



SPRING 2020

GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

USC Dornsife

Department of English

Theories of Race, Class, and Gender

"Black Lives & 21st-Century African American Literature"

Daniels-Rauterkus, Melissa

TH | 2:00-4:20 P.M.

SECTION: 32776

As static and essentialist notions of identity have been supplanted by more dynamic and fluid accounts, the task of defining blackness has never been more complicated or contested. Scholars working at the forefront of African American literary studies agree that old approaches to subjectivity and periodization can no longer offer a coherent framework for assessing contemporary black life or literature. But there really is no scholarly consensus on what it means to be black in America today or just what to call this current outpouring of African American literary production.

Viewing black existence as a generative site of inquiry, this seminar explores how recent African American writings conceptualize black identity in the 21st century. Acknowledging that there is no singular, universal black experience, this course surveys a wide range of writings to remain mindful of the sheer diversity of black life in modern America. Adopting an intersectional approach, this course examines blackness through the

interlocking and overlapping lenses of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Understanding these categories as mutually constitutive forces, this seminar stresses the cumulative significance of these social constructs in the making of black subjects, aesthetics, and critical theories.

The objective of this course is to familiarize students with both established and emergent theories of race, class, gender, and sexuality; provide an in-depth treatment of key works of 21st-century African American literature; and determine what, if any, relationship this current production has to previous periods of African American literature like the Harlem Renaissance or the Black Arts Movement.

Assignments will consist of weekly Blackboard posts, a book review of a critical study, a seminar presentation, and a conference paper of 10-12 pages.

Texts include:

Fiction/Creative Non-Fiction:

Nafissa Thompson-Spires, *Heads of the Colored People* (2018)

Kiese Laymon, *Heavy* (2018)

Michelle Obama, *Becoming* (2018)

Tayari Jones, *An American Marriage* (2018)

Danzy Senna, *New People* (2017)

Dana Johnson, *In the Not Quite Dark* (2016)

Criticism:

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016)

Aida Levy-Hussen, *How to Read African American Literature* (2016)

Kevin Quashie, *The Sovereignty of Quiet* (2012)

Kenneth W. Warren, *What Was African American Literature?* (2011)

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (2010)

Elizabeth Alexander, *The Black Interior* (2004)

Marc Anthony Neal, *Soul Babies* (2001)



BECOMING

Literatures and Cultures of the Romantic Period

Russett, Margaret

T | 2-4:20P.M.

SECTION: 32782

Recent debates in critical theory have placed a renewed emphasis on the concept of the "aesthetic," not so much—this time around!—as an alternative to politics, but as a mode of ethical/political engagement itself. Responding to this critical revival, but not beholden to it, we will focus on Romantic-era philosophical and literary texts which either foreground or theorize a particular mode of aesthetic experience. The emphasis will fall on texts written in English, but we will also read (in translation) selected contemporaneous works from the German transcendentalist tradition, beginning with Lessing and continuing through Kant, Schlegel, and Schiller.

English-language works are likely to 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*.

Among the Germans, expect to encounter Lessing's *Laocoon*; the Schlegel circle's *Athenaeum*; Kant's third *Critique* and his earlier essay "Observation on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime"; selections from 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. Participants will also be asked to lead one class meeting, by preparing and advance-circulating a detailed set of questions on that week's reading.





ENGL-536

Literatures and Cultures of the Victorian Period: *The Novel & The Archive*

Schor, Hilary

W | 3-5:30P.M.

SECTION: 32783

Novelists in the nineteenth-century imagined their stories through the material, published shapes they took: serialized in magazines and monthly numbers, issued in three-volumes as "triple-deckers," and, eventually, as still today, sandwiched solo between two covers. This course will meet in UCLA's library's Sadleir collection, the world's largest collection of nineteenth-century novels outside of the British Library, to explore the archive of this print-culture world.

Our aims are two-fold. We will both interrogate the novel as a material art form in the era in which it became dominant and, more broadly, discover the discipline, power, and lure that archival work can hold for scholars. You will thus have a graduate-level view of the nineteenth-century novel and of archival work by the end of this course. Each class session we will work with the stunning materials held in the collection. You will turn the pages of original monthly parts of *Picwick*, of lurid "Yellow-backs" published for sale at railway bookstalls, and of the novels of

"Anonyma" a female collective. You will have opportunities to engage now-little-known but once-famous sub-genres like the Newgate novel (crime), silver-fork fiction (class), Marryat's pioneering of maritime fiction (Empire and race), and more.

We will chart our way together through this era's vast and fascinating print culture by reading two novels especially reflective of it: Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (serialized irregularly from 1851 to 1853) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897 in one volume). Our main concern will be with authors and how they shape their stories in and for different contemporary mediums of print and different readerships, but this course welcomes students interested broadly in book history and the materiality of the book, digital humanities, and collection and information studies. Secondary readings will include Susan Stewart, *On Longing*; Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the*

Reading Public, and Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library: On Collecting."

The course will be team-taught by Hilary Schor (USC) and Jonathan Grossman (UCLA). Students from both universities will be enrolled concurrently and meet together each week. In addition, you will have opportunities to work with the wonderful staff of YRL Special Collections. Guest speakers, whose work we will sample, will include Helena Michie, author of *Love Among the Archives*, and Richard Menke, author of *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies, 1880-1900: Many Inventions*. Requirements for the course include a presentation about archival materials of your choice and a research essay related to the Sadleir archive (or with prior approval, another archive). The course will begin on Wednesday, January 8th; USC students will continue to meet with Professor Schor through the end of the USC semester, and will write an additional short paper.



ENGL-593

Practicum in Teaching English and Narrative Studies

Freeman, Chris

T | 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 approximately a dozen times during the semester. There is one text, *THE SLOW PROFESSOR* by Berg and Seeber (Toronto, 2016).

ENGL-610

Theory and Criticism

Nelson, Maggie

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

SECTION: 32810

This theory and criticism seminar will inquire into the form, style, and even purpose of theory and criticism today, by reading authors whose work challenges or experiments with the supposed (i.e. academic) norms of the genre(s). To consider: What is the work of "theory" or "criticism" today, and how does that work still matter? What is the relationship of autobiography to theory and criticism? Of poetry? Of fiction? Of history? What forms of theory and criticism are currently on the rise, and why? What are their precedents?

What is the difference between "theory" and "criticism"? What kind or kinds do we personally want to write, and why? What might be the place in the world for our own experiments, both literally and conceptually? In addition to hosting 3 guests in the field, we will read work by Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, Paul Preciado, TJ Clark, Simone White, Hilton Als, Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa; we will also try our hand at one critical / theoretical writing experiment to be workshopped by the class.

A decorative border at the top of the page features a hexagonal pattern. The left side contains musical notation on staves, while the right side shows a close-up of a violin's body and f-hole.

ENGL-620

Literature and Interdisciplinary Studies: *Writer & Composer*

St. John, David

T | 2-4:20P.M.

SECTION: 32856

This course will be team taught by David St. John and Professor Frank Ticheli of the Thornton School of Music. This course provides a series of structured collaborations between composers and poets. Activities include fundamentals of poetry, comparative analysis of poem/song settings, and creative projects. There is also a class of graduate singers from Thornton attached to our class to allow for the workshopping of all student projects. We hope that this course can foster long-term collaborative relationships between composers and writers. The course is designed for graduate students in Music Composition and English/Creative Writing (Poetry). 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.

ENGL-660

Studies in Genre: *Race and the Novel*

Román, Elda María

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

SECTION: 32816

The aim of this seminar is to give you an in-depth understanding of how the novel as a genre has been theorized and how ethnic writers have developed the novel form. Most foundational scholarship on the novel has been written about texts produced by white European and U.S. writers.

In this course, we will examine novels by Native, Black, Asian American, and Latinx authors alongside readings in narrative theory to ask what the theory productively illuminates about the text as well as what it cannot account for. Topics include: the origins of the novel; theorizations of structure, time and space, perspective, voice, novelistic

subjectivity; as well as innovations in the Bildungsroman, metafiction, speculative fiction, and hybrid forms. Scholarly readings may include essays by M. M. Bakhtin, Georg Lukács, Walter Benjamin, Raymond Williams, Catherine Gallagher, Caroline Levine, Alex Woloch, and Ramón Saldivar, among others. Literary texts may include novels by Ralph Ellison, Octavia Butler, Colson Whitehead, Sandra Cisneros, Salvador Plascencia, D'Arcy McNickle, Tommy Orange, Chang Rae Lee, Fae Myenne Ng, and Karen Tei Yamashita. Assignments will consist of weekly class participation, a presentation, an annotated bibliography, and a final research paper of 15-20 pages.



ENGL-694

Graduate Nonfiction Writing Workshop

Treuer, David

TH | 2-4:20P.M.

SECTION: 32833

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—sometimes carefully and with premeditation and other times in ignorance and "from the gut"—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 do that and to do it ourselves. Our time will be spent analyzing different approaches to the practice of non-fiction, isolating the working parts, the gears, of those approaches, and then trying them out in our own attempts at the genre(s). This combined reading and workshop course is designed to investigate the ways in which we take the raw material of life and turn it into text. How do we shape the "real" into the miniature imaginary?

ENGL-695


Graduate Fiction Form and Theory

Senna, Danzy

M | 2-4:20P.M.

SECTION: 32834

Here we will explore the term autofiction as applied to both our own writing and the works of others. Questions of race, sexuality, and gender will be central to our discussion. What are the origins of the term? Whose work is described as autofiction and whose work is described as "authentic" or "autobiographical"? How has the autobiographical been analyzed and read differently across race and gender lines? We will read contemporary authors whose works address these questions while students will be required to produce and share their own writing in a workshop setting.



ENGL-696

Graduate Poetry Writing Workshop: *Séance Poetics*

McCabe, Susan

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

SECTION: 32835

"We are all haunted houses." —H.D., "Advent"

Who is your addressee? Are you haunted? If so, by what or by whom?

Ghosts, invocations to the dead, conversations with the invisible, all sounds morbid, but every time we start a poem we are addressing an absence through the very act of writing. The workshop will inspire new poems or re-animate fragmentary drafts, but mostly you will be writing new poems through a "mediumistic" practice, while responding to the writing of your peers. Our emphasis will be on process, and working on the "unfinished," and unheard or unseen.

We will elicit new work through invocation, opening up to the unknown, the indeterminate, the invisible, the ancestral. How can we intuitively combine aspects of the visible and the invisible world and make another imagined world? How do we conjure our poems, and what practices help this creative process?

Each poet will mediate their own ancestries, repressions, apparitions, doppelgangers, dreams and nightmares, and geopolitics. The Ouija-poem by James Merrill, The Book of Ephraim, forms one basis of the

class, but we explore how the ineffable, shadowy side of our existences seek us out? I will provide a reading list of poems and poets who engage in this dance with the invisible—among them Helene Cixous, Dickinson, Whitman, H.D., Eliot, Yeats, Toomer, Plath, Merrill, M. NourbeSe Philip, Brenda Hillman, and Alice Notley. The practices of tarot, rituals, typewriter, or trance, etc. would not be amiss, but neither are they necessary. We will tap the unconscious through collaboration, dreams, meditation, eco- rather than ego-centric poetry, inviting the stranger.

In essence we are after what Eliot attributed to Dante, "disciplined dreaming," to explore the ghosts that haunt us. We may not have visions, but we can cultivate our relationship to the fertile void, the "nothing that is" and "the nothing that is not." Participation and attendance are mandatory along with a group of at least seven new poems and several with versions in process, and a short presentation with a handout on your interaction with a particular text on our group *séance* "reading list." With your portfolio of poems, a short creative prose piece describing your artistic process in the class will be welcome.

ENGL-697

Graduate Fiction Writing Workshop

Johnson, Dana

W | 5-7:20P.M.

SECTION: 32836

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.



Graduate Poetry Form and Theory: *Forms of seeing. Ways of listening*

Irwin, Mark

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

SECTION: 32837

"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, Anselm Kiefer's Lot's Frau, Sarah Charlesworth's Stills Series, 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, while we interrogate notions of perspective and point of view. Each student will write a short critical paper, give a presentation, and produce a draft for a longer creative sequence in poetry, one that may entail archival research for a poem that blends autobiographical material with fragments of science, art, philosophy, history, myth, ecology, and witness.

Tentative Reading List:

John Ashbery: *A Wave*

Anne Carson: *Plainwater / Selections from Various books*

Forrest Gander: *Be With. New Directions*, 2018.

Angie Estes. *Enchantée. Oberlin*, 2013.

Tom Sleigh. *House of Fact. House of Ruin. Graywolf*, 2018.

Peter Gizzi. *In Defense of Nothing: Selected Poems. Wesleyan*, 2014.

Jorie Graham: *Place. Ecco Press*, 2012.

Laura Kasischke: *Space, in Chains*, 2013

Yusef Komunyakaa: *Warhorses. NY: Farrar, Straus*, 2009.

Arthur Rimbaud: "The Drunken Boat" & other Selections

Mary Ruefle. *Selected Poems. Seattle: Wave Books*, 2010.

Arthur Sze: *Sightlines*, 2019

C.D. Wright: Selections

Some Critics:

Aristotle's Poetics: Malcolm Heath, trans.

A Broken Thing: Poets on the Line. Rosko & Vander Zee eds.

Mary Ruefle: *Madness, Rack, and Honey: Collected Lectures*

Theories and Practices of Professional Development I

Anderson, Emily

MWF | 8:00-8:50A.M.

SECTION: 32606

This 2-unit class is designed for graduate students in the literature and creative writing tracks of the English Ph.D. program who have completed coursework and are preparing to take their qualifying exam. The majority of our meetings are focused on familiarizing ourselves with and executing the different components of the dissertation prospectus. Students will be given a chance to study completed prospectus documents in a variety of subfields (both critical and creative), to meet with students who have successfully navigated the qualifying exam process, and to workshop their own exam materials as they prepare them. This course also contains various professionalization exercises that students will need as they advance to candidacy: grant writing and academic C.V. preparation among them.

We will have **seven** group meetings in total during the semester, at a time mutually agreed upon by those who register for the class.

