

The background of the entire page is a collage of various city and street scenes, including skyscrapers, residential buildings, and cars on a street. These images are arranged in a grid of white-outlined hexagons. The top half of the collage shows a city skyline with tall buildings against a light sky. The bottom half shows more detailed street-level views, including houses, cars, and a street with a utility pole.

# FALL 2021

## GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

**USC** Dornsife  
*Department of English*

ENGL-501

## History of Literary and Cultural Theory

Griffiths, Devin  
Senna, Danzy

M | 2-4:20P.M. SECTION: 32773

TBA.

ENGL-504

## Theories of Race, Class, and Gender: *Institutional Critique in Theories of Race, Class, Gender & Sexuality*

Tongson, Karen

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

SECTION: 32776

In Edward Said's 1993 Reith Lectures, a series of annual BBC lectures given by leading thinkers and public figures, he asks: "Are intellectuals merely the servants of special interests or do they have a larger responsibility?" The lectures were eventually collected into a book of essays on *Representations of the Intellectual*, in which he argued for the role of the intellectual—of the critic—as an "exile" or "amateur" who confronts systemic political problems, institutional power, and the allure of for-profit framings of intellectual labor and institutions.

This course takes Said's framework as a starting point to explore the forms of institutional critique, or what I like to imagine as a variety of "countercriticism" that has sprung from within academic institutions by scholars of color, women and queer/LGBT writers and thinkers since the mid-twentieth century. We will put pressure on the framing of disciplines, including the additional demands of "interdisciplines" (like gender and sexuality studies, ethnic studies, and comparative literature) as we strive towards understanding the very concept of "specialization," while forging models of practice that scrutinize, and potentially break from the "new" orthodoxies of the neoliberal university.

Readings include (but are not limited to) selections from:

Paula Gunn Allen, *Off the Reservation: Reflections on Boundary-Busting Border-Crossing Loose Canons*

M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations of Feminism, Sexual Politics, and the Sacred*

Rey Chow, *Ethics After Idealism*

Roderick Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*

Stuart Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, eds. Paul Gilroy & Ruth Wilson Gilmore

Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*

Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*

Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings*

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*

José Esteban Muñoz, *The Sense of Brown*, eds. Joshua Chambers-Letson & Tavia Nyong'o

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen*

Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*

Sarita Echavez See, *The Filipino Primitive: Accumulation and Resistance in the American Museum*

Hortense Spillers, *Black, White and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*

Gayatri Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*



# CITIZEN

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## CLAUDIA RANKINE



# Medieval English Literatures and Cultures:

## *The Salutory Voices of Satan in Middle English Literature*

Rollo, David

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

SECTION: 32779

At a critical juncture in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Jesus appears and delivers the following reassuring news to the protagonist: "Daughter, yow now knowe it was no Devyl that spoke to yow."

On more than one count, this obliging denial of devilry on the part of the Divine can only give pause. First, it appears 210 pages into the modern printed edition, and this self-identifying non-devilish Son of God has by this time, among other things, assured that Kempe will be a born-again virgin in heaven (despite the fact that she has already given birth to at least twelve children), proclaimed (with some help from Julian of Norwich) that her tears will guarantee salvation to hundreds of thousands of souls, and (most egregiously)

encouraged her to get in bed with His Father, the Godhead, and intimately acquaint herself with His body in the ultimate act of Divine matrimony.

There is, then, something decidedly odd about this unduly belated assurance that all that has so far exhaustively preceded is indeed legitimate. Kempe's entire narrative of madness and redemption begins with the voice of the Devil himself explaining that the protagonist needs no confessor because her own personal commitment to penance will be sufficient. *The Book of Margery Kempe* starts with the Devil telling Kempe that she in fact should be a good Lollard, a member of a contemporary and flourishing proto-Protestant sect.

The course will consider this ambiguous Divine/devilish naratology of the late Medieval text, particularly in the light of the Wycliffite and Lollard writings of the late fourteenth century and the attendant movement toward vernacularity over Latinity and the widespread criticism of the epistemological tyranny of the Church.

The term will be divided into three parts. The first will be on Kempe, Julian of Norwich and the exploration of the personal dialogue with the Divine and the accompanying anxiety over devilish machination. This will be followed by five weeks devoted mainly to Chaucer. We shall begin with *The Man of Law's Prologue and Tale*, and look at the way in which Constance, the protagonist (if such is the apposite term for someone who never really does anything) contrives to be at one and the same time one of the most unremittingly boring characters in the literature of the Middle Ages and manages to say one of the most incisive things ever scripted during the period: "Wommen are born to thraldom and penance, / And to been under mannes governance." The power that subordinates women in this way is God himself, who persistently saves Constance from hardship in order, with apparent sadistic

pleasure, to plunge her into a new cycle of torment, invariably, if oddly, at the hands of crazed, incestuously driven mothers-in-law.

This tale of hyperbolically masculinist Divine law and true Christianity gone underground (and the suspicion of hearing "a Lollard in the Wind" which serves as an epilogue to the Man of Law's performance) will act as an introduction to Chaucer's two favored ecclesiastics. The first is the Pardoner, a self-identified charlatan and, at first, seemingly a performer of all that seems unnatural. He ends up, however, being the very opposite, and, rather like Chaucer himself, is a masterful storyteller who receives material reward for making illusion into reality. This charismatic purveyor of productive falsehood will be analyzed alongside that most excruciatingly dull of all ecclesiastical hacks, the Parson, who brings *The Canterbury Tales* to a pious but somewhat ridiculous endpoint by reminding the reader of his or her duties to the teachings of Christ and to the ecclesiastics such as himself who would interpret His words.

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This call to Christianity is all the more challenging in the light of Chaucer's own Retraction to the *Tales* themselves. Are we really to reject the profitable and eminently enjoyable fictions that have preceded because, implicitly following the Parson's stipulations, we should be exclusively attentive to the Divine word? Or are we left as adherents to the Pardoner's performance of all we are told we should not be or do? We shall also briefly consider Chaucer's equally weird Retraction to *Troilus and Criseyde*.

The last third of the term will be on the Arthurian romance, with an initial emphasis on Malory's late-medieval/early-Renaissance *Le Morte D'Arthur*, a compendium of medieval lore printed and published during the first year of the Tudor dynasty and couched in a transitional idiom between late Middle- and early-Modern English.

Galahad, a consummate prig who rivals even Constance as a mindless pawn of Divine stricture, will be the focal figure of attention. After having spent three quarters

of the text riding around the Waste Land reprimanding people for their sinful ways and professing to be so much better than everyone else, this most Perfect of all Knights shockingly ends up actually saying something sensible.

In the aftermath of hacking a couple of dozen woefully over-matched knights to pieces, he, Percival and Bors pause to consider the carnage they have just wrought and to countenance the possibility they have just committed cold-blooded murder. Bors attempts to explain everything away by arguing that God wouldn't have allowed it to happen if He hadn't wanted it to. Galahad, however, begs to differ: "Yee say nat so. First, if they mys-seded ayenst God, the vengeance ys nat owris, but to hym that hath power thereoff." Galahad in fact has a good point: How do we know any longer what God permits, especially when the Kingdom of Logres is populated by ecclesiastics who, it turns out, are as often as not demons in disguise committed to perverting humanity through perverting the word of God? Or, to rephrase Galahad's question: How do we any longer know if it

is God or the Devil who speaks to us through the mediating figures representing the authority of the Church? And, if we don't know, why don't we all just become Protestants and circumvent suspect intermediaries altogether?

Finally, we shall consider a text that anticipates and answers these anxieties. Composed in the North Midlands far from the urban/courtly centers of the South East, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* offers a synthesis of the magical and the miraculous that presents Christianity in curious co-operation with supernatural forces that seem antithetical to it and offers, in Morgan Le Fay, who is a woman and (I am sure not coincidentally, bears the title "Le") is the agent of social change that later generations of writers seem anxious to promote.

Texts will include all of those already mentioned. We shall make brief forays onto the continent. We shall consider, during our study of *The Man of Law's Tale*, Christine de Pizan's open denunciation of a masculinist God from *The Book of the City of Ladies*, in addition to a

couple of her Saints' Lives in which she exemplifies the lack of empathy toward women she ascribes the traditional Godhead. In tandem with the Pardoner, we will also take a look at the sermon that Jean de Meung (according to recent studies, Archdeacon of Orléans in the 1270s) in *The Romance of the Rose* scripts for Genius, sacerdotal assistant to Nature. In context rather outrageously, given the fact that he is a priest (and that the author of the text was supposedly an Archdeacon), Genius preaches that the best way to get to heaven is to have as much sex as possible.

Secondary sources will include: Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages*, Robyn Malo, *Relics and Writing In Late Medieval England*, John A. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe*, and R.N. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*. Attention will also be given to more general studies of medieval literature by Carolyn Dinshaw, Alastair Minnis, Paul Strom and Lee Patterson. Students will do the reading, attend class, give a class presentation, and write a paper of fifteen to twenty pages.

# Renaissance English Literature and Cultures: *On Words*

Lemon, Rebecca

TTH | 2-3:20P.M.

SECTION: 32780

Polonius: "What do you read, my lord?"

Hamlet: "Words, words, words."

Hamlet's response to Polonius seems at once dismissive and exhausted. And his attitude to words is famously vexed: if words might move him to tears, he also condemns words as the province of the "whore," "drab," and "scullion." This course will, in contrast to Hamlet's prejudicial attack on valueless words, take words seriously, investigating their etymologies and their histories in order to illuminate the texts they live in. Drawing on Raymond Williams's approach to "keywords," this class begins by investigating the recent flourishing of scholarship on words, following what Jeffrey Masten has called a "renewed historical philology." In his appeal to attend to words and their histories, he writes, "We have not sufficiently attended to *etymology*—the history of words (the history *in* words)." Then, energized by readings and manifestos by Adorno, Williams, Masten, Roland

Greene, Cord J. Whitaker and others, we will begin our primary investigations: studying keywords in early modern literature. We will concentrate each week on a play or poem(s) in tandem with a critical piece that illuminates keyword(s) in the text. In a week on Shakespeare's sonnets, we begin to think with Kim F. Hall about the racialized constructions of "fair." With *Richard III*, we will study the words "now," "determined," and (following Ramie Targoff's essay on the play), "amen." For *Macbeth*, our keyword study concentrates on "weyward," following Ayanna Thompson's "What Is a 'Weyward' Macbeth?," as well as on the racialized metaphors of the play (following Cord J. Whitaker's *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking* and Farah Karim-Cooper's "Anti-racist Shakespeare"). Our study of *The Merchant of Venice* will concentrate on the words "quality," "shadowed," "bond," "conversion," and "blood" (reading the work of Patricia Akhimié on quality, Ian Smith on shadowed, Amanda

Bailey on bonds, and Janet Adelman on blood). For *Twelfth Night* we will consider the word "baffle" (reading Adam Zucker on this term and phenomenon). For *The Tempest*, we will consider the word "pinch," building on Patricia Akhimié's reading of that word in the play. As the course unfolds, I am open to your own reading interests, as we decide what keywords we study, in what texts.

## Course Requirements

- A short, written response (1 pg) to one event.
- A short (1-2 page) analysis of a sonnet keyword for our second week of class.
- Presentation/leading class discussion on a keyword.
- An article-length final paper (20-25 pages).
  - An abstract and working bibliography due week 9.
  - Draft due week 12.
  - Final paper due week 15.
- OR two short papers (10-12 pages), due week 9 and week 15.
- **Group Goal:** Compile our documents from presentations on keywords (both the sonnet exercise and your own presentation notes) into a Raymond Williams style keywords class book.

## Key Texts

Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, *Richard III*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*





# 19th Century British Literature and Cultures:

## *Annihilating Time and Space: From the Steam Engine to Steampunk*

Schor, Hilary

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

SECTION: 32784

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven!—Oh! times,  
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways  
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once  
The attraction of a country in romance!"

William Wordsworth, [The Prelude](#)

"Let the great world spin for ever down  
the ringing grooves of change..."

Tennyson, "Locksley Hall"

"Is it now?"

Spielberg/Philip K. Dick/ Scott Frank, "Minority Report"

This class is a graduate seminar in Victorian literature and culture, one that takes as its subject two questions, growing out of a single insight. The insight is that following the vast upheavals of the French Revolution, the Victorians invented a series of devices, objects and social structures that promised, in a recurrent phrase

of the period, to "annihilate time and space." Among these were the railways, the postal system, the telegraph, the radio, evolution, séances, the historical novel and the photograph. Note the sheer number of gadgets and apparatuses; note the rich historical period they constitute (even leaving out, say, the phonograph and the computer); note the way they circulate endlessly around the figure of the woman, be it "the telegraph girl," "the New Eve," [Galatea 2.0](#) or [Her](#), and ask yourself these two questions: one, if space and time were being annihilated once and for all, why did we keep needing additional ways of "getting over" them? And two, if space and time were to disappear, what would happen to the realist novel, which depends so heavily on the deployment of characters who change over time, progress through the landscape, who live in our world, and not Wordsworth's "romance" of the future? Travelling, counting, missing, writing to, hearing from, seeing, listening—where would the novel be without these activities? How does the novel change, as they do? And

why do contemporary novelists, from Neal Stephenson's [The Diamond Age](#) to Kate Atkinson's [Life After Life](#) to China Miéville's [Perdido Street Station](#), continue to return to this moment? Why, to borrow a title from William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, does the Victorian "difference engine" still generate (new/old) plots today? As we travel from Verne's trip around the world in eighty days to Wells's time machine, from that experiment in time known as the serial novel to films with split screens, reverse plots and multiverses, we will also undertake that other form of X-ray vision, the world of internal time, the representation of the psychological, the hysterical, the uncanny and the repressed. We will draw equally on novels, narrative film, history and cultural studies and literary and gender theory—the promise of the 19th century, the ruins of the 20th century, nuclear time and the fever of the archive, the world that, like Wordsworth's "romance" of the revolution, recedes forever as we follow it into the world of the post-millennial. Bliss!





ENGL-593

## Practicum in Teaching English and Narrative Studies

Freeman, Chris

W | 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 seven or eight times during the semester. You'll keep a journal based on your teaching, our sessions, your

reading, etc. There is one main text, *THE ACADEMIC SELF* by Donald E. Hall.

ENGL-660

## Studies in Genre *Poetry/ poetics Emphasis/ modernism's future*

McCabe, Susan

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

SECTION: 32816

This graduate course explores two enormously productive literary moments—1920-c 1923 in American poetry, and towards 2020- as the start towards another “renaissance” of intense poetic output. We begin with Isabel Wilkerson's study, *Caste*, which will inform our historical exploration. These moments, or instances, in both periods, reflect great cultural violence—and offer epistemological, ontological and aesthetic models for “new” identities, to break out of old forms. We start with Whitman and Dickinson and Du Bois. Among the 1920s readings, we will read Eliot, H.D., Toomer, as

well as counterpointing with an anthology of women poets of the Harlem Renaissance. We will spend the last half of the course reading poems that have emerged in the 21st century that offer yet other poetic continuities as well as innovations. Students will write a final essay, either lyrical non-fiction or a thesis-driven piece. Each student will guide the class to a key text on one occasion. Creative prompts will also be on offer. We engage in close readings, first of the “genre”—and how these poets upend their immediate past, and with this, find the “underground” voices of the 1920s take new shape in our time.





**ENGL-694**

## Graduate Nonfiction Writing Workshop

**Nelson, Maggie**

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

SECTION: 32824

This course will be primarily a workshop in which students will have the opportunity to garner feedback about original works of nonfiction, written in response to class prompts. We will also do a fair amount of reading, concentrating on recent and contemporary works of nonfiction roughly divided into the categories of self, other, and world. Hopefully we will also host at least one guest. Along the way, we will touch on questions of memory, narration, ethics, style, research, and formal experiment. Please come ready to write new work, respond to the work of your peers, and engage deeply with the work of published writers.

**ENGL-696**

## Graduate Poetry Writing Workshop

**Journey, Anna**

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

SECTION: 32826

"It is hard to believe farmers pollinate vanilla orchards / with toothpick-sized needles," Arthur Sze writes in his *ars poetica* "Circumference," "yet we do as needed." Amid the vast scales of global pandemic, systemic racism, and sociopolitical polarization, how can poets write with imagination, urgency, and nuance, braiding individual sensibilities and experience with the concerns of our historical moment? As a frame for considering our own poems in this graduate workshop, we'll be reading recent collections by Yusef Komunyakaa, Emilia Phillips, Ellen Bass, Ilya Kaminsky, Isabel Duarte-Gray, and Arthur Sze. (Note: booklist subject to slight revisions.) Each workshop participant will be responsible for giving a short, informal presentation on one of the poets on our reading list and leading the class discussion of several representative poems. During workshop, our critical focus will be geared toward helping each poet further develop their voice and style, with a view toward the shaping of a larger body of work, such as a chapbook or full-length poetry collection.

**ENGL-697**

## Graduate Fiction Writing Workshop

**Johnson, Dana**

F | 2-4:20P.M.

SECTION: 32827

The basic idea behind this fiction workshop (and most others) is that graduate students learn best about literary fiction by writing, by reading published examples of literary fiction, by reading the creative work of peer writers and constructively discussing it in class, by listening to others constructively discuss their work, by talking about their work in conference with the instructor, and by rewriting and revising. The aim of the course is to help you write quality literary fiction by providing you with a supportive, and, at the same time, critical environment and by helping you to develop a sound technical sense of your own work as well as the work of others. In addition to submitting stories or chapters from novellas or novels (approximately 40-60 pages by the end of the semester), you will read and critique the course texts as well as critique and discuss one another's creative work.

