genre:

The Novel as Genre: Histories and Theories

Boone, Joseph

T | 4:30-6:50P.M

SECTION: 32816

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? 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 Carolyn Levine.

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 proto-novelistic examples of early eighteenth-century writing straddling the line between the non-fictional, the “real,” and the imaginative—Fielding’s “The Female Husband” and Defoe’s “The Apparition of Mrs. Veal” and two female pirate “histories”—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*, and Lennox’s deliberately melodramatic send-up of the Romance form *The Female Quixote*. Among nineteenth-century novels we will select among

Austen’s “odd-novel-out” *Mansfield Park* Charles Brockden Brown’s political-dystopic-gothic *Wieland*, Charlotte Brontë’s proto-modernist manipulation of unreliable first-person narration in *Villette*, Hawthorne’s equally unreliable first-person *The Blithedale Romance*, and Melville’s literally and figurative perverse *Pierre or the Ambiguities*. If there’s time, I’d like to bookend the course with two contemporary masterpieces that evoke the entire history of the novel, 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. Writing assignments include one short paper (6 pages) and a full-blown critical essay (12-15 pages). Every week will have an assigned class recorder who takes notes and writes them up in for distribution to the rest of the class, so you together are compiling a journal of responses to and musings on our weekly readings. Sometimes students submit these as journal-like entries, sometimes as mini-essays or subjective reflections, sometimes as creative ripostes to or dramatizations of the work(s) at hand (for instance, composing a series of letters among classmates to reflect the discussion of the epistolary novel!).

ENGL-694

Graduate Nonfiction Writing Workshop

Treuer, David

M | 4:30-6:50P.M.

SECTION: 32824

Life may very well be “one thing after another” and text “one word after another” but of the two only texts are scripted—life is, for better or worse, a series of accidents. Creative non-fiction is a vast genre and a tricky practice. Ranging from scholarly essays to travel writing and personal reflection 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 into written narrative. These “true” narratives are meant to move, educate, convince, sway, and transport us. This workshop will focus on how narratives of non-fiction work and then we will write our own. This is predominantly a workshop-style course: you will spend most of your time creating and improving your own work with your peers. The goal is to create at least two stand-alone essays and to radically revise one of them as a final project.

ENGL-696

Graduate Poetry Writing Workshop

St. John, David

TH | 4:30-6:50P.M.

SECTION: 32826

What does it mean if we talk of “The Poet in the World” instead of “The Poet and the World”? What do we expect from a poet’s work? Do we prefer “experience mediated by the imagination” or “the imagination mediated by experience”? (On this issue, see J. Hillis Miller on Wallace Stevens.) What is the relationship between any poet’s poetry and their essays or prose reflections? This course will be run on a workshop basis. The basic reading list includes: Tom Sleight’s *House of Fact, House of Ruin* and *The Land Between Two Rivers: Writing in an Age of Refugees*; Jane Hirshfield’s *Ledger* and *Ten Windows: How Great Poems Transform the World*; and Carolyn Forché’s *The Lateness of the World* and *What You Have Heard Is True*. Additional class readings will be suggested/determined by class participants.

ENGL-697

Graduate Fiction Writing Workshop

Senna, Danzy

W | 2-4:20P.M.

SECTION: 32827

Amy Hempel once said in an interview: “Fiction is logical.” How do we go about restoring logic to our narratives through the delicate work of characterization, scene and world-building? When and why might we resist this idea of logic in our work? This is all to say we will be examining the art and technique of great storytelling. Students will be required to turn in sixty pages of original work and critique the works of their peers. I will assign readings tailored to the needs of specific student work.

