



Spring 2024

Graduate Course Descriptions

USCDornsife
Department of English

ENGL 535

Literatures & Cultures of the Romantic Period: *Gothic Romanticism*

Margaret Russett

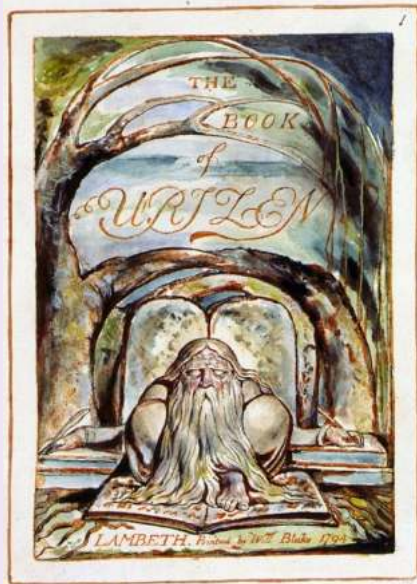
M | 2:00-4:20 p.m. | Section 32782D

Gothic fiction was long characterized as the “other” of Romantic literary art: a popular mode, disavowed or demonized by writers whose goals exceeded mere entertainment.

Even the recent gothic revival in criticism has largely accepted this view while acknowledging that most Romantic writers worked in the gothic mode at some point in their careers. In this class, we will turn that characterization sideways, considering Romantic literature—particularly “first generation” Romantic literature—as an expression of the same anxieties and aspirations that

prompted the popular gothic. Our syllabus will give about equal time to classics of gothic fiction and of canonical Romanticism. While this approach will not assure coverage of either the gothic or the Romantic canon, we will at least begin to understand the two modes as both dialectically and dialogically engaged with one another. Disclaimer: gothic fiction is not noted for its brevity, so the reading load for this class will be substantial. You are advised to complete at least some of the longer novels (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *Melmoth the Wanderer*) before the spring semester begins. Our first class meeting will focus on *The Castle of Otranto*.

Provisional list of readings: Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* with Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*; Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* with selected poetry of the “Graveyard” school (Beattie, Young, Macpherson, Warton); Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; William Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and *The Book of Urizen*; William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* and selected juvenilia; Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Christabel” and *Biographia Literaria*; Walter Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*; Charles Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*; Mary



Shelley, *Frankenstein*; Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*; James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.

Expectations for the class will be fairly standard. You will be asked to lead the discussion once during the semester and provide an annotated bibliography of the critical works which shaped your view of the material. A seminar paper of approximately 15 pages will be due about one week after our last class meeting.

ENGL 560

Early American Literatures & Cultures

Anthony Kemp

T | 4:30-6:50 p.m. | Section 32785D

A study of the declension/transformation of American colonial culture, particularly New England, into Enlightenment nation and further into the counter-Enlightenment Transcendentalist myth of nature’s origin. The course will focus on the national mythology embodied in histories, poetry, and autobiographies and will address particularly the



Portrait of Margaret Gibbs in her 7th year, 1670; *The Freake-Gibbs Painter*. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

question of how religious culture—trans-Atlantic Puritanism—transforms into romantic culture and what hauntings show through in the palimpsest of American modernity. Therefore, the first half of the course will examine the forms of colonial culture; the second will follow the vectors of these into the American Renais-

sance and on into the present. Authors to be considered include William Bradford, John Winthrop, Roger Williams, Nathaniel Ward, Thomas Hooker, John Cotton, Increase Mather, Mary Rowlandson, Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor, Edward Johnson, Joshua Scottow, Franklin, Emerson, Melville, and Henry James.

ENGL 591

20th Century American Literatures & Cultures: *Unmaking the End of the World: Intro to the Environmental Humanities*

Devin Griffiths

Th | *2:00-4:50 p.m. | Section 32791D

**Course time may be adjusted to 2-4:20 p.m. to avoid a schedule conflict. More info coming soon.*

How do we think and 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 the environmental humanities to explore how a variety of writers, academics, and activists have explored the interpretation of nature and the place of humans within it.

In today's world, environmental challenges have become increasingly urgent, complex, and interconnected. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic perspective that draws upon the insights and methodologies of various academic disciplines. This graduate seminar in the environmental humanities invites students to engage in a deep exploration of the intricate relationship between humans and the environment.

Though centered on the twentieth century, this seminar will explore the wider field of the environmental humanities from its seeds in nineteenth-century natural history and nature writing to its emergence as a full-fledged and deeply interdisciplinary research program in the twenty-first. Our readings will pair primary readings of creative works of fiction, poetry, art, and personal narrative with secondary sources drawn from fields as diverse as ecological science, history, art history, sociology and anthropology. Over the course of fifteen weeks, we will consider the following topics: Indigenous knowledge and land management; histories of environmental racism; ecofeminism; environmental affects, including climate anxiety and ecological mourning; histories of environmental science, ecology, and ecosystem; deep ecology; the Western conservation movement; "slow violence" and the environmentalism of the poor; extractivism and energy cultures; world perspectives on environmental history and colonialism; nature poetry and locodescription; "cli-fi"; environmental activism and the divestment movement; and green Marxism.

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

Who Should Attend:

This seminar is open to graduate students from a variety of academic backgrounds, including but not limited to literature, history, philosophy, environmental studies, anthropology, communications, and related fields. It is designed for those who are passionate about understanding and addressing environmental challenges through a humanistic lens.

By the end of this seminar, students will be equipped with a deeper understanding of the environmental humanities and will be better prepared to engage with and contribute to the critical environmental discussions and environmental activism of our time.



ENGL 593

Practicum in Teaching English & Narrative Studies

Christopher Freeman

T | 5:00-6:20 p.m. | Section 32793D

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.

ENGL 599

Special Topics: *Second-Year Pro-Seminar*

Ashley Cohen

W | 6:00-7:50 p.m. | Section 32811D

This two-unit course is designed to help you begin the transition from coursework to independent research. On a nuts-and-bolts level, it will introduce you to the genres of professional writing (the conference proposal, grant application, abstract) that you are expected to know but might not learn in other classes. We will also explore the important concept of a “field.” What is a “field,” or area of specialization? How do you find the fields you want to join? Once you have found them, how do you identify, familiarize yourself with, and ultimately join their most pressing, ongoing, critical conversations? Finally, we will approach professionalization from both traditional and Altac perspectives. What kinds of careers do English PhDs pursue outside of the tenure track?

ENGL 610

Theory & Criticism:
The Art of the Study

Maggie Nelson

Th | 2:00-4:20 p.m. | Section 32810D

This course—subtitled “The Art of the Study”—will think about the possibilities of theory and criticism today by focusing on the art of the study. To this end, we will read critical and/or theoretical texts that take a singular concept or figure as their focal point of attention; our reading will include studies of laughter, humiliation, marine mammals, translation, Fassbinder, and more. We will also host a handful of guests in an effort to learn more about the lived landscape of critical and theoretical practice and publishing today. At the course’s end, we will have a chance to share our own original experiments in study undertaken over the course of the semester.



ENGL 620

Literature & Interdisciplinary Studies

Molly Bendall

W | 4:30-6:50 p.m. | Section 32812D

How do formal and semantic relations between poetry texts and images revise and shape our understanding of cultural and political issues, such as family, gender, ecology, disability, etc.? In this class we will look at contemporary books of poetry which incorporate visual materials from various sources: photographs, diagrams, maps, drawings, typographical designs, etc., and consider how these visual materials interact with the original writing of the poet.

More precisely, we’ll be examining how we read a poem if it’s accompanied by a visual image. Do we give equal attention to the image and the poem? How do the two mediums (visual and verbal) converse with each other?

Does one enhance the other, betray it, or do they become intertwined in a complicated network inseparable from one another? We’ll consider closely the following books: Monica Ong’s *Silent Anatomies*, *Poem that Never Ends* by Silvina López Medin, *Edges & Fray* by Danielle Vogel, *Fighting is Like a Wife* by Eloisa Amezcua, as well as *A Bony Framework for the Tangible Universe* by D. Allen. And we will also explore works by Jody Gladding, Krista Franklin, Blunt Research Group, Diana Khoi Nguyen, and others. The class will also think about book design and presentation. We’ll visit Doheny Library’s Special Collections and examine some unique examples of Artists’ Books. REQ: 1 Paper, 1 essay/review, and a creative project/presentation.

ENGL 640

Individual Writers

Geoff Dyer

M | 4:30-6:50 p.m. | Section 32814D

John Berger (1926-2017) wrote on so many different subjects, in such a variety of forms, that many readers encounter him in just one or two of his multiple incarnations: as an art critic and theorist, as Booker Prize-winning author of the novel *G*, as author of the documentary studies *A Fortunate Man* and *A Seventh Man*, as essayist, as...



John Berger

to this his ground-breaking TV series, *Ways of Seeing*, his life-long engagement as a public intellectual and activist, his collaboration with Theatre de Complicité and screenwriter on three of Alain Tanner's best films, and we are faced not only with the task of assessing his work but of reflecting on how the mechanisms of literary reputation function.

In this course we will examine the full range of Berger's work, investigating his formation—historical, cultural, and political—and considering the extent of his ongoing influence and legacy. But since it would be inappropriate just to *study* Berger, we will also use his example as an incentive for creative collaboration and an inspiration for formal experimentation.

ENGL 650

Multicultural Literary Studies:
Interracial Intimacies

Corrine Collins

F | 2:00-4:20 p.m. | Section 32610D

In the past thirty years, the number of interracial relationships and multiracial-identifying people has increased exponentially, and these numbers have been interpreted as signs of the U.S.'s increasing progressiveness and movement towards a "post-racial" society. No longer encumbered with the weight of "old" racial categorization, this post-racial society is one where race is transformed by the power of interracial love and multiracial people's rejection of the racial binary. This class studies the emergence of multiracialism as a racial politics in the late twentieth-century and examines arguments that celebrate the contemporary multiracial child as symbol of racial progress. While mainstream media has frequently presented multiracialism as liberatory, African diaspora literature has largely challenged the possibilities of race-neutral desire and post-raciality. Throughout this class we will read representations of various forms of interracial intimacy in novels, poetry, and memoir written by Mat Johnson, Erin E. Adams, Rebecca Carroll, Natasha Trethewey, and Danzy Senna. As the interracial is the presumed site of racial transformation, we will question the ways histories of enslavement and colonization impact interracial intimacy. In what ways do these texts present interracial intimacy as a fraught and/or worthwhile project? Is interracial desire inherently revolutionary, and for whom are the interracial family and friendship transformative? We will frame our discussion through Black Studies scholarship by Hortense Spillers, bell hooks, Jared Sexton, Christina Sharpe, Habiba Ibrahim, and Roderick Ferguson.

ENGL 693

Graduate Nonfiction Form & Theory

David Treuer

T | *4:30-6:50 p.m. | Section 32823D

**Course time may be adjusted to 5-7:20 p.m. to avoid a schedule conflict. More info coming soon.*

One of the pleasures (and perils) of nonfiction is that it can (almost) take any shape. This makes it different than fiction. There is, it feels, much more diversity in CNF than there is in fiction. Braided. Circular. Plotted. Meandering. Autobiographical. Linear. Story-like. Chronological. CNF can be, it seems, “like” almost anything. It is fundamentally Protean.

It is my belief that nonfiction can and should be a way of thinking and that for every NF project there is, out there (or rather, IN HERE—“here” being your brain), the perfect shape: that the shape of the thought or question will, in turn, shape the story; that the form will ideally mirror what it contains; that what it contains determines the form.

As such, this course will be something of a hybrid, the coming together of three different narratives. We will read and analyze examples of the form, produce analyses of those examples, and write and lightly workshop our own narratives.

ENGL 697

Graduate Fiction Writing Workshop

Danzy Senna

W | *2:00-4:50 p.m. | Section 32826D

**Course time may be adjusted to 2-4:20 p.m. to avoid a schedule conflict. More info coming soon.*

This is a fiction workshop—a space for you to share your work and get feedback on your works in progress, whether they be novels or short stories. The primary focus will be on practice more than theory. That said, a larger, guiding question I want to explore is: How does logic function in fictional narratives? I was struck by Amy Hempel saying in her *Paris Review* interview: “Stories. Are. Logical.” Charles Baxter touches on a related idea in his essay about what he calls “dysfunctional narratives.” How does this idea resonate with you and your experience of reading and writing? How does Baxter’s essay apply to the work we produce today, in the here and now, as opposed to when Baxter was writing this essay in 1997? How do matters of identity (race, gender, class, sexuality...) affect the supposedly neutral/universal matters of craft and logic?

ENGL 698

Graduate Poetry Form & Theory: *Poetry Manuscript Class: Forms of seeing, Ways of listening*

Mark Irwin

Th | *4:30-6:50 p.m. | Section 32828D

**Course time may be adjusted to 5-7:20 p.m. to avoid a schedule conflict. More info coming soon.*

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

While discussing the organization of important contemporary books of poetry, we will look carefully at each other’s, including the use of metaphor, tone, imagination, diction, the line, emotional amplitude, and scoring of the poem. We will continue to ask: how do we expand a book’s metaphorical speech? How do we use tone to make a book more readable? How do we use imagination in organizing a book? We’ll consider how several well-known poets organize and revise their books, and we’ll be looking at numerous visual works of art and a few musical compositions that might convey 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”



Lot's Frau; Anselm Kiefer

to Anselm Kiefer’s *Lot's Frau*, Sarah Charlesworth’s *Stills Series*, Julie Mehretu’s *Cityscapes*, Jorie Graham’s “The VR mask,” Annelise Gelman’s *Vexations*, 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. Several contemporary poets will *Zoom* into our active class. Everyone will revise a manuscript in progress, give a presentation on the work of a favorite contemporary poet/artist and, finally, we will visit the studio of Enrique Martínez Celaya and watch how he often erases and changes both figures and shapes on his canvases.

ENGL 700

Theories & Practices of Professional Development I

Ashley Cohen

MWF | 8:00-8:50 a.m. | Section 32830D

This two-unit course will help you find, finesse, and design a promising dissertation project. By the end of the semester, you should be able to write a successful prospectus. Even more importantly, you will understand what goes into the making of a successful dissertation project.

ENGL 701

Theories & Practices of Professional Development II

Devin Griffiths

MWF | 8:00-8:50 a.m. | Section 32831D

Where do you want to go, and how are you supposed to get there? This two-unit seminar is a practical workshop for the genres, codes, and strategies that will help advance your career as a researcher, writer, and professional after finishing your PhD.

Topics: application materials, including the job letter and CV; genres of the interview and presentation and how to prepare for them; sample teaching documents; writing samples; letters of support; job market analysis; the difference between liberal arts and R1 institutions; the difference between postdoc and job applications, CVs, and resumes; how to find non-academic jobs and hack the hiring system; and above all: how to cope with the stress of the market and to support each other.

The seminar will meet on a biweekly basis and, in addition, you will be expected to produce samples of all major job market documents.

****ENGL 563/THTR 501 (*Crosslisted*)**

Poetry and Prose into Drama

Instructor TBA

W | 5:00-7:50 p.m. | Section 63219D

Plays for the stage shall be written using public-domain poetry and prose as inspiration and source material, complemented with exploring poetry, prose, and varied dramas as context for the student writer. Students should be well-versed in literature and have written in one or more genres.

**This course is crosslisted with English but is housed in Theatre. For D-clearance, contact Admissions & Student Services in the School of Dramatic Arts: 213/740-1286; email sdainfo@usc.edu.

ENGL Course D-Clearance Requests

- Contact Janalynn Bliss (jbliss@usc.edu) to request D-clearance for workshop and form and theory courses (ENGL 693, ENGL 697, and ENGL 698).
- Contact Jeanne Weiss (jeannew@usc.edu) to request D-clearance for other graduate courses in English.