

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

**ENGL 502: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory: Writing as an Other
Viet Nguyen Monday 5:00-7:20 p.m. Number: 32778D**

What does it mean to be an other? How does the other experience her or his own self and subjectivity? What does it mean to write as an other? These are the core questions for this course, which foregrounds in particular the way that writers who are marked as other or who imagine themselves as other have dealt with issues of aesthetics, politics, economics, history, representation, publishing, and criticism. The writers who interest me are the ones who resist boundaries of all kinds—national, racial, gendered, generic, sexual, and disciplinary. Boundaries are a way of creating others and managing otherness by restricting creative, critical, and political inquiry. The writers we will read challenge multiple boundaries.

All the writers for the course express a desire to write creative criticism, whether they happen to foreground the critical and scholarly act or the creative act of writing fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or some hybrid. Likewise, this course emphasizes the writing of creative criticism in its seminar requirements. We will foreground the act of writing itself on the part of students, and I encourage students to think about their own styles, visions, and voices as they write their seminar projects. I hope to cultivate the practice of writing criticism as a creative and idiosyncratic endeavor that should not be restricted by traditional academic conventions.

The reading list is in flux, but here are some of the names that I am thinking about: Gloria Anzaldua, James Baldwin, John Berger, Aime Cesaire, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Teju Cole, Jacques Derrida, W.E.B. DuBois, Frantz Fanon, Toni Morrison, Maggie Nelson, Claudia Rankine, Adrienne Rich, Edward Said, W.G. Sebald, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Monique Wittig. We may also read some more conventional works of criticism, in whole or part, that have some relevance to understanding creative criticism and otherness: Eric Bennett (*Workshops of Empire*), David Palumbo-Liu (*The Deliverance of Others*), Jacques Ranciere (*Politics and Literature*), Rei Terada (*The Limits of Critique*).

Requirements: online and in class participation; seminar presentations; and a 20-page essay that students will draft over the course of the semester.

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**ENGL 540: 19th Century British Literatures and Cultures: Genre of the Living Dead
Margaret Russett Thursday 2:00-4:20 p.m. Number: 32600D**

Is there such a thing as the “gothic novel”? At least for the past 30 years or so, literary studies have assumed this much, and the gothic industry is still growing: there are now associations and journals devoted exclusively to the gothic, considered as a transhistorical and transnational phenomenon. Yet the label “gothic” was used by none of the British writers so classified (with the exception of the putative founder, Horace Walpole), and defining it (genre or mode? Plot, setting, effect or affect?) has proved notoriously difficult.

In this class we will read a broad swath of late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century fiction (and some poetry, drama, and narrative nonfiction) categorized as gothic. We will also consider some works and some writers who, although generally not so described, experimented on occasion with gothic motifs or atmosphere—and with genres or modes such as the “sensation” or “mystery” novel which are sometimes described as heirs to the gothic inheritance. Depending in part on the interests of participants, our reading list may include: novels and short stories by Walpole, Radcliffe, Shelley, De Quincey, all three Brontes, Braddon, Le Fanu, Stoker, Stevenson, Wilde...and Austen, Gaskell, Dickens, Eliot, and other writers associated with the realist tradition. Among the animating concerns of the class will be the advantages and disadvantages of genre study, as well as the ways in which genre labels intersect with other classifications such as gender, sexuality, spectacle, high/low culture, consciousness and unconsciousness, etc. How do we distort literary history by reading “through” genre labels? What insights does such study make possible?

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ENGL 591: 20th Century American Literatures and Cultures: Postwestern Representations

William Handley Tuesday 4:30-6:50 p.m. Number: 32788D

What do Sherman Alexie and Jerry Bruckheimer have in common? Not much -- and a lot. That question and its nonsensical answer speak to the difficulty and challenge of studying the U.S. West and its cultural representations in the past century. Haunted by imperial and settler-colonial history and popular cultural stereotypes and formulas, western U.S. fiction, historiography, and film exhibit a broad range of aesthetic and political responses to the questions of how and why the past and its ongoing legacies are represented.

The burden of writing about the U.S. West in the nineteenth century was to give readers what they wanted: something authentically real. Yet the West in the twentieth century inspired terms such as the "simulacrum" and the "hyperreal" in the work of European postmodernist theorists Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco. We will explore these seeming contradictions about representations of the West after the formula Western, along with such topics as "postindian simulations," ecocritical literature, Los Angeles and postmodernist theory, noir as invisible history, and the ongoing frontiers of race and sexuality in the post-frontier West.

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**ENGL 599: Special Topics: A Tour of the Imagination
Carol Muske-Dukes Wednesday 12:00-1:50 p.m. Number: 32792D**

This course (which debuted last spring) is a dialogue between Art and Poetry that is mounted in cooperation with the new Broad museum. Students are given open access to the spectacular collection of paintings, photographs, sculpture, and video installations at the Broad, from which they select a work of art. Students then spend the semester observing their selection and writing original poems in response to or inspired by “their” art work.

The Broad staff cooperates fully and provides VIP passes to students for ready entry to the museum. The class also will meet regularly on campus for feedback and instruction. Last spring the Broad hosted a “Night at the Museum” at the semester’s end. Students gave a reading of their poems “in front” of the chosen art work to an invited audience. Also, the USC Office of Communications “covered” the final reading: here is the link to the article: <http://dornsife.usc.edu/news/stories/2354/a-tour-of-the-imagination-art-inspires-graduate-poetry-at-the-br/>.

USC also funded publication of a chapbook of the student poems from the semester, entitled “A Tour of the Imagination”.

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ENGL 600: Publication in Humanities Journals

Susan Green Wednesday 5:00-6:20 p.m. Number: 32789D

Publishing an article in a refereed periodical is one of the best ways to engage with the research in your field – both intellectually and professionally. This seminar will focus on developing essays into successful submissions. Class members will send the instructor a draft of an essay they propose to submit to a periodical — ideally in December 2016 for the seminar beginning in January, or no later than the second session of the seminar.

One goal of the seminar will be to survey the current state of refereed periodical publishing in the humanities, including the shifting relations between print and digital publication. Not all refereed periodicals appear in print (some are “born digital”), and almost no surviving periodicals are “print only.” Digital technology has streamlined the production of periodicals and greatly improved access to them; the impact on refereeing and editing is less clear. The main objective of our work will be mastering the steps of editorial review in the digital environment, while we will also consider the resources of “digital humanities” more broadly, as tools for research.

We will begin with a survey of about twenty periodicals to open discussion on current trends in method and approach. Class members will also introduce to the seminar several periodicals that interest them, accompanied by detailed analysis of particular articles. Readings in the seminar will chiefly include published articles introduced by class members and the instructor, as well as style guides treating the mechanics of preparing articles for refereeing. Because the fields and interests of class members will differ, discussion will focus on general strategies for argument, documentation, and style. The seminar will have some attributes of a workshop; class members will read each other’s essays and offer comments, with the goal of helping to ready them for submission at the end of the term.

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ENGL 612: HISTORY OF THE BOOK AND MATERIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY: History of the Organic Book: Codex, Ecocriticism, and Systems Thinking in the Anthropocene

Devin Griffiths Thursday 4:30-6:50 p.m. Number: 32790

How do we write 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 have drawn from and informed theories of the book as an organism. Rather than studying the material history of the book, we will study the history of the book's biological articulations, from the "book of life," to recent experiments with DNA book printing.

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 in which "writers and artists perceive themselves, perceive their histories, and their aesthetic practices," and for one shared reason: "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 and systems-theoretic formulations, a way of theorizing the "ecosystem" which is derived from Romantic organicism, particularly the notion of books and their archives as organic entities. Our seminar will explore that longer history of thinking of the book as a form of 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 by that history. How might the inorganic book or archive help us to understand the Anthropocene and what Tim Morton has recently termed the "dark ecology" of our present?

In addition to work by Haraway, Malm, and Moore, our seminar will use studies of the history of book production and archives (D. F. Mackenzie, Roger Chartier, Elizabeth Eisenstein, Jerome McGann, Adrian Johns, and Robert Darnton) in order to frame readings from nineteenth century science and literature (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Jean Baptiste Lamarck, 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, Rob Nixon, and Jane Bennet) and systems theory (Karl Marx, Antonio Stoppani, Immanuel Wallerstein, Bruno Latour, and Giovanni Arrighi).

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

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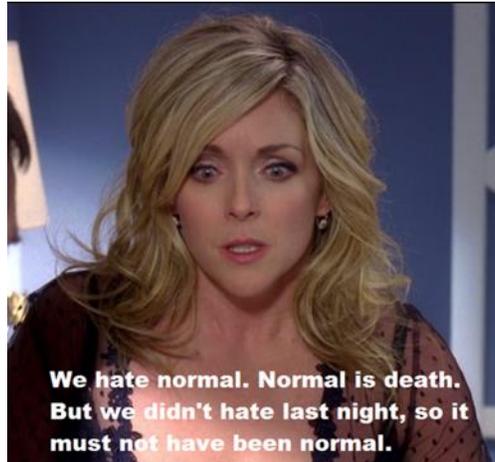
**ENGL 620: Literature and Interdisciplinary Studies: Reporting and Literature
Geoff Dyer Monday 2:00-4:20 p.m. Number: 32769D**

At what point does reporting become literature? How does the obligation to record facts or document events sit alongside the artistic urge to shape and embellish? To what extent can a highly individual personal style conflict with reliability? These are some of the questions to be raised in a survey of landmark books by – among others – Gay Talese, Janet Malcolm, Rebecca West, Dexter Filkins, Norman Mailer and Ryszard Kapuscinski. We will also consider some photographic books, especially collaborations between writers and photographers such as *A Fortunate Man* by John Berger and Jean Mohr and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by James Agee and Walker Evans. It was Evans, after all, who expressed the crux of the matter most concisely by making a distinction between documentary and what he insisted on calling “documentary style.”

Writing requirements: A paper of 12-20 pages either on one or more of the authors or on one or more of the issues raised in the course. In addition each student will be expected to present on – or lead the discussion about – the featured book or books and then to submit any notes for this used in a revised form the following week so that it constitutes a short paper in its own right (3-5 pages).

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ENGL 630: Studies in Gender: Queer/Normativity
Karen Tongson Thursday 4:30-6:50 p.m. Number: 32797D



In the penultimate season of *30 Rock* (2012), the sitcom's resident kinkmeisters and genderqueer¹ lovers, Jenna and Paul, are faced with a profound sexual crisis: after chatting about their day, they pass out fully clothed, nestled beneath an afghan. Unable to accept this egregious lapse into normalcy as a simple result of long-term companionship, they conclude that "normaling" must be a "whole new fetish," a heretofore-undiscovered playground of genuine perversity. As cultural texts like *30 Rock* make apparent, all the hoopla in the last decade about purportedly "new" varieties of normalcy are bound up with the sense that queer lives have been absorbed into the matrimonial and reproductive matrix. Meanwhile, scholars and cultural observers have argued that heterosexuality itself—the baseline for normalcy—has become more flexible. If the 1990s were about imagining the possibility that "we are all queer," the postmillennial teens have told it to us straight: we are all, in fact, normal. Or are we?

This graduate seminar revisits the relationship between queer texts and norms, particularly since the academic institutionalization of queer studies in the early 1990s. In recent years, queer and feminist scholars such as Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth A. Wilson, have called for a sustained attention to norms. In the process they eschewed the "anti normative" stances they claim nearly everyone else in queer studies has adopted. A lot of ink has been spilled about this inside baseball debate between some of the contemporary players in queer studies, including tag-team responses from Bully Bloggers, Jack Halberstam and Lisa Duggan, among others. This set of conversations currently animating the field of queer studies—one that has resurfaced perpetually since

¹ Paul L'astnamé, played by former-SNL cast member Will Forte, is not only a female-impersonator by trade, but his signature character is Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski's character, who is a narcissistic comedic actress on an SNL-style variety show).

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Foucault, and in the more recent past, since Michael Warner's *The Trouble with Normal* (1999)—is but another iteration of the national attention to norming, normalizing and normcore aesthetics, which this seminar will also explore in depth. In addition, we will explore the possibility of queer ambivalence, in order to re-enliven the reparative, and disidentificatory practices of queer spectatorship we tend to lose amidst firmer agendas and exertions that require we pick teams and draw hard lines.

REQUIREMENTS: Students will be asked to complete brief, bi-weekly writing assignments on a particular theme inspired the readings. Final projects will take either the form of a 20-minute conference paper/presentation, or the expansion of an earlier essay from the semester into an article-length submission.

PROVISIONAL READING LIST*

Lauren Berlant, *Desire/Love*

Hanne Blank, *Straight: The Surprisingly Short History of Heterosexuality*

Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*

K-Hole, *Youth Mode*

José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color & the Performance of Politics*

Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*

Richard T. Rodriguez, *Next of Kin: The Family in Chicano/a Cultural Politics*

Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics & The Limits of the Law*

Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics & the Ethics of Queer Life*

Robin Wiegman & Elizabeth Wilson, eds. Special issue of *differences* "Queer Theory Without Antinormativity"

Selected Essays by Judith Butler, David Eng, Lisa Duggan, Erica Edwards, Jack Halberstam, Heather Love, Sharon Marcus, Jasbir Puar, Robert Reid Pharr, Nayan Shah, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Gayle Salomon, Karen Tongson.

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Selected Media:

The Kids are Alright, dir. Cholodenko (2010)

thirtysomething (TV series, ABC, 1987-1991)

True Blood (TV series, HBO, 2008-2014)

Parenthood (TV series, NBC 2010-2015)

The Fosters (TV series, ABC Family, 2013 -)

Transparent (TV series, Amazon, 2014 -)

The Slap (TV miniseries, NBC, 2015)

This is US (TV series, NBC, 2016 -)

*Course texts are subject to change before the semester.

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**ENGL 696: Graduate Poetry Writing Workshop
Anna Journey Tuesday 4:30-6:50 p.m. Number: 30835D**

Putting together a book of poems can feel like an occult undertaking to the author assembling a debut collection, but even seasoned poets often feel this way: Which title will best serve my manuscript? How many sections should I use, if any? What makes a strong section “opener” and “closer”? What are the best approaches to sequencing poems to create arcs in emotion or narrative? What are the book’s touchstone poems and where should they appear in the book? In this manuscript workshop, we’ll examine and discuss at least one draft of each poet’s in-progress collection. Manuscripts may be full-length poetry collections or chapbooks. We’ll also read and discuss books by Forrest Gander, Jane Mead, and C.D. Wright. Additional books will be included on the reading list via nomination: each poet will suggest a title and assume responsibility for leading the class discussion on that particular text.

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**ENGL 697: Graduate Fiction Writing Workshop
Dana Johnson Thursday 7:00-9:20 p.m. Number: 32838D**

This course is an intense practicum in advanced-level fiction writing and a traditional graduate fiction workshop, concentrating on understanding and implementing the various aspects of fiction. These aspects include craft issues such as characterization, point of view, narrative structure, style, and voice.

Participants will be required to hand in three submissions of 20 pages (novel or short story) during the semester. In addition, there will be revisions of a scene or scenes from one of each student's workshopped submissions at the end of the semester. We will also be reading a novel and a short story collection to be announced at the beginning of the semester.