

USCDornsife  
*Department of English*

# Graduate Course Descriptions

*Spring 2023*



## ENGL 508

History, Theories and Practice of Cultural Studies: *Cultural Studies in Television*

**Sarah Kessler**

M | 4:30-6:50 p.m. | Section 32778D

One might argue that no amount of “prestige” programming can undo popular perceptions of television as a debased cultural medium. One might also argue that no amount of brilliant research and writing in cultural studies can undo scholarly perceptions of the field as a debased academic arena. In this graduate seminar on cultural studies in television, we will neither claim TV for the fantasy of high culture nor dismiss it as “trash.” (Obviously.) We will have no patience, either, for debates on the validity of cultural studies as an area of inquiry. Rather, we will devote ourselves to examining the always already relevant mass medium of television through the theoretical frameworks cultural studies—and its attention to the intersections of class, race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and disability—provides for us.

Make no mistake! We will critique these theoretical frameworks! And we will critique TV down to its unabashedly capitalist foundations! But we will do this while remaining attentive to the highly classed, racialized, and gendered dynamics of both the popular and scholarly discourses that surround television and its positioning as an object of study. Our goal is to come out of the seminar with deeper knowledge of TV’s material and discursive histories, a workable genealogy of television studies (including a clear sense of its positioning within/without the field of cultural studies), and a toolkit for analyzing television beyond representation alone.

Expect to read the works of: Lynn Spigel, Kristen Warner, Anna McCarthy, Raymond Williams, Jason Mittell, Brandy Monk-Payton, Michele Hilmes, Stuart Hall,



Kristal Brent Zook, Lynne Joyrich, Rebecca Wanzo, Laurie Ouellette, Aymar Jean Christian, Racquel Gates, Susan Murray, Laurie Ouellette, Hunter Hargraves, Anna Everett, Alfred L. Martin Jr., Victoria Johnson, and more. Expect to watch a lot of TV.

## ENGL 540

19th Century British Literatures and Cultures: *The Romance of Revolution: Shock Cities and the Social Problem Novel*

**Hilary Schor**

T | 4:30-6:50 p.m. | Section 32787D

**The wine was red wine, and had stained the ground of the narrow street in the suburb of Saint Antoine, in Paris, where it was spilled. It had stained many hands, too, and many faces, and many naked feet, and many wooden shoes. The hands of the man who sawed the wood, left red marks on the billets; and the forehead of the woman who nursed her baby, was stained with the stain of the**

**old rag she wound about her head again. Those who had been greedy with the staves of the cask, had acquired a tigerish smear about the mouth; and one tall joker so besmirched, his head more out of a long squalid bag of a night-cap than in it, scrawled upon a wall with his finger dipped in muddy wine-lees—blood.**

**The time was to come, when that wine too would be spilled on the street-stones, and when the stain of it would be red upon many there.**  
—Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)

Can a street tell a story? In his classic study of urban life, *Victorian Cities* (1963), Asa Briggs coined the term “shock cities,” places, as he put it, that “forced to the surface what seemed to be intractable problems of society and government.” Manchester in the 1840s; Chicago in the 1890s; Los Angeles in all its post-modern glory



Charles Dickens circa 1867-1868

(tours of the Bonaventure Hotel!) and now – Mumbai? Singapore? The product of rapid growth, industrial transformation, migration, visual confusion, bustling marketplaces, dense rookeries of poverty and dark alleys shadowed by secrets, the great cities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shimmered with the promise (or the horror) of the future, and mapping them became the work not just of government ministers and social good-doers, but of peculiarly intrepid novelists. This seminar borrows its key terms from early Victorian literature, when the “social problem novel” (or, as it is more conventionally known, “The Condition of England novel”) exploded alongside the early sociology of Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* and *The Criminal Prisons of London*, new ventures in mapping disease and surveilling prostitutes, and of course, that great Gothic tale of urban dread, Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto*. The question of how to represent immense social change, the battle between the sociological eye and the novelist’s love of “romance,” will be staged for us in the interplay of Victorian social theory, 19<sup>th</sup>-century novels and poetry, and contemporary fiction, where these “intractable problems,” like the panoramas of urbanity that gave them shape, continue to generate a dizzying array of narrative and sociological experimentation. In addition to novels like Gaskell’s *Mary Barton* and Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend*, Henry James’s *The Princess Cassamassima*, Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* and Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, we will read more recent novels such as Pat Barker’s *Union Street*, Gloria Naylor’s *The Women of Brewster Place*, Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*, Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street*, Kate Atkinson’s *Behind the Scenes of the Museum* and Paul Auster’s *In the Country of Last Things*. Beyond Marx and Freud, we will draw on histories of sexuality, literary and cultural theorists including Walter Benjamin, Fredric Jameson, Pierre Macherey, T.J. Clark, Ariella Azoulay and Eugenie Brinkema, and the popular street and sound culture of the Victorian world, from “The Bitter Cry of Outcast London” and the callings-out of street vendors to Oscar Wilde’s *De Profundis* and George Gissing’s *The Nether World*. The city, in all its dreadful delight, will be ours to wander, to describe, and to plot.



The Oregon Trail, Albert Bierstadt, 1869

## ENGL 591

20th Century American Literatures and Cultures: *Unsettling the U.S. West*

**William Handley**

F | 2:00-4:20 p.m. | Section 32791D

“Each age writes the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions uppermost in its own time,” argued the first academic historian of the West, Frederick Jackson Turner. The western historian and novelist Wallace Stegner wrote about the “Doppler effect” of western American history: from the vantage point of the present, the sound of the past alters as it comes near, then recedes, like a passing train. The New Western History and settler colonialist studies have significantly revised Turner’s and Stegner’s ethnocentric work, foregrounding tragedy and indigenous “survivance” in the “geography of hope.” Yet the imbrication of past and present that Turner and Stegner understood inescapably still inheres in contemporary writing about the West.

This seminar will look at 19<sup>th</sup>-century literary and historiographical representations of the West through the lens of late-20<sup>th</sup> and early-21<sup>st</sup> century fiction and criticism. We will explore how writers and artists queer and revise real and imaginary pasts and in doing so alter paradigms of futurity, from Transcendentalism and Manifest Destiny to Postcolonial, Queer, and Anthropocene studies. Like the racialized and gendered subjectivities and bodies that make them matter, temporal and spatial imaginaries in the West are haunted fictions with real consequences.

To hear and critique the Doppler effect of western U.S. history, we will put into dialogue chronologically disparate but culturally overlapping texts. What is lost and gained by re-imagining the ghosts of settler colonialism’s depredations and its temporal ideologies—and by “filling in” the lost subjectivities of historical experience? Why is historical fiction about the 19<sup>th</sup>-century West on the rise in the 21<sup>st</sup> and what is at stake in these re-imaginings?

Writers include Emma Pérez, Cormac McCarthy, Judith Freeman, Robert Coover, Mark Twain, James Welch, Joan Didion, Sebastian Barry, and Percival Everett.

## ENGL 593

### Practicum in Teaching English and 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. Our main text will be *The Slow Professor* by Berg and Seeber (Kindle or paperback; easily accessible).

## ENGL 595

### Literary Studies Across Cultures: *Writing as an Other*

#### Viet Thanh Nguyen

M | 2:00-4:20 p.m. | Section 32795D

What does it mean to be an other? How does the other experience their 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



Toni Morrison

restricting creative, critical, and political inquiry. The writers we will read—novelists, poets, essayists, memoirists, critics, theorists—challenge multiple boundaries.

Most of 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. 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.

Some of the writers we will read include Toni Morrison, Ha Jin, Edwidge Danticat, Claudia Rankine, W.G. Sebald, Gloria Anzladúa, Roland Barthes, Frantz Fanon, Trinh T. Minh-ha, James Baldwin, Richard Wright, and more.

## ENGL 620

### Literature and Interdisciplinary Studies: *Time, Memory, and the Use of Materials in Painting, Poetry, and the Visual Arts*

#### Mark Irwin

W | 2:00-4:20 p.m. | Section 32820D

The internet and electronic media continue to change our notions of spatial and temporal forms, creating interruptions and reconstructions in the visual arts and poetry. How do visual artists such as Julie Mehretu, Cai Guo-Qiang, Mary Corse, Mark Bradford, Enrique Martínez Celaya, Anselm Kiefer, Gerhard Richter, and Marina Abramovic use innovative materials to convey new aspects of time and memory in their work? How do poets such as Milosz, Szyborska, Merwin, Ashbery, Yusef Komunyakaa, Larry Levis, Jorie Graham, Anne Carson, Natalie Diaz, Angie Estes, Forrest Gander, Alice Notley, Arthur Sze, and Peter Gizzi manipulate imagery, metaphor, diction, perspective, and syntax in order to protract, collapse, or accelerate memory and time? We will visit the studio of USC Provost Professor and painter Enrique Martínez Celaya and also watch a time-lapse film of a painting's continual changes while in progress.



The Island, Enrique Martínez Celaya, 2015-2022

This course will be conducted as a studio class during which time the poets, fiction writers, visual artists, and critical track majors will be working on a specific creative or scholarly project that addresses the use of time, space, and memory in a more contemporary sense.

#### Required Texts:

- Natalie Diaz. *Postcolonial Love Song*. Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2021.
- Forrest Gander. *Be With*. New York: New Directions, 2018.
- Jorie Graham. *From the New World: Poems 1976-2014*. NY: Ecco Press, 2014. ISBN-978-0-06-231540-3 Paperback: new/used. *Not Hardcover*
- Peter Gizzi. *In Defense of Nothing: Selected Poems*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2014. ISBN-13: 978-0819574305
- Diane Seuss. *frank: sonnets*. Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2021.
- Arthur Sze. *Sightlines*. Port Townsend: Copper Canyon Press, 2019.
- *Selections from the poetry* of Rick Barot, Yves Bonnefoy, Philippe Denis, Thomas Sayers Ellis, Jean Follain, Jane Hirshfield, Alice Notley, Carl Phillips, Mary Ruefle, Meredith Stricker, Wislawa Szymborska, Derek Walcott, and others.

## ENGL 630

Studies in Gender

Tania Modleski

W | 4:30-6:50 p.m. | Section 32813D

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, Teresa de Lauretis, 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: one oral report from which you will proceed to lead the discussion for 20 minutes or so, a final paper of 20 pages, and of course active seminar participation.



Alfred Hitchcock

## ENGL 640

Individual Writers: *Anne Carson*

### Maggie Nelson

T | 2:00-4:20 p.m. | Section 32814D

This class will focus on the work of Anne Carson. As we move through Carson's diverse body of work, we will pay special attention to issues of genre (including the relationships between lyric poetry, epic poetry, drama, translation, criticism, and scholarship); translation; ekphrasis; transtemporal immersions and reimaginings; the possibilities and limitations of the printed word; and the art of collabora-



Anne Carson

tion. Carson once said, "I never did think of myself as a writer. I know I have to make things. And it's a convenient form we have in our culture, the book, in which you can make stuff, but it's becoming less and less satisfying. And I've never felt that it exhausts any idea I've had . . . I don't know that we have poetry anymore. You have writing of lots of undefined kinds." This class will set up shop in this productive dissatisfaction, and explore "writing of lots of undefined kinds." Though we will be reading Carson most extensively, we will also dabble in work by related figures, from Artaud to Antonioni to Edward Hopper to Simone Weil to Judith Butler to Paul Celan (and select ancient Greeks, of course).

## ENGL 694

Graduate Nonfiction Writing Workshop

### David Treuer

T | 4:30-6:50 p.m. | Section 32833D

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 your work in the genre with the goal of helping you make and perfect at least two new nonfiction pieces.

## ENGL 697

Graduate Fiction Writing Workshop: *Novel Writing Workshop*

### Aimee Bender

Th | 2:00-4:20 p.m. | Section 32826D

This class will be a generative one for those writing novels. If you happen to have finished your novel... that is great! But if you sign up, just be very open to letting it change—it'll be less about us giving feedback on an entire chunk at a late stage, and more about reading parts in progress and talking about what's working best in those parts and seeing how this might help influence the whole. I'm hoping that the class will help with the seedlings, the kernels, the image or scene or moment as yet undeveloped, the few chapters that haven't moved forward, and we will aim to see what's there and try to help you see what's there. We'll read about the making of novels, and we'll read novels, and mainly you will write pages of novels and we'll read and discuss those. Plan to commit to a fair amount of reading and writing—but actually not tons of detailed commenting, as a light hand is often useful at this stage of the game. This will be an experiment, and flexibility is appreciated, too.

# ENGL 698

## Graduate Poetry Form and Theory: *Writing within the Ruins*

Susan McCabe

Th | 4:30-6:50 p.m. | Section 32878D

Psychic whiplash . . . . processes, fragments, copula, invocations, embraces, root-tracing, epigenetic, trauma, ecological bereavement-attunement, cosmic-inquiries, historical-ethical attunement—grief, love, joy . . . .

The above list of words represents a “ruin”—but also possibility, avenues to try out as we read poems and prose, as we pluck modes for writing in and among the ruins and possibilities of our contemporary landscape. What is there left to love? How do we love differently? How do we grieve; can we yet? What poetic or formal methods of modern and contemporary poets help refine your own question: what kind of poetry do I envision writing? You may not be able to articulate it fully, but by the end of the class, you will write a “Letter to a Young (or Another) Poet” that imparts what you have gathered or discarded. With embodied awareness, we will explore methods of resistance, or acceptance, or celebration, or grief, all when called for. We will read both prose work by poets and thinkers, as well as poems—through the lens of how culture meets poetry in each text. During these times of excavating history’s pathogens, what claims can poetry make—or not make? Moreover, what does it mean to be human, now, and how do you practice, now, with our diverse cultural inheritances and thefts? How do ecological worry and apocalyptic notions shape literary style and inquiry? We will read poems as essays and essays as poems to find dynamic new forms of writing about what we love.

I am aware this is a hefty reading list, but I hope to show the intersections between poetry, criticism, and memoir. If it gets too heavy, we can drop something. My notion is to mix 21<sup>st</sup> century poetry with earlier 20<sup>th</sup> c to mid 20<sup>th</sup> c., to provide the historical thread(s) linking them, all selected as they pertain to craft and, moreover, a way to discover how and where social inequities and imbalances are addressed—as they inform aesthetic choices.

### Possible and Likely Reading:

- Anonymous, *Upanishads*. Introduction and translated by Eknath Easwaran. Nilgary Press, 2007.
- Baudelaire, from *Paris Spleen*. (several selections of prose poems on Blackboard or photocopy)
- Benjamin, Walter. “Baudelaire.” (on Blackboard or photocopy)
- Diaz, Natalie *A Post-Colonial Love Poem*. Graywolf, 2020.
- Eliot, T.S., “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” and *The Waste Land*. (on Blackboard or photocopy)
- Eliot, T.S., *Selected Essays*. Harcourt, 1975. Edited by Frank Kermode
- Gay, Ross. *Be Holding*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020.
- <https://onbeing.org/programs/ross-gay-tending-joy-and-practicing-delight/>
- Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. *Dub: Finding Ceremony*. Duke University Press, 2020.
- H.D. *Notes on Thought & Vision* and *The Wise Sappho*. City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1982.
- Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press, 2016.
- Hillman, Brenda. *In a Few Minutes Before Later*, Wesleyan, 2022.
- Howe, Susan. *Debths*. New Directions, 2017.
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53265/from-my-emily-dickinson>.
- Iyengar, B.K.S. *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Harper Collins, 1993.
- Lorde, Audre. Edited R. Gay *Selected Work of Audre Lorde*, Norton, 2020.
- Perez, Craig Santos. *Navigating Chamoru Poetry*. University of Arizona, 2022.
- Rich, Adrienne. “Twenty-One Love Poems,” “Power.” (online Blackboard)
- Rilke, Maria R. *Letters to a Young Poet*. (online Blackboard or photocopy)
- Rukeyser, Muriel. *Life of Poetry*. (selections)
- *Book of the Dead*.
- Soldier, Layli Long. *Whereas*. Graywolf, 2017.
- Trethewey, Natasha. *True Crime: A Memoir*. Bloomsbury, 2022.



Ross Gay

Highly Recommended before Class Starts:

- \*Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste*. (recommended for prior to class; though I know it is a tough ask, I'd like you to try)
- Roethke, Theodore, *On Poetry & Craft* ("The Business of Poetry," "The Cat in the Classroom," "I Teach out of Love" recommended)
- Forché, Carolyn. *What You Have Heard is True*. (recommended)
- M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (recommended if you haven't read; on Blackboard)

We will have at least three workshops and several presentations. A letter (à la Rilke) is due at the end that sums up your "poetics" that would offer promise, direction, "trade secrets," and reality to other writers.

## ENGL 700x

### Theories and Practices of Professional Development I

**Ashley Cohen**

\*W | 6:00-8:50 p.m. | Section 32830D

The dissertation prospectus is an enormously important document—not only as your institutional ticket to ABD status, but also as your statement of intellectual purpose for the next few years. All this might make the prospect of prospectus-writing seem daunting. Thankfully, you will have guidance along the way. This class is designed to help you develop your dissertation idea into a fully fleshed-out project and to articulate that project with precision and clarity in a compelling prospectus. Producing a solid prospectus at this phase will make dissertation writing easier. It will also set the stage for fellowship applications and even the job market. In short, this course will be one of the most important experiences of your graduate education.

\*This class meets biweekly.

## ENGL 701x

### Theories and Practices of Professional Development II: *The Placement Seminar*

**Devin Griffiths**

\*\*T,Th | 8:00-8:50 a.m. | Section 32831D

Where do you want to go, and how are you supposed to get there?

This 2-unit seminar is a practical workshop for the genres, codes, and strategies that will help advance your career as a researcher and writer after finishing your Ph.D.

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, strategies for looking for alternative and non-academic jobs and networking, and above all: how to cope with the stress of the market and to support each other.

\*\*This seminar will meet on a biweekly basis at a day and time to be determined by the professor in consultation with the students who enroll. In addition, students will be expected to participate in periodic mock interviews and job talks. The placement director will also meet with each of you individually to review materials and discuss your strategy on the market.

This class will be hybrid—meeting both in-person and online to accommodate remote students.





## **\*\*\*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](mailto:sdainfo@usc.edu).

## **ENGL Course D-Clearance Requests**

- Contact Janalynn Bliss ([jbliss@usc.edu](mailto:jbliss@usc.edu)) to request D-clearance for workshop and form and theory courses.
- Contact Jeanne Weiss ([jeanne@usc.edu](mailto:jeanne@usc.edu)) to request D-clearance for the rest of the graduate courses in English.
- To request D-clearance for the cross-listed course, THTR 501 (ENGL 563), contact the School of Dramatic Arts.