

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SPRING 2016 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

ENGL 510: Medieval English Literatures and Cultures: The Literary Prison of the Middle Ages: Tensions of Claustrophobia and Claustrophilia
Rollo, David, Th 2-4:20 p.m. Number: 32778D

One day in Canterbury, Margery Kempe undergoes the habitual consequences of the unbearable love she feels for Jesus, who by this juncture has become her celestial husband and, in her mind, carnal lover: she collapses, cries uncontrollably, thrashes from side to side, turns leaden blue and affirms "I die, I die." At this, an elderly spectator drily remarks: "I would you were enclosed in a house of stone so no man could speak with you." The old man's words at one and the same time reverse and follow the trajectory of Kempe's life. Once a middle-class wife bound to the service of her husband, Kempe becomes an international celebrity famed from Santiago de Compostela to the Holy Land for her extrovert performances of divine love. However, although formally freed from spousal control, she constantly seeks refuge in the equally confining and patriarchal space of ecclesiastical approbation, describing her liberated experiences to church authorities and receiving their validating blessing in return. Kempe's life reflects a tension particular to many of the other great works of medieval literature: a centrifugal rejection of surveillance (be it spousal, hierarchical or religious) mitigated (and, on occasion, downright canceled) by a centripetal return to confinement. Often, the return is inadvertent. The Wife of Bath, for instance, speaks against misogyny; yet her prologue is an extended set of quotations from misogynistic texts that place her in precisely the literary tradition she grammatically attempts to reject. Usually, however, re-admittance to the prison house of social custom is gratefully embraced. For example, in inscrutable silence Grisildis endures and thereby overcomes Walter's sadism (which entails pretending to have their children murdered and then having their marriage annulled so he can marry a girl who turns out to be his own daughter); yet once she has sufficiently proven herself and the nature of the tests is revealed, she swoons at her husband's feet, overjoyed once again to be an ancillary member of his household.

The course will examine the escape/return paradigm in: Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (certainly the contributions of the Clerk, the Man of Law and the Wife of Bath, possibly also the Physician) and *The Legend of Good Women*; John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*; Julian of Norwich, *The Showings*; Margery Kempe and scribes, *The Book of Margery Kempe*; the Pearl poet, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, books 13-18 (the "Grail books"). For theoretical purposes, we shall also consider, in translation, excerpts from Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, and *De civitate Dei*, Alain de Lille, *De planctu Naturae*, Rabanus Maurus, *De institutione clericorum* and Christine de Pizan, *Le livre de la cité des dames*. Modern theorists will include Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gérard Genette and (perhaps) Elaine Scarry. Students will make one formal and one informal presentation and write a final essay of about twenty pages.

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SPRING 2016 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**ENGL 592: Contemporary British and American Literatures and Cultures: Film, Fiction, and Culture in the 1950s
Braudy, Leo T 4:30-6:50 p.m. Number: 32789D**

This course explores the cultural shape of a crucial period in American life through the mediation of film, "popular" fiction, and "serious" fiction from the end of World War Two to the election of John F. Kennedy in 1963. We will be reading essays, poems, plays, and novels by writers such as James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, William Burroughs, Albert Camus, John Cheever, Ralph Ellison, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Heinlein, Ernest Hemingway, Jack Kerouac, Robert Lowell, Norman Mailer, Arthur Miller, John O'Hara, Sylvia Plath, Theodore Roethke, J. D. Salinger, Mickey Spillane, Lionel Trilling, and Tennessee Williams. Filmmakers represented will include Robert Aldrich, Walt Disney, Howard Hawks, Elia Kazan, Joseph Mankiewicz, Anthony Mann, Christian Nyby, Nicholas Ray, Frank Tashlin, Billy Wilder, and William Wyler.

We will also consider some of the political and social problems of America in the 1950s, to which many of these works responded and out of which they emerged: the military and political threat of the Soviet Union, the rising political consciousness of African Americans, the supposed threat of juvenile delinquency, the changing social and sexual relations between men and women, and the expanding consumer economy that promised so much to so many.

Throughout the course we will also discuss more general theoretical issues--the nature of a cultural period (and "culture" as a concept), the various interpretations that have been made of the period along with their ideological bases and biases.

Requirements are two medium-length papers (12-15 pages) and an oral presentation on a background topic of general interest.

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SPRING 2016 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**ENGL 599: Special Topics: History of the Book and Material Bibliography
Dane, Joseph M 2-4:20 p.m. Number: 32821D**

The course will focus on early books and manuscripts and the use of primary source material in literary research. All students are welcome, from first-year to dissertation students, creative writing students and those in the literary track. Depending on their interests, students will be encouraged to develop projects or incorporate aspects of material books in projects in other areas. There are no prerequisites, and there will be no seminar papers. We will meet at Doheny Special Collections and the Clark Library (when it opens). Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions:
dane@usc.edu.

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SPRING 2016 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**ENGL 620: Literature and Interdisciplinary Studies: Literature and
Interdisciplinary Studies: Writer & Composer
St. John, David T 2-4:20 p.m. Number: 32769D**

This course will be team taught by David St. John and composer Frank Techeli of the Thornton School of Music. It is a structured collaboration between composers and poets. Activities include fundamentals of poetry, comparative analysis of poem/song settings, and creative projects. This course has often fostered long-term collaborative relationships between composers and writers. The course is designed for graduate students in Music Composition and English and Creative Writing. However, other graduate students may enroll with the permission of the instructor. Be warned: this is all about collaboration in the arts. If you think of yourself as a lone wolf artist, this course may not be for you.

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SPRING 2016 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**ENGL 630: Studies in Gender: Feminist and Queer Theory Through Hitchcock
Modleski, Tania M 4:30-6:50 p.m. Number: 32797D**

Some of the foremost feminist and queer studies scholars have formulated their theories around the films of Alfred Hitchcock. In this course we will examine theories proposed by D. A. Miller, Lee Edelman, Patricia White, Tania Modleski, Susan White, Alexander Doty, David Greven, Ned Schantz, Robert Allen, Rhona Berenstein, and many others, testing them by reading each alongside Hitchcock films. Thus, to paraphrase Slavoj Žižek paraphrasing Woody Allen paraphrasing Dr. David Reuben, this course will seek to provide “everything you wanted to know about queer theory (but were afraid to ask Alfred Hitchcock)” and “everything you wanted to know about feminist theory (but were afraid to ask Alfred Hitchcock).” Requirements: two oral reports and a final paper of 15-20 pages.

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SPRING 2016 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**ENGL 695: Graduate Fiction Form and Theory
Everett, Percival M 4:30-6:50 p.m. Number: 32802D**

We will examine notions of form in fiction. What are the necessary and sufficient conditions that must be satisfied before we call a work of prose a work of fiction? Are there any? Is there such a thing as conventional fiction? Is experimental fiction possible and what does that mean? We will take stories apart and rebuild them, retell them by doing “violence” to the stories’ constituent elements.

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SPRING 2016 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

ENGL 696: Graduate Poetry Writing Workshop: Series, Sequences, & the Parts of a Whole (or the Parts of a Part)

McCabe, Susan T 4:30-6:50 p.m. Number: 30805D

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, or even part of your research. 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?

The focus of the course then will be on interconnections within your own poems, developing themes or framing devices, kinds of appropriations, 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, of musical fragments? 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).

Students will be required to attend every class meeting, participate in discussion and peer-review, and submit a group of poems in an ongoing cycle (or an out-of-order one!)—about seven finished poems accompanied by a statement about their possible interlocked-ness. There will be a couple of poetry books assigned to work in tandem with your series.

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SPRING 2016 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

ENGL 698: Graduate Poetry Form and Theory: Forms of Seeing, Ways of Listening
Irwin, Mark W 5-7:20 p.m. Number: 32803D

“The form is always the measure of the obsession.” —Giacometti

While discussing critical works from Aristotle to Mary Ruefle, we will begin with Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo" and explore poems, visual works of art, and a few musical compositions that provide unique ways of seeing or perceiving the world through form. Often inspired through concept, or crises in belief, these poets, painters, and composers create new boundaries in art through vision and sometimes the distortion of form. From Rimbaud's "The Drunken Boat" to Rilke's Duino Elegies, Frances Bacon's Triptychs, Ashbery's "Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror," Jorie Graham's "Pollock & Canvas," and the work of many younger poets, we will discuss works of art that arc, distort, and create new forms. Each student will write one critical paper, give a presentation, and produce a draft for a longer creative work in poetry.

Some poets include John Ashbery (Selected Poems), Anne Carson (Plainwater), Peter Gizzi (In Defense of Nothing: Selected Poems), Linda Gregerson (Prodigal; Selected Poems (1976-2014) Magill Reader, 2016), Jorie Graham (The End of Beauty. NY: Ecco, 1987), Laura Kasischke (Space, in Chains), and W.S. Merwin (Migration: Selected Poems).

We will also read the following critics: Aristotle's Poetics (Malcolm Heath, trans.), Bruce Bond's Immanent Distance, James Longenbach's The Virtues of Poetry, Donald Revell's The Art of Attention, A Broken Thing: Poets on the Line (Rosko & Vander Zee eds.), and Mary Ruefle's Madness, Rack, and Honey: Collected Lectures. Numerous slides of visual works of art and selected recordings of Philip Glass, Arvo Part, Joan Tower and others will also be included.

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SPRING 2016 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**ENGL 700: Theories and Practices of Professional Development I
Boone, Joseph MWF 8-8:50 a.m. Number: 32806D**

A structured environment in which to craft a research project, write a dissertation prospectus, and define areas of professional expertise.