

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
FALL 2013 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**ENGL 501: HISTORY OF LITERARY AND CULTURAL THEORY: INTRODUCTION
TO CRITICAL METHODS**

Joseph A. Boone, Mon., 4:30-6:50 pm Course Number 32770D

This course, taken by all entering Ph.D. students in English (including literary critics and creative writers alike), serves as an introduction to a range of critical communities, from the communities of writers/theorists/artists we will engage in our readings, to the community we build in our class, to the larger communities that composes our profession. Hence, a central goal of English 501 is to foster a convivial yet simultaneously challenging atmosphere in order to shape an entering class of as-yet-unknown individuals into a working group of intellectual colleagues and peers. As part of this process, I will no doubt assign a couple of literary case-studies (possibly Melville's *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd*) through which to explore some fundamental concepts in literary and cultural theory. Along the way, we'll be (a) asking what's "in," what's "out," and what's at stake in deciding what's in and out at different epochs in literary/cultural criticism; (b) expanding our knowledge of the research methodologies and facility in using the resources, from the textual to the archival, that shape contemporary literary scholarship; and (c) learning about current faculty scholarship and the dissertation projects your peers are developing. Readings, discussions, practicums, class activities, and presentations by guest visitors will be complemented by assignments including class presentations, response papers, and a variety of other writing assignments.

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**ENGL 510: MEDIEVAL ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CULTURES: Deferred Pleasures in Medieval Literature
David Rollo, Thurs., 4:30-6:50 pm Course Number 32778D**

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

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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 Revisited*; Andreas Capellanus, trans. John Parry, *The Art of Courtly Love*; Jacques Derrida, *Plato's Pharmacy* (from *Dissemination*).

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ENGL 580: 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURES AND CULTURES: U.S. Modernisms

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

Half the seminar will be devoted to the backgrounds to U.S. modernism in Whitman's and Dickinson's late-romantic poetry, Twain's (Pudd'nhead Wilson) realism, and Gilman's ("The Yellow Wall-Paper") and Sui Sin Far's (Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Stories) adaptations of literary naturalism. In the second half of the seminar, we will then study examples of four versions of U.S. literary modernism deeply influenced by these predecessors (either the movements or the authors or both): aesthetic or so-called "high" modernism (Ezra Pound [Hugh Selwyn Mauberley], T.S. Eliot [The Waste Land], and Gertrude Stein [Three Lives]); the Harlem Renaissance (W. E. B. DuBois [The Souls of Black Folk]); Left culture of the CPUSA (Rukeyser [The Book of the Dead]) and Mexican Marxism (José Clemente Orozco's frescoes [The Epic of America]); the social criticism and cultural expression of the pan-Indian movement of the 1930s (Black Elk Speaks). We will try to assess the complementarity and conflict among these different backgrounds and versions of U.S. literary modernism, as well as consider their respective influences on subsequent political and cultural movements. While considering some of the transnational dimensions of "U.S. Modernisms" both across the Atlantic and within the Americas, we will also treat a good range of canonical "modernist" works in the period 1865-1940. Requirements: lead the discussion of part of one seminar (probably with another member of the seminar); complete a seminar essay of approximately 25 pages or an equivalent project.

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**ENGL 640: INDIVIDUAL WRITERS: Returning in, to, with, and through
Shakespeare**

Bruce R. Smith, Wed., 2:00-4:20 pm Course Number 32798D

King Lear, a script first performed toward the middle of Shakespeare's career, will provide the entry point for an exploration of "the motif of the return" in Shakespeare's plays as well as for a consideration of "the return" as a motive in contemporary criticism, with respect not only to Shakespeare but to objects in all periods and cultures. We shall consider "the new philology" (words and syntax as indices of cognitive functioning), "the new bibliography" (the political, economic, aesthetic, and cognitive implications of different forms of media), "the new materialism" (Marx without the promised revolution), "the new phenomenology" (the universalizing assumptions of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty adjusted to historical and cultural differences), and "the new poetics" (aesthetics informed by materialism, cognitive theory, and phenomenology). Articles in special issues of *PMLA* (125.4, 2010) and *Criticism* 54.3, 2012) will help us find our bearings. Although play scripts and poems by Shakespeare will provide test cases for this exploration of new critical practices, participants with interests in other periods and authors will have the opportunity to pursue those interests in their final projects.

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ENGL 620: LITERATURE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES: Victorian visual culture and its afterlife

Kate Flint, Tues., 2:00-4:20 pm Course Number 32796D

This course will explore a number of different aspects of Victorian aesthetic production and the visual environment, whether directly made visible to the eye, or evoked in verbal form. We'll consider representations of the Victorian city, and the impact of different forms of mobility and technology. We'll look at modes of display, from shop windows to exhibitions and galleries to posters and advertising. Britain's role as an imperial power, and the export and import of material goods - and their impact on art, design, and imagery - will play a central role. Our frames of reference will encompass both "high" and "low" culture - from cartoons to the art on the walls of the Grosvenor Gallery; illustrations in the popular press and the democratization of photography and the exhibits at the Great Exhibition; fiction of contemporary life and Renaissance Florence; medievalism and Buddhism. We will consider conventions of looking and describing, Victorian theories of sight, vision, and affect, and the vocabulary of spectatorship.

In this course, we'll consider such topics as the experience of time, place, space, and event; the nature of objects/things; the power and limitations of institutions; modes of description and organizing knowledges; the politics of gender; and publics and counter-publics. We'll be exploring the oscillation between a preoccupation with the modern, and with progress, on the one hand, and nostalgia, melancholia, and pessimism, on the other, that characterized the period - a period perennially concerned with defining itself through style. What, indeed, we will be asking, was "Victorian style," or styles, and how might one trace these across both visual and verbal genres? In the final weeks of the course, we'll discuss the backlash against Victorian styles as expressed within certain strands of English modernism, and the more recent revival of interest, and re-appropriation of the period to be found in neo-Victorianism.

Throughout the course, Victorian and early C20th works of imaginative literature (including Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, Alfred Tennyson, *The Idylls of the King*, George Eliot, *Romola*, the poetry of Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Henry James, *The Princess Casamassima*, Rudyard Kipling, Kim, D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*) will be placed in relation to contemporary prose (including John Ruskin, Walter Pater, William Morris, Oscar Wilde, Vernon Lee, Roger Fry), recent critical and historical writing (by, for example, Isobel Armstrong, Caroline Arscott, Rachel Teukolsky, Christopher Reed), and theoretical pieces (Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre). We will make at least two trips (outside of class time) to the Huntington and to the Getty, to look at visual materials.

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ENGL 660: STUDIES IN GENRE: Narrative Theory and the Making of Fiction: Bleak House, or Why Do We Read Novels?

Hilary Schor, Mon., 2:30-4:20 p.m. Course number 32800D

It is one of the minor wonders of the world that people go on not only writing but reading novels -- long novels, short novels, old novels, new novels, good novels, bad novels. They watch films and serial TV shows and read graphic novels and comic strips and when in doubt, they tell stories, and not all of them are lies. Why? This seminar takes the question of the novel, novelistic form, the social uses of fiction and the vast expanse of narrative theory seriously. It does so unexpectedly by devoting an enormous amount of its energy to a single novel, Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-3), which we will read twice: once, quickly, all the way through, and the second time slowly, as it was originally written, in number parts. Accompanying this experiment in serial fiction will be a series of other kinds of reading, including such classic narrative theorists as Roland Barthes, Gerard Genette and Peter Brooks, feminist critics, including Teresa deLauretis and Susan Winnett, theorists of objects and desires, most prominently Susan Stewart, and recent works on narrative theory and probability, narrative and games of chance, coincidence and counterfactuals, temporality and the end of history. All of these things are in *Bleak House* too, of course, as are dinosaurs, decaying bodies, bastard daughters, orphans, drug addicts, adulteresses and vampires. Out of the miasma of Victorian publishing history, the novel of the streets, the funeral pyre of the law and the pencil scribbles of lost women, we will attempt to generate our own ideas of why fiction matters -- and to illuminate this quest, we will also read some contemporary re-workings of Dickens, including TV adaptations, science fiction novels (Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age*), a graphic novel (Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*) and the most lonely orphan novel ever written, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. This class is designed for any writer or reader of fiction, for people who want to discover the ways literary theory illuminates not only the forms of fiction but the dark corners of our own lives, and for people whose idea of fun is being lost in an alternative reality invented by an uncanny genius who has been dead for 140 years, but who comes to life like the unconscious or like your own story coming back to you whenever you turn a page of this book... London, Michaelmas term lately over, and The Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall ... Begin the world again, meet a megalosaurus in the streets, read a great novel, think about why fiction matters, or just learn some cool new facts -- this is a seminar that will be very much what you want it to be because, like *Bleak House* the house and *Bleak House* the novel, it will have a little bit of everything in it, and it will surprise all of us collectively at every turn.

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**ENGL 696: GRADUATE POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP: Series, Sequences, & the parts of a whole (or the parts of a part)
Susan McCabe, Thurs., 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32803D**

John Lowther writes of Jack Spicer's avant-garde "serial poems"

"In addition to the notion of dictation is Spicer's idea of the "serial poem." Much could be said about what he means by serial poem. Often he uses it to mean that the poem is written as a series of events, i.e. that he writes one line then the next, then the next (He speaks in the lectures some place about having to wait hours upon hours for the next line to arrive) instead of 'conceiving' the poem and then writing different parts of it and revising—it's tied up in with notion of 'dictation' and that's what probably gives the poems the feel at times of dialogue."

The class will meet to workshop poems in progress that are either solitary (but that may feel like they are part of a larger group), or are written specifically as a projected part of a sequence or series, or part of a longer poem. How do parts work with a sense of an ongoing whole? Does a book require sections? How do the pieces of a manuscript fit together? From what concentration or saturation of materials, do your poems emerge out of? This question links back to the aesthetic expressed above about Spicer: To what extent are your poems part of an ongoing relay with the unconscious and "dictation"?

The focus of the course then will be on discovering interconnections within your own poems, developing themes or framing devices, kinds of appropriations and intertextuality, methods of organization; and questions of how sensibility emerges in a series, set or sequence of poems. What governs the connections between poems, or frames a set of poems? Is there a developing thematic or ongoing drive, a through-line of emotion or experience? We may not know this at once, but will seek to conceptualize the relationship between process and architectonics (in individual poems as well as in groups).

Participants will be required to attend every class meeting, contribute to discussion and peer-review, and submit a group of poems in an ongoing cycle (or an out-of-order one!). I also ask that you choose a book published in the last few years (up to five) that embody in one way or another the idea of the series, and present a short review. I will give you a list of recent publications that seem to bear this kind of examination.

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ENGL 697: GRADUATE FICTION WRITING WORKSHOP
Dana Johnson, Thurs., 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course Number 32804D

This course is an intense practicum in advanced-level fiction writing and a traditional graduate fiction workshop. Writers will be required to hand in two to three submissions of 20-30 pages (novel or short story) during the semester. In addition, there will be revisions of a scene or scenes from one of each writer's workshopped submissions at the end of the semester. We will also be reading a novel, *Veronica*, by Mary Gaitskill and a short story collection, *Whose Song?*, by Thomas Glave

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**ENGL 698: GRADUATE POETRY FORM AND THEORY: THE MAGNIFICENT EMBRACE: THE LONG POEM AND POETIC SEQUENCE IN AMERICAN POETRY
David St. John, Tues., 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32805D**

The tradition of the long poem and the book-length poem or lyric poetic sequence has a rich and varied tradition in American poetry, reflecting Whitman's influence and moving through some of our most powerful public/political poets, notably Muriel Rukeyser and Thomas McGrath, yet including also H. D., Charles Olson, and William Carlos Williams. This is a phenomenon that cuts across all aesthetic divides.

In late 20th Century American poetry we have seen seminal volumes in this tradition from John Ashbery, Jorie Graham, Galway Kinnell, and Adrienne Rich. In addition, more recent examples from Larry Levis, Lynn Emanuel, C. D. Wright, Carolyn Forché, David Wojahn, and Frank Stanford have signaled the power and attraction -- for contemporary poets -- of working on a large poetic canvas. In addition to work by the poets here, we will also consider the projects of Anne Carson, Charles Wright, Brenda Hillman, Joshua Poteat, and Beckian Fritz Goldberg, as time allows. This is a course meant to reflect the broad, inclusive, political, gestural, and generally irrepressible poetic ambitions of American poetry.

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**ENGL 701x: THEORIES AND PRACTICES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT II
Karen Tongson, Day and Time TBA, Course Number 32807D**

This two-credit course helps ABD students craft their professional identities and placement materials as they make the transition from graduate school to their academic position.

Graded CR/NC. Not available for degree credit.