

SPRING 2026 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

UNDERGRADUATE & PROGRESSIVE M.A. COURSES



WELCOME

Welcome to the Department of English. For the Spring 2026 semester, we offer a rich selection of introductory and upper-division coursework in English and American literature and culture, and creative writing workshops.

Please feel free to speak with any faculty in the English department, with one of our undergraduate program coordinators, or with Professor Bea Sanford Russell, our Director of Undergraduate Studies, to help you select the courses that are right for you.

All Department of English courses are “R” (open registration) courses, except for our GE-B courses that begin as “R” and then switch to “D,” and the following “D” courses, which always require departmental clearance: ENGL 240, 302, 303, 304, 305, 407, 408, 490, 491, 492, and 496. Departmental clearance is not required for “R” course registration prior to the beginning of the semester, but is required for “D” course registration.

Be sure to check the class numbers (e.g., 32734R) and class hours against the official Spring 2026 Schedule of Classes at classes.usc.edu.



Major Programs

English (Literature)
English (Creative Writing)
Narrative Studies

Minor Programs

English
Narrative Structure

Progressive Degree Program

Literary Editing and Publishing

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GENERAL EDUCATION



ENGL-172g

The Art of Poetry

INSTRUCTOR
Theis, Catherine

DAYS
TTh

TIME
8-9:20 am

SECTION
32606D

Are you curious about poetry but simultaneously frightened by it? This course is an introduction to the pleasures and wisdom of poetry. We will examine key elements of the poetic art (voice, image, metaphor, and form) with examples drawn from various moments in English literary history. The aims of the course are to develop your skills in critical reading and writing. We will learn how to perform a “close reading” of a poem, as well as cultivate what it might mean to inhabit a poetic experience. By the semester’s end, you will find that the careful study of poetry will enhance your understanding of language, the world, and your spirit.

ENGL-174g

Reading the Heart: Emotional Intelligence and the Humanities

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Gustafson, Thomas	MW	10-11:50 am	32613D

The university upholds itself as a place devoted to the study of critical thinking, and college curriculums give a pre-eminent place to courses in Western and non-Western thought. But where in our education do we develop emotional intelligence? Can EQ even be taught? What if the university offered a course where we study the realms of the heart and not just the head and where love of knowledge is combined with knowledge about love. This GE Humanistic Inquiry course will be such a course. It draws upon literature from Homer and Epicurus to James Baldwin and Sandra Cisneros and films such as “Groundhog Day” as well as Blues music and Rap to study sadness, anger, happiness and love. It also considers the importance of emotional intelligence in such fields as medicine and business and how listening with empathy can help us study conflicts in politics from the Peloponnesian Wars of 5th century BC through the American Revolution and the Civil War to the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising and the BlackLivesMatter and MeToo movements.

ENGL-230g

Shakespeare and His Times

Shakespeare and the Stage

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
James, Heather	MW	2-3:20 pm	32627D

How did William Shakespeare come to sum up an entire era, that of Renaissance England? How did his theatrical art come to inspire countless artistic, cultural, political, and economic enterprises from his day to our own? This course places Shakespeare’s drama in the cultural ferment that ultimately produced modern ideas about the theatrical or performative self, views about social mobility and change, and the idea of nationhood as paradoxically universal and polarizing. Shakespeare wrote and performed in a collaborative spirit, and we may better understand how the Renaissance relates to modern ideas about identity, society, and nation or empire when we place the period and its most famous author in the context of the broader theatrical scene of London at the turn of the century from the 1590s to the early 1600’s.

LOWER - DIVISION SEMINARS

ENGL-240

Literary Arts

INSTRUCTOR
Leal, Jonathan

DAYS
MW

TIME
10-11:20 am

SECTION
32633D

Why does literature matter? How do we, as readers, come to make sense of it for ourselves and others? What are the mechanics of literature on and beyond the page? In this course, we will consider these questions and more as we engage with a wide range of materials that mobilize literary creativity: fictions, essays, poems, songs, films, video games, and more. In the process, we will delve into the fundamentals of close reading and media-specific criticism, examining how writers respond to their times, how their works move us, and what literature reveals about our inner geographies and shared, complex world.



ENGL-240

Literary Arts

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Sanford Russell, Beatrice	TTh	9:30-10:50 am	32634D

Have you ever wondered about the big questions? Why literature matters in the first place, and why we should continue to read it in a world that is on fire? This course is an exercise in connecting the big to the small, the big-picture “why’s” to the practical matters of how to read literature closely, and how to write about it clearly.

To the question of why literature matters, Oscar Wilde would say that literature creates reality (and not the other way around); Percy Shelley would say that language-makers are the true source of cultural and political power; while Audre Lorde would say that literature names “the nameless so it can be thought.” By the end of the semester, you will develop your own answer. You can think of the course as a taster: you’ll get the flavor of key literary genres and forms, gain familiarity with ingredients of style and historical context, and sharpen your sense of your own literary palate—what you like, and what you want to learn more about over the rest of your undergraduate education and beyond.

We begin by discussing the “what” of literature, touching on genres across prose fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama, and engaging some basic formal components of diction, syntax, and imagery. We continue by thinking about the “how,” taking up the way that different interpretative frameworks shape our reading and writing, and considering how to engage literature in its historical contexts. And we finish with the “why,” placing particular emphasis on contemporary answers about literature’s role in the world we live in today, including in works by Kiese Laymon, Annelyse Gelman, and Patricia Lockwood.

ENGL-240

Literary Arts

Stories That Make Us: Young Adult and Children’s Literature

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Levine, Ben	TTh	2-3:20 pm	32638D

Come on a literary journey from the nursery through the college dormitory and worlds beyond. This course allows students to read widely within the world of literature oriented towards, and featuring, children.

The literatures we read (or have read to us) as young people shape us. The stories we are exposed to, and our reaction to them, help determine our relationship with literature for the rest of our lives. These books also serve an invaluable psychological function: preparing young people, via metaphor and/or relatable fictional example, for difficulties they may encounter as their horizons broaden. The course will have a special focus on the liminal period of adolescence and young adulthood, but will begin by establishing the didactic nature of early children’s books. It will attempt to capture the broad range of experience reflected in young adult literature, while also recognizing that some of the lessons or pleasures derived from these texts are universal.

Specific attention will be paid to how the use of symbolic language and worldbuilding is an early rhetorical tool to prepare children for the trials of adolescence and impending adulthood. Looking at how metaphors of betrayal, conflict, loss, and discovery are handled throughout various texts allows for insight into different approaches to navigating the maturational process. These texts therefore exist as both potential roadmaps for young readers, and chronicles of past experience for students on the course looking back. This is not only a chance to revisit your own childhood favorites from a more mature and nuanced perspective, but also the opportunity to examine the evolution of the concept of the child historically.

ENGL-261g

English Literature to 1800

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Tomaini, Thea	MWF	12-12:50 pm	32635D

This course traces the development of poetry and drama in England during the centuries between the First Millennium and the English Civil War. We will also look at important source texts and historical backgrounds that influenced these authors and their work. Students will learn the fundamentals of Old, Middle, and Early Modern English, and they will also learn the fundamentals of medieval and Early Modern poetic and dramatic forms. Authors and works will include selections of Old English poetry, Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, sonnets by Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare, Shakespeare’s Henry V, and Milton’s Paradise Lost, among other texts. Course texts include the Norton Anthology of English Literature, The Norton Selected Canterbury Tales with Parallel Texts, plus handouts TBA. There will be three quizzes, various in-class activities and assignments, a midterm, and a final exam.

ENGL-261g

English Literature to 1800

English Renaissance, Harlem Renaissance

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Smith, Ian	MW	10-11:50 am	32636D

What is “Renaissance,” and why have we attached that term to two of the most important periods in literary history: the English Renaissance, figuring largely in the literature to 1800, and the Harlem Renaissance? The term suggests periods of extraordinary artistic and intellectual output, leading us to question why such flourishing of literary work happened at specific moments in history. In this course we will examine the role of English literature in the construction of history, the birth of political identity, and the definition of the human in western culture. We will also explore the extent to which the Harlem Renaissance revisits the issues raised by the English Renaissance and broadens our understanding of literature, history, national culture, and epistemology.



English Literature since 1800

The Chartered Thames and the Chariot of Fire: Love, Law, and the Wandering Self

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Schor, Hilary	MW	2-3:20 pm	32641R

In 1799, William Wordsworth sat down to write an epic to rival Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and like any one of us attempting to begin a paper, he spent most of his time looking for a topic. First, he imagined "some British theme, some old/ Romantic tale by Milton left unsung." Then, he tells us, "More often turning to some gentle place Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe/ To shepherd swains, or seated harp in hand,/ Amid reposing knights by a river side," a poem, he says, which would have ended with "Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves." (I think we're all glad he didn't write that one!) Other subjects passed through his wandering mind -- Mithridates; Odin; "And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain/ Flying,[who] found shelter in the Fortunate Isles," and even "How Wallace fought for Scotland." Fortunately, before he began writing "Braveheart," he wrote the following:

Was it for this That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song, And, from his alder shades and rocky falls, And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice That flowed along my dreams?

And with that, he opened *The Prelude*, his masterpiece, in which, as he recounts it, "Fair seed-time had my soul..."

Wordsworth, of course, did not write an entire poem about rivers. Instead, he sub-titled his epic "The Growth of the Poet's Mind," and that focus on the individual quality of thought, imagination, perspective, what Wordsworth calls "expression," is the heart of this class. At a time of immense cultural change and profound self-doubt, the age of revolution, abolition, empire and industry, what does it mean to create a self

through words? Is a person a legal fiction; a citizen with rights; a slave who is "socially dead"; a "feme covert"; someone who walks the streets of a crowded city, or someone who sits alone in a room? What happens when we begin to be able to "make people"? And how does literature begin to answer such complicated questions? The class will encompass the two central goals of any introductory course: we will read through a kind of "survey" of major British authors, offering a wide range of voices, but we will also concentrate on developing the skills of reading and writing necessary to understand and to analyze the complexities of any work of literature. From the banks of the River Derwent to the slums of London; from Newgate Prison to the shores of Botany Bay; from the colonial offices in Egypt to the playing fields of an English boarding school (no, not Hogwarts, but feel free to think of HP!), our focus throughout will be on individual acts of perceiving and creating meaning. Who sees; who speaks; whose heart breaks; and who gets to write about it? Texts will include Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Zadie Smith's *The Fraud*, as well as the poetry of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Browning, Tennyson, Hopkins and Yeats.



ENGL-262g

English Literature since 1800

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Collins, Corrine	TTh	11-12:20 pm	32640D

This course focuses on key movements and major themes in literature from Britain and its empire. We will explore a range of literary genres with particular focus on the rise of the novel and its impact on post- and anti-colonial literary traditions. We will read texts from the British Isles, Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana, Nigeria, Ghana, India, and South Africa, and will focus on narratives of race, gender, sexuality, class, nationality and their expressions of power. Throughout, we will examine the impact of Britain’s imperial expansion and the relations of power that structure the very idea of “British” literature (which texts count and why?) while attending to histories of migration and diaspora.

ENGL-263g

American Literature

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Handley, William	TTh	12:30-1:50 pm	32647D

This introduction to American literature will address some of the major themes of human experience and culture over the last four centuries on the American continent. These include the idea of the individual in relation to the social world; the construction of race, class, gender, and religion in relation to democracy; and the myth and reality of the U.S. West. In exploring these topics, we will examine the artistic and social meanings of literary genres such as autobiography, drama, essay, novel, short story, and poetry. Additionally, we will aim to develop literary critical skills, to improve our capacities as readers, thinkers, and writers. By understanding and analyzing such elements in interpretation as context, audience, figural language, and narrative structure, we will explore how literature represents and critiques racial hierarchies and gender difference and related limitations on individual freedom in U.S. culture and ideology -- how, in the largest sense, texts shape Americans’ understandings of themselves, their pasts, and their futures.

ENGL-263g

American Literature

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Gustafson, Thomas	MWF	1-1:50 pm	32645D

This course seeks to help students read with insight and appreciation significant works of American literature, including short stories, novels, poems, plays and essays by a spectrum of writers including Anzaldua, Baldwin, Cisneros, Douglass, Erdrich, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Hughes, Hurston, Kingston, Melville, Morrison, Twain and Yamashita. Since these writers, like so many American authors, were preoccupied with the fate of America itself--or since their works can be read in part as commentaries upon the success or the failure of the country to fulfill its ideals as articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution--this course emphasizes the relationship of literary works to their political and cultural contexts. The United States is a country governed by the words of the founding fathers, but American writers have constituted another republic of words--a literary tradition--that will be studied as a congress of voices debating American ideals and their contradiction.

ENGL-263g

American Literature

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Rowe, John	TTh	11-12:20 pm	32646D

Although the term multiculturalism is relatively recent, dating to the debates in the 1980s and early 1990s, there is a long history of multicultural writing in the United States that constitutes one important national literary tradition. We will use multiculturalism, then, as our organizing principle, in order to understand cultural definitions of the United States in different historical periods as well as to gain a better understanding of the heritage of the recent concept of multiculturalism. Not all of the writers we will read are advocates of multicultural politics; some defend contrary views and in doing so give us a better understanding of the conflicts that culminated in the culture wars of the 1980s and our contemporary debates. Figuring out the cultural politics of the writers we are studying, both in their own times and for ours, will be one of our projects. We will read: Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Huntly; Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself; John Rollin Ridge (Yellow Bird), The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta; Henry James, Daisy Miller; Gertrude Stein, Three Lives; John Neihardt and Nick Black Elk, Black Elk Speaks; Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God; and Maxine Hong Kingston, China Men. Midterm, final, and short essay.

ENGL-270g

Studying Narrative

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Theis, Catherine	TTh	12:30-1:50 pm	32653D

What is narrative? How does it work? What makes a good story? Why do we even bother telling stories? In this course, we will look at the concept of narrative through the components of plot, point of view, character, action, and time. Because a story's form and medium influence our understanding of it, we will examine short stories, poems, essays, photographs, films, diaries, notebooks, drama, and novels.



ENGL-270g

Studying Narrative *Inside Story*

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Vogel, Marci	MWF	12-12:50 pm	32651D

In English, we often exchange the words “story” and “narrative,” a word that comes to us from an old root meaning “to know.” But beyond this casual turn of phrasing, what do we know about narrative and its inner workings? And why might such knowledge matter? French theorist Roland Barthes claimed that narrative “is simply there, like life itself,” while California poet Lyn Hejinian proposed that “an interest in discovering and perhaps creating relationships between things is, in essence, a narrative interest.” In this course, we’ll consider a wide range of narrative threads across genres, cultures, and eras to better understand, appreciate, and evaluate both the stories we are told and the stories we tell.

Along with literary fiction and nonfiction, we’ll talk fairy tales, comics, journalism, film, podcasts, poetry, and music. We’ll take a serious gander at riddles, jokes, and TED Talks, gaining fluency with key theories of narrative studies. We’ll attend to questions of empathy and ethics, interrogating gossip, spin, and yarns that stretch at truth. Rather than getting lost in any one story, this time around we’ll navigate the labyrinth from within, giving voice to the many stories of our lives as we go. Whether the telling is traditional or experimental, outlandish or cautionary, our approach will be generous and good-spirited, critical and creative with an insider’s know-how of narrative techniques and decisions that lead to new and enduring resonances.

Studying Narrative

Reckoning with Authority Through Narrative

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Levine, Ben	TTh	5-6:20 pm	32650D

This wide-ranging course invites students to reflect on the complex relationships between authority and literature. This topic encompasses the portrayals of characters wrestling with authoritarian structures and structures within their texts, whether, parental, political, or magical. It also extends to how narratives themselves can provide social criticism or commentary for both the contemporary and the historical period. Finally, this course allows us to examine how the nature of “telling a story” can imply structural authority in itself, and how our own critical interpretation can rebalance that relationship.

We’ll be exploring the nature of authority through the mediums of short story, narrative poems, drama, novels and graphic novels. Our readings will take us from the well-trodden halls of classically canonical Literature, to the more familiar shores of contemporary texts, with excursions into the realms of the dystopian, and several flavors of the fantastical. Together we’ll engage with the many narrative depictions and metaliterary reactions to authority, including but not limited to: rebellion, resistance, resignation, co-option, capitulation, exile, satire, solitude, independence, insanity, and death. We’ll be looking at the authority of narrators within texts, the systems that inform those narrators’ point of view, and ultimately what authority lies with us as readers.

This course will draw upon a wealth of critical voices to help contextualize the works we’ll be reading by authors including the Brontes, Virginia Woolf, Chinua Achebe, Jean Rhys, Alan Moore, Arthur Miller, Samuel Beckett, and Donna Tartt. But the most important resource this semester will be the discussions that will make up most of our meetings. We will come to a deeper and more involved understanding of narrative through a direct engagement with texts, and with each other.

Introduction to Dramatic Literature

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Mccarthy, Harry	MW	12-1:50 pm	32654D

This class will introduce students to the principles of dramatic literature and how they change over time. Beginning with a close reading of Aristotle’s Poetics, the basic text of Western drama, we will examine how the six central tenets of plot, character, thought, diction, music, and spectacle have been adapted by playwrights and theatermakers across two millennia. From Greek tragedy through Shakespeare to Lin Manuel Miranda’s Hamilton, we will consider the political and ethical purposes of theatre as well as its immense value as entertainment in and of itself. Throughout our discussions, you will learn to read dramatic texts as blueprints for performance as well as incomplete records of theatrical pasts, attending as closely to what ‘isn’t there’ as the words on the page. Particularly central to our discussions will be a focus on the body in performance and the various ways in which it is categorized, marked, and exhibited – the uses, in other words, to which bodies in theatrical space are put.

ENGL-297g

Introduction to the Genre of Nonfiction

Into the Wild: A Field Guide to the Tangled Woods of Nonfiction

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Minas, Steven	MW	2-3:20 pm	32656D

In *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Rebecca Solnit argues that nonfiction, like photography, “poses the challenge of finding form and pattern in the stuff already out there.” This means that unlike fiction, which “lets you start with a blank canvas,” nonfiction relies for its art on pre-existing material, what Charles Dickens’ utilitarian character Gradgrind calls “facts.” Nonfiction, in other words, doesn’t make things up or invent alternative worlds, but instead takes real people and true events as its subject.

According to recent data, nonfiction, which includes memoirs, history, biography, self-help, psychology, philosophy, essays, travelogues, and dozens of other categories, accounts for 85%-90% of all books published. This leaves only about 10% for fiction and roughly 1% for poetry. It’s clear that the reading public likes “the true,” which suggests that nonfiction constitutes a large part of what defines us as a society. It’s one of the more influential ways in which its authors as well as readers engage critically with the world, whether through personal experience or through prolonged research. In this class, we will take our own trip into the tangled woods of “the true” by critically examining a range of nonfictional works (both in the long and short form). We will specifically look at form, style, and process, examining how these aspects of a work condition the finished product. In a way, this course provides another perspective on how we tell stories about ourselves, specifically ones that try and tell the truth. Authors assigned for the course might include Tracy Kidder, Brian Dillon, Eve Babitz, Edward Said, John Krakauer, Mark Grief, Rebecca Solnit, Susan Sontag, Imani Perry, Henri Cole, Cathy Park Hong, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and Jan Zwicky.

ENGL-300

The Art and Craft of the Essay

The Art and Craft of the Essay

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Lord, M.G.	T	2-4:50 pm	32677D

This course will make you excited about essays again. It will also stress the importance of revision in the essay-writing process. The first part of the course will involve reading some superb practitioners of the form and discerning how they achieved what they achieved. Then you will apply techniques from the assigned texts in short creative exercises. The second part of the course will involve writing an original essay, workshopping it in class, revising it, and—yes—workshopping the revision. In real life, editors require more than one polish of a so-called finished version.

The assigned texts will include essays by James Baldwin, Virginia Woolf, Joan Didion, E.B. White, Rebecca Solnit, Jia Tolentino, Nora Ephron, Geoff Dyer, Jonathan Lethem, and others.

This course will be useful for students considering the Literary Editing and Publishing (LEAP) progressive degree program at USC.

CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS

ENGL-302

Writing Narrative

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Mullins, Brighde	M	2-4:50 pm	32681D

Mark Twain, like most writers, found it easier to write long than short. He received this telegram from a publisher: “NEED 2 PAGE SHORT STORY 2 DAYS.” Twain replied: “NO CAN DO 2 PAGES 2 DAYS. CAN DO 30 PAGES 2 DAYS. NEED 30 DAYS TO DO 2 PAGES.” With Twain in mind, this seminar will consider the artistry of short pieces that exhibit an economy of means. We will consider the structure and the effect of the short form in multiple incarnations: aphorisms; epitaphs; fragments; theatre texts; flash and sudden fiction; haiku; the lyric poem; as well as short films. We will also consider how social media and technology have influenced our attention spans as audiences, as readers, and ultimately, as writers. We will read work by Basho, Samuel Beckett, Gwendolyn Brooks, W.B. Yeats, and Kafka, and we will view short films by Peter Greenaway, Jane Campion and Todd Haynes. We will also read critical theory that addresses the short form and the fragment, including essays by Maurice Blanchot. Writing exercises will give students a chance to try their hand at many of these forms, and the class will include both a creative and analytical writing component.

ENGL-302

Writing Narrative

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Ingram, Brian	Th	2-4:50 pm	32680D

Which is most important to you: memory or the imagination; history or creativity? In our time together, you’ll write your truth. English 302 is a narrative workshop providing an introduction to the techniques and practices of narrative prose. We will focus on writing narrative in two primary genres: fiction and literary non-fiction. Of course, even those two distinctions are often blurred. In every case, our job is to continue to seek your insights with a precise diction, in context. Subsequently, we will also spend some time looking at prose poetry, if only to get a sense of how all the genres are mutually related forms of expression. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to identify the mechanics and principles of their preferred narrative forms.

ENGL-303

Introduction to Fiction Writing

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Ingram, Brian	T	2-4:50 pm	32685D

English 303 is a fiction workshop in which we practice the techniques of prose narratives. The emphasis is on writing first and analyzing next. Thoughts and feelings crafted into words become real objects in the world, gifts we can all share. Expect to exit the class with finished stories and to formulate specific ideas about craft for maintaining your personal momentum. Once you discover the right methods for you, beauty and meaning will follow.

ENGL-303

Introduction to Fiction Writing

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Sligar, Sara	W	2-4:50 pm	32684D

This course combines writing exercises, workshops, and seminar discussions to explore the craft of fiction. We will begin by studying how authors use character and setting to craft full fictional worlds, and then exploring these topics ourselves through short writing assignments. As the semester progresses, we will move on to writing and workshopping longer stories. There will be an emphasis on learning how to give effective feedback as a window into understanding story structure and form.



ENGL-303

Introduction to Fiction Writing

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Ulin, David	Th	2-4:50 pm	32686D

What is fiction? It seems the most basic of questions to answer: Fiction tells a story that is made up. And yet, there is a lot of truth in fiction; there has to be, if it is to be believed, and to work. In this class, we will look at fiction as a form that grows out of a series of relationships — between memory and imagination, truth and emotion — and investigate the way they are transmogrified through the lens of art. These are the issues faced by every fiction writer, and they will be at the center of our work. Although primarily a workshop — and it is the instructor’s intention that each student have the opportunity to be workshopped twice during the semester — the class will also use select assigned readings to frame a discussion of the larger issues involved in fiction writing, from structure and point-of-view to empathy and revelation, as well as character development and conflict, and the inherent subjectivity of point-of-view. During the semester, students will write two short stories, each of 10-15 pages in length, and will be asked to experiment with different styles and approaches to narrative. At the end of the semester, students will be asked to choose one of their stories and turn in a revision as a final project.

ENGL-304

Introduction to Poetry Writing

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Campbell, Christian	T	2-4:50 pm	32691D

Introduction to the techniques and practice of writing poetry.

ENGL-304

Introduction to Poetry Writing

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Bendall, Molly	M	2-4:50 pm	32689D

In this course we will read and study a wide range of contemporary poetry in order to become acquainted with many styles, trends, forms, and other elements of poetry. Students will write poems exploring some particular strategies. The class is run as a workshop so lively and constructive participation is necessary with attention to analytical and critical skills. Hopefully, each person will discover ways to perfect and revise his or her own work. There will always be lots of room for misbehaving in poems and other adventurous pursuits. Several poems and written critiques are required. Poets include Frank O’Hara, Elizabeth Bishop, Michelle Brittan Rosado, Jake Skeets, John Murillo, Khadijah Queen, Natalie Diaz, and others.

6 poems, written critiques, class participation required.

ENGL-403

Creative Nonfiction Writing

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Nelson, Maggie	Th	2-4:50 pm	32729D

Do you want to write about “real life” (as opposed to writing stories or poems), but aren’t sure how to make nonfiction into creative art? Do you like analyzing literature or culture, but feel frustrated by the constraints of the academic paper? If so, this course is for you! Liberated from such constraints, we will be experimenting with nonfiction in many different forms, including the diaristic, memory writing, journalistic or opinion pieces, literary essays, and more. Expect to read and write, and share your creative work with your peers. This course is open to students who have completed ENGL 303 or 305, or by submission of a writing sample and subsequent permission of the instructor. If you’re submitting a writing sample, please send a short piece of nonfiction (under 20 pages) to margarmn@usc.edu, along with a list of creative writing classes previously attended.

ENGL-406

Poetry Writing

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Lewis, Robin	W	2-4:50 pm	32733

A practical course in poetry writing.

ENGL-405

Fiction Writing

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Senna, Danzy	M	2-4:50 pm	32732D

In this workshop setting, students will be required to share their own original fiction and to discuss the works of their peers in a generative, supportive and process-oriented atmosphere. Through in- and out-of-class prompts, we will explore the elements of literary fiction - including characterization, dialogue, scene and setting. Students should expect to write and present two full short stories, as well as a complete revision of one. Students also will do weekly readings from a literary anthology and do an in-class presentation on one of the assigned authors.

ENGL-408

Advanced Poetry Writing

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Journey, Anna	Th	4:30-7:20 pm	32738D

In this reading and writing intensive advanced poetry workshop, students will read six collections of contemporary American poetry; write and carefully revise five to six poems for inclusion in a final portfolio; and post weekly Blackboard responses (two paragraphs or longer) to the required texts. Admission by application only. Prerequisites: ENGL 304 and 406.

ENGL-343

Images of Women in Contemporary Culture

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Kessler, Sarah	MW	2-3:20 pm	32703D

The #MeToo movement has provoked widespread reassessments of popular representations of women. What seemed like progressive or empowering images of femininity or female-ness a mere ten years ago may today appear cringe-worthy. How and why has this cultural shift taken place? And how might this transformation help us to rethink traditional understandings of gender as a binary opposition between “male” and “female”? In this course we will not merely explore how various media depict women; we will examine, using the tools of feminist, literary, and political theory, how these media construct and regulate the category of “woman” in the first place. Our approach will be intersectional, since gender does not exist in isolation from other identity categories such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality. Critical readings will include essays by Laura Mulvey, bell hooks, Sarah Banet-Weiser, Andrea Long Chu, and others. Contemporary media texts will range from TV shows such as *Sex and the City*, *Insecure*, and *Pose*; to films such as *Hustlers* and *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*; to pop songs by Beyoncé and Taylor Swift; to makeup tutorials on YouTube; to the novels of Elena Ferrante and their recent televisual adaptations.

*This course satisfies the university’s diversity requirement.

UPPER- DIVISION SEMINARS

ENGL-350g

Literature of California

Literature of California

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Valenzuela, Gabriela	TTh	9:30-10:50 am	32705D

What does California’s literary history look like? Who gets to tell its stories? This class introduces students to California’s vast and diverse literature. We will read folklore in translation, memoirs, poetry, essays, short stories, and novels written by and about Californians that offer glimpses into the state’s Native American and Indigenous beginnings, Spanish colonization, the transition from Mexican territory to a US state, and, finally, our contemporary moment.

ENGL-352g

Bookpacking

BOOKPACKING AMERICA - exploring US regional cultures through classic and contemporary novels

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Chater, Andrew	TTh	9:30-10:50 am	32707D

This class is an exercise in ‘bookpacking,’ an innovative form of literary adventure in which novels serve as portals through which to explore American regional history and culture.

Over the course of the semester, we’ll take a metaphorical road trip through the different regions of the USA (New England, the Appalachia, the South, the Hispanic Southwest and so on) and we’ll use one novel per region to unpack each region’s culture, past and present.

The course promises a vibrant overview of the myriad facets of the American experience, offering an important exercise in cultural empathy and understanding - all the more vital in this age of profound division.

Offered for both English and GE, the course offers a holistic approach to the humanities, combining elements of literature, history, geography, politics and social studies. If you are interested in a course that celebrates literature with a real world application, this class is for you. All majors welcome.

The class is led by Andrew Chater, a contemporary educator and award-winning BBC historian who has designed a variety of classes for USC students on the ‘Bookpacker’ model. Please visit www.bookpackers.com for a wealth of content on bookpacking at USC, and www.andrewchater.com for more information on the class instructor.

ENGL-352g

Bookpacking

BOOKPACKING LOS ANGELES- an immersive journey through the culture and literature of L.A

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Chater, Andrew	Sat	10-5:00 pm	32850D

This 4-unit class offers students a unique opportunity to dive deep into USC’s vibrant and extraordinary home city.

This is an immersive class - meaning that we’ll travel beyond the classroom. Every Saturday for 10 weeks in the Spring Semester, we will meet for a seminar on campus in the morning - and then, in the afternoon, we will head off campus and visit a different facet of Los Angeles.

The class is an exercise in ‘Bookpacking’, a cross-humanities experience using novels as ‘guidebooks’ to places and people. Over the semester, we will read a variety of classic and contemporary LA fiction - from Raymond Chandler to Joan Didion - and we’ll explore these fictional worlds both conceptually and on the ground. We’ll walk the same streets as the characters in the stories, we’ll dig into context and history - and we’ll reflect on the intersection between literary landscapes and the contemporary cultures of LA.

The class is led by Andrew Chater, a contemporary educator and award-winning BBC historian who has designed a variety of classes for USC students on the ‘Bookpacker’ model. Please visit www.bookpackers.com for a wealth of content on bookpacking at USC, and www.andrewchater.com for more information on the class instructor.

The class is accredited for General Education - all majors welcome.

Bookpacking

BOOKPACKING NEW ORLEANS - a cultural and literary journey

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Chater, Andrew	TBA	TBA	32708D

‘Bookpacking’ classes at USC are immersive experiences in which students read classic and contemporary novels on location. They combine cultural exploration with literary adventure.

This Maymester class offers students the chance to go ‘bookpacking’ through New Orleans and the bayou regions of Southern Louisiana.

‘Bookpacking’ is all about cultural connection, using fiction to make empathetic connections with the world around us. New Orleans makes for a wonderful destination for this kind of ‘bookpacking’ experience because it’s so culturally dynamic, formed of a fusion of folk pathways (French, Creole, Cajun, Haitian, African-American, White Protestant) unlike anywhere else in America.

Over the course of a four week journey, we will explore this vibrant region through a handful of classic and contemporary novels, which we will read as we travel - using fictional texts as cultural guidebooks through which we can ‘unpack’ place and people, past and present.

The class is led by Andrew Chater, a contemporary educator and award-winning BBC historian who has designed a variety of classes for USC students on the ‘Bookpacker’ model. Please visit www.bookpackers.com for a wealth of content on bookpacking at USC, and www.andrewchater.com for more information on the class instructor.

The class is accredited for General Education - all majors welcome.

Contemporary Poetry

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Mccabe, Susan	TTh	9:30-10:50 am	32711D

This course will follow the thread of vibrant varied poems from 20th century Modernism, Confessionalism, Beat poetry, Black Arts Movement, New York school (among them H.D., W.B. Yeats, Eliot, Jean Toomer, Elizabeth Bishop, Gwendolyn Brooks, Adrienne Rich, Frank O’Hara, Allen

Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath). We will spend the first four week on this foundation for contemporary late 20th and 21st century poetry, including the work of Jorie Graham, Gary Snyder, Terrance Hayes, Brannndon Som, Brenda Hillman, Ocean Vuong, and other emerging voices. Requirements: participation, two short papers, several poems in dialogue with studied poems, a final exam.



ENGL-362g

Contemporary Poetry

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETRY

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Bendall, Molly	MWF	11-11:50 am	32712D

The contemporary poems we read for this class will emphasize narrative strategies. We will consider how recent poetry constructs “stories.” We’ll discover how narrative and story-telling techniques are incorporated, manipulated, and often subverted. We’ll read many types of narratives, such as quests, family sagas, historical events, and fantastic fables. There will be a focus on close readings of individual poems as well as book-length narratives. and we will read both well-known poets and new poets with recent books. Poets include Cornelius Eady, Todd Kaneko, Shivani Mehta, Jorie Graham, Arthur Sze, Monica Rico, Diana Khoi Nguyen, Austen Leah Rose, John Murillo, Rosa Alcala, and others.

Participation, 3 papers, written responses/quizzes, creative assignments, class presentations.

ENGL-363g

Contemporary Drama

Contemporary Drama: The Other English Plays

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Berg, Rick	TTh	3:30-4:50 pm	32713D

This course will look at contemporary drama in English... not English drama. The class intends to move beyond the confines of current British theater and to introduce students to plays from elsewhere in the English-speaking world. We will read these works in order to gain a sense of how other people in places often missed in literature courses, all those elewheres, are creating drama, performing themselves, presenting their interests, and revealing their understanding of their history and our world. In this instance of contemporary anglophone drama, we will read texts from former British colonies in the Pacific and Southeast Asia. We will read texts from Singapore, New Zealand, and Australia, indigenous and otherwise. The object of the course is clear: to expand our horizons. The goal is even clearer: to move the margins to the center and to engage with the experiences of other peoples. (When possible, the course will include films to help enhance understanding.)

The Modern Novel

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Kemp, Anthony	TTh	3:30-4:50 pm	32714D

When does the “modern” novel begin? One answer might be that the first modern, psychological novel is Madame de La Fayette’s *La Princesse de Cleves* of 1678. For the purpose of this course, I’m going to define the modern sensibility as beginning in the nineteenth century with the three intertwined artistic movements of Modernism, Decadence and Symbolism. Writers and visual artists became convinced that humanity was entering an experience of self and culture that was qualitatively different from what it had been throughout the historical past, and was perhaps entering a post-humanity or inhumanity. The human, as we were accustomed to thinking of it, was over, replaced by an unknown something else. Paul Verlaine wrote of the principal originator of Modernism, Decadence and Symbolism, “the profound originality of Charles Baudelaire is to represent powerfully and essentially modern man . . . modern man, made what he is by the refinements of excessive civilization, modern man with his sharpened and vibrant senses, his painfully subtle mind, his brain saturated with tobacco, and his blood poisoned by alcohol.” In the words of Joyce’s protagonist in “The Dead,” the world was entering “a thoughttortured age.” We will trace this crisis of humanity from the fin de siècle, with its sense of exhaustion and foreboding, into the calamitous twentieth century, the cruelest in all of history. Throughout this period of unprecedented dislocations, writers sought new subjects, new feelings, new formal experiments, with which to interpret and challenge their unfamiliar and vertiginous new world. These novels are all adventures into strangeness, efforts to break with conventional worlds that are no longer tenable, to break through into some alternative intensity, knowledge, love, redemption.



Literary Genres and Film

Literary Genres and Film (Adaptation/Intertextuality)

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Mullins, Brighde	MW	10-11:50 am	32715D

“The Pleasure of Intertextuality... is inherent in all texts, but perhaps is the defining principle of any adaptation.” -Linda Hutcheon

This course combines the close reading of works of fiction and nonfiction with the attentive viewing of their film adaptations— in that order. We’ll always begin with the original text. After we read works within their cultural and historical contexts, we will apply what we’ve learned to our viewing of the films, taking into consideration the design elements, including sound and music, the directorial vision, and the actors’ portrayals. We will pay attention to how the work is translated into images and into a cinematic narrative that speaks to a group mind. Reading reviews, essays, interviews, and other supplementary material will augment our understanding of the art and craft of adaptation as translation, as metamorphosis, and, finally, as a kind of reverse ekphrasis. Ekphrasis, the Greek word for description, is also a category of writing practice: it is writing about a work of art. For our purposes, it is when a filmmaker’s response to a literary text is one that refracts (rather than mirrors) the original text-- so the goal in making the film is somewhat different than the “faithful” (mirror) transliteration of a narrative between media. Students will be expected to attend all class sessions and film screenings, to complete short weekly writing assignments, and to write two papers.

Required Texts:

The Birds, short story by Daphne Du Maurier, film by Hitchcock

Barn Burning, short story by Haruki Murakami, Burning, film by Ang Lee

Brokeback Mountain, short story by Annie Proulx, film by Ang Lee

The Orchid Thief, nonfiction by Susan Orlean; Adaptation, film by Charlie Kaufman

I Am Not your Negro, text by James Baldwin, film by Raoul Peck

Excerpts from Linda Hutcheon’s A Theory of Adaptation; Susan Sontag’s Regarding the Pain of Others; et cetera.



ENGL-373g

Literature and Society

Disability and the Novel

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Cruz, Amelia	MW	3:30–4:50 pm	32717D

This course goes beyond analyzing how disability is represented in literature to ask what disability is, and how literary works shape its definition. Just as feminist and critical race scholars have illustrated the ways in which gender and race are socially constructed alongside lines of power and control, disability theory shines a light on dis/ability’s precarious artificiality. How do you know if you are disabled? What does it mean to be able-bodied one day and disabled the next? How does disability affect one’s material reality, and how does society influence the way in which one’s disability is disabling? Reading disability theory classics alongside literary ones, this course aims to provide an introductory overview of the field of disability studies while encouraging students to rethink texts that often serve as the foundation for American English courses. How does the specter of disability appear as a narrative force in these texts and how do they, in turn, affect how we define disability? Potential primary texts include: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler, *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, and others.

ENGL-375

Science Fiction

“What am I?” The Science/Fiction of the Human Condition

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Wright, Erika	TTh	9:30-10:50 am	32720D

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), considered by many to be the first work of science fiction, imagines the ultimate medical miracle: bringing the dead back to life. When Victor creates his monster from the body parts of corpses, he imagines a future world that is very different from his own, one that might be able to “fix” the problem of death. While Victor’s experiment and his reaction to his creation stage a battle between science and nature, ambition and ethics, academics and art, they ultimately force us to ask, along with the creature, “What am I?” Science fiction’s take on this fundamental question offers new insights into familiar aspects of the human condition: curing disease, achieving perfection, looking for love, embracing difference, resisting status quo all look different when the real world doesn’t impose its pesky limits. Whether we enter a speculative world vastly different from the one we inhabit, or experience something eerily like our own, the texts and theories we will study invite us to consider what makes us human, who decides, and why should we care. In order to examine these topics and pose questions about our current condition, we will dissect a range of novels, short stories, and films that challenge how we see ourselves and the world in which we live. Selected Texts include: Arimah’s “What It Means When A Man Falls From the Sky” Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*, Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*, Niccol’s *Gattaca*, Peele’s *Get Out*, Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, selected episodes of *The Black Mirror*, and some shorter fictional works by writers such as Ted Chiang and Octavia Butler.

ENGL-376g

Comics and Graphic Novels

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Lord, M.G.	TTh	11-12:20 pm	32721D

Graphic novels have much in common with screenplays. They combine dialogue and scenes to tell a story. Once dismissed as “comic books,” they came into their own in 1992 when Maus, Art Spiegelman’s two-volume graphic novel that deals with the Holocaust, won the Pulitzer Prize. The graphic novel has since become a hot literary genre.

In this course, we will look at storytelling that combines verbal and visual texts. Most of the course will deal with contemporary graphic novels. Students will look at the elements that are common to successful narratives as well as elements that make certain narratives unique or groundbreaking. The class will begin by looking at early conventions in visual narration, including work by William Hogarth (1697-1794). Students will have an opportunity to create a short original sequence of verbal/visual narration. (The exercise will not be graded on quality of artwork but on the degree to which the finished exercise reflects an understanding of narrative in sequential art. Participation is required.) The course will end with an overview of Webcomics, digital storytelling that isn’t constrained by the limitations of print.

ENGL-392

Visual and Popular Culture

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Martinez Celaya, Enrique	T	2-4:50 pm	32725D

Course in the theory and practices of ‘popular culture,’ highlighting modern and contemporary culture, film, video and popular music, as well as narrative forms.

ENGL-420

English Literature of the Middle Ages (1100–1500)

Super/Nature

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Tomaini, Thea	MW	2-3:20 pm	32740D

In this course we will discuss both canonical and non-canonical texts of Middle English Literature. The main focus of our discussion will be on uncanny or preternatural issues in medieval literature as they relate to the natural world. By making eco-critical interpretations of preternatural issues in medieval literature we will approach a comprehensive idea of how peoples’ attitudes toward the land, the weather, the cosmos, and non-human creatures (like animals, monsters, and faeries) were framed by their acceptance of the supernatural as a part of everyday life. In addition, we will focus on the language of the poetry itself: students will study the fundamentals of Middle English. Texts will include poems by Geoffrey Chaucer, William Caxton, William Langland, and Marie de France; students will also read Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Claris et Laris, and other poems. There will be several quizzes, in-class assignments, a midterm, and a final exam.

ENGL-424

English Literature of the Romantic Age (1780–1832)

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Russett, Margaret	TTh	11-12:20 pm	32744D

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,

But to be young was very heaven!

William Wordsworth, The Prelude

Romantic literature was the artistic expression of an Age of Revolution. The revolutions included the American war of independence and the overthrow of the French monarchy, the first reform movements for women and slaves, and the dramatic technological and sociological changes we now call the Industrial and Commercial revolutions. It should come as no surprise that the literary and art worlds were revolutionized at the same time. Romanticism was both a mode of political action and a radical aesthetic experiment. Everything was up for grabs: to whom should works of literature be addressed, and what should they be about? How could they effect change in the world and in their readers? What should they even look like?

This course will examine the relationship between social and aesthetic innovation. In it we will pay special attention to texts that either portray or enact revolutions, whether in the external world or in the minds of their readers. Not all of them were written with explicit political aims, but all were intended to be something new, and to do something important. They include two novels, William Godwin’s Caleb Williams and Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein; William Blake’s “illuminated” books Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, and America: A Prophecy; Lord Byron’s “Turkish Tales” and his verse play Manfred; Percy Shelley’s activist lyrics and his “lyrical drama”

Prometheus Unbound; John Keats’s narrative poems Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion; William Wordsworth’s poetic autobiography The Prelude; and Wordsworth’s collaboration with Samuel Taylor Coleridge on the 1798 Lyrical Ballads. These primary texts will be read against the background of shorter selections by the leading social thinkers of the time, including Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Paine, and Edmund Burke.

ENGL-430

Shakespeare

Shakespeare

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Smith, Ian	MW	2-3:20 pm	32730D

1623 marked the year of the publication of the most significant text in the seventeenth century: Shakespeare’s First Folio. Four hundred years later, we are still grappling with the scope and appeal of this work in the twenty-first century, discovering in the process individual works’ intervention in multiple contemporary discourses through close attention to Shakespeare’s language. The class aims to bring Shakespeare to students whose education benefits from understanding Shakespeare’s modernity, that is, the degree to which his works engage us today regarding social and political questions, including race and immigration, gender and identity, sexuality and desire, and marriage and heterosexuality—all accessible through attention to the textual evidence or language used. Specifically, the course recognizes an unavoidable and notable feature: Shakespeare’s persistent interest in blackness in multiple iterations through which racial critique always emerges. In addition, the course examines Shakespeare’s investment in blackness to contest convention and make legible biases that structure early modern cultural perceptions and attitudes.

American Literature, 1865 to 1920

American Literature, 1865 to 1920

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Valenzuela, Gabriela	TTh	12:30-1:50 pm	32749D

This course introduces students to US literature from 1865 to 1920, emphasizing its engagement with the rest of the American hemisphere in the long nineteenth century. We will explore the following questions: What constitutes “literature” in the nineteenth-century United States? How does restricting definitions of literature to only imaginative genres like the novel hinder our understanding of the literariness of other kinds of writing that fall outside these categories, but which were very much a part of the US literary landscape in that period? What were the conditions shaping the production, circulation, and reception of nineteenth-century literature? What were the national and transnational discursive conversations in which US literature written after the Civil War participated?

Over the course of the semester, students will read a variety of works by authors such as Henry David Thoreau, Charles W. Chesnutt, José Martí, Edith Wharton, Edith Maude Eaton, Salomón de la Selva, and others, exploring key moments of national and hemispheric change: Reconstruction, the rise of Jim Crow, U.S. expansionism before and after the Spanish-American War, and the construction of the Panama Canal.

Native American Literature

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Finley, Chris	MW	12-1:50 pm	32751D

Indigenous histories and stories have been passed down orally for thousands of years before settlers arrived on “turtle island.” With the attempted institutionalization and archiving of some Indigenous knowledge and tradition by settler colonial systems of knowledge and violence, much of the context and nuance of Native American culture has been destroyed and weaponized through Western systems of knowledge. Yet, Indigenous peoples remain and our voices continue to speak of our continued relationship with the land, colonial dispossession, nationalities, settler heteropatriarchy, tradition, ancestors, and politics. We have not forgotten. We are still here after everything that has been done to us. Indigenous peoples have never stopped resisting.

This course will focus on relationships between Native people and the land, Indigenous sovereignties, queer Indigenous love, and celebrate Indigenous life and thrival. We will read Indigenous theory, autobiographies, histories, novels, poetry, and experience what Leanne Simpson theorizes as “Indigenous brilliance” in the twentieth and twenty-first century.

The Literatures of America: Cross-Cultural Perspectives

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
TBA	MWF	10:00-10:50 am	32747D

Introduction to African- American, Chicano, Asian American, and Native- American Literatures and to the literary diversity of American cultures.

Contemporary African American Literature

Contemporary African American Literature

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Daniels-Rauterkus, Melissa	TTh	12:30-1:50 pm	32789D

African American literature has always told the truth about Black racialized experience in the U.S. One crucial facet of this aesthetic-political project has been shining a light on racial oppression. But in the years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a new generation of African American authors came of age, one that would broaden how we think about African American literature.

Known as the “post-soul generation,” this group of writers, born in the 1970s and later, grew up in a very different America from that of earlier generations of African Americans. Whereas their ancestors endured the hardships of Jim Crow and slavery, this younger cohort navigated a new racial landscape structured by affirmative action, desegregation and busing, and multiculturalism. This isn’t to say they didn’t experience racism or that their writings disavow its ongoing nature, but rather to acknowledge that social and political changes have altered what it means to be African American and what it means to write African American literature.

This class is a study of these changes. Approaching both Black life and literature as diverse and capacious formations, we’ll identify the key authors and texts (print and performative media) that constitute contemporary African American literature. We’ll explore the emergence of new, extra-canonical themes like racial and cultural alienation, fluidity, class privilege, queer and/or interracial desire, and the rejection of racial authenticity. We’ll discuss the rise of corporate aesthetics and the changing politics of the literary and cultural marketplaces. We’ll examine how the literary intersects with tv, film, music, and other forms of cultural production during this time

We’ll determine what, if any, relationship this literary output has to previous periods of African American literature like the Black Arts Movement, the Harlem Renaissance, and the postbellum and antebellum periods.



ENGL-451

Black British Literature

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Collins, Corrine	TTh	2-3:20 pm	32799D

The Black British community is diasporic and transnational, encompassing a wide-range of cultures from across the globe. Particularly, many of the cultures that make up this community are descendants and immigrants from the people and places that were former colonies of the British Empire. While Black Britain is typically defined through the mid-century era of migration—the post-World War II Windrush generation—black British literature is enmeshed in both contemporary black British experience and the legacies of transatlantic slavery and colonization. This class examines the shifting definitions of “Black” and “British” that have emerged over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We will consider the ways this literature disrupts ethnic absolutist notions of British identity, engages colonial history and violence, and foregrounds issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class. We will examine the global appeal of works by authors such as Zadie Smith and Andrea Levy, in addition to the limited circulation of texts by writers such as Joan Riley and Una Marson. Other readings include poetry, novels, and short stories by John Agard, Bernadine Evaristo, Jackie Kay, Diriye Osman, George Lamming, Grace Nichols, and Helen Oyeyemi.

ENGL-496

Senior Honors Thesis

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Sanford Russell, Beatrice	Th	2-4:50 pm	32769D

Seminar in workshop form to accompany completion of Senior Honors Thesis. Bi-weekly meetings to complete thesis according to contract.

ENGL-499

Special Topics

Creative Writing and the (Ir)resistible Rise of AI

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Mullins, Brighde	TTh	2-3:20 pm	32780D

Frank Herbert’s Dune contains this famous prophesy: “Once men turned their thinking over to machines in the hope that this would set them free. But that only permitted other men with machines to enslave them.” While there is plenty of pessimism around the role of AI and the future of learning, there is also some guarded optimism. How do we locate ourselves as readers and writers on this continuum? Yuval Noah reminds us “Prior to the rise of AI, all the stories that shaped human societies originated in the imagination of a human being.” What are some of the challenges faced by creative writers (and readers) in an increasingly technological mindscape? What is the difference between writing generated by AI and writing generated by flesh and blood humans? This class will focus on literary forms, specifically the personal essay, the lyric poem, and flash fiction, and how the rise of machine learning may re-define the role of the writer in contemporary culture. We will read work by Italo Calvino, Jeanette Winterson, and Sheila Heti, among others. Class time will consist of close-reading and active discussion. Students will have a chance to write creatively and experiment with AI-generated texts, and there will be one group writing assignment. As time permits, we may have class guests.

SENIOR & CAPSTONE SEMINARS

ENGL-491

Senior Seminar in Literary Studies

Romantic Satan, Superstar

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Russett, Margaret	Th	2-4:50 pm	32760D

This seminar combines an intensive reading of *Paradise Lost* with an exploration of John Milton's Romantic legacy. As the course title suggests, we will focus particularly on Satan, the anti-hero of Milton's epic and the hero of Romantic radicalism. During the first half of the semester, we will read *Paradise Lost* at the rate of two books per week, contextualizing our readings with briefer considerations of Milton's source texts, compositional practice, and polemical writings. The second half of the semester will be devoted to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century re-imaginings of Milton, including William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *The Book of Urizen*, and the "brief epic" *Milton*; gothic villains and the painter Henry Fuseli's "Milton Gallery"; Wordsworth's *Prelude* (particularly his experiences of the French Revolution); Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*.

Because this is a Senior Seminar, participants will be expected to take an active role in class discussions and to read some criticism and theory alongside the primary texts. Formal requirements will include weekly "blog" responses to the assigned readings, and a presentation on one of the many biographical or critical studies of Milton published during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The semester will culminate in a researched 15-page "seminar paper."



ENGL-491

Senior Seminar in Literary Studies

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Journey, Anna	T	4:30-7:20 pm	32761D

Sylvia Plath remains one of the most influential poets of the twentieth century. Due to the tabloid sensation surrounding her troubled marriage to the English poet Ted Hughes; her notorious suicide, in 1963, at age 30; and the posthumous impact of her groundbreaking second poetry collection *Ariel*, Plath also remains one of our most heavily mythologized—and misunderstood—authors. The enduring machinations of the Plath “industry,” comprised of competing scholarly and biographical perspectives, represent Plath variously as a feminist icon, navel-gazer, madwoman, “nympho,” and victim driven to a fated early grave. In this reading and writing intensive single-author seminar, we will examine a range of critical perspectives on Plath’s work (provided in a course reader) and explore her brief yet formidable oeuvre through discussions of her first book *The Colossus and Other Poems*, her novel *The Bell Jar*, both “versions” of her second poetry collection *Ariel*, and her Pulitzer Prize-winning *Collected Poems*. Students will write one medium-length midterm paper on Plath’s early work (6-8 pages) and one longer final paper on her late work (12-15 pages) as well as post two-paragraph responses to the assigned readings on Brightspace every week. All textbooks must be purchased in hard copy (no e-books; no laptop or tablet use in class).

ENGL-491

Senior Seminar in Literary Studies

The Question of Palestine: Memory and Forgetting, Violence and Genocide, Narrative and Literature, Self and Other

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Nguyen, Viet	M	2-4:50 pm	32759D

In this seminar, we will examine what Edward Said called “the question of Palestine” to see how it stands at the center of fundamental contradictions in a world defined by Western colonialism, not the least of which is how Western civilization is inseparable from genocidal conquest. We will spend time looking at the origins of 20th century Israel and its embeddedness in one of nationalism’s major problems, the violence that accompanies the emergence of all nation-states. The imperative to selective memory and forgetting that is crucial to most nation-states—urging their citizens and their others to forget the violence that founds the nation, while celebrating the mythologies that justify the nation—is exacerbated by the Holocaust. But the call to “always remember, never forget” is almost always premised on forgetting certain events, histories, and others that reveal the violence, often genocidal, that has made the nation. Narrative plays a crucial role in nationalist, colonial, and imperial self-justification, and narrative is also important in revealing the operations of abusive power. Literary aesthetics and the production of literature as an institution in the West cannot escape from the question of Palestine and all its implications—the submission to silence in the face of the contradiction between civilization and genocide, the demonization and idealization of the other, the exploitation of culture as the terrain of both domination and resistance, the dynamic between self and other occurring at the level of the personal and the political, and the incitement to speak out as the recognition of the totality of genocide dawns.

ENGL-492

Narrative Studies Capstone Seminar

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Roman, David	W	4:30-7:20 pm	32765D

Capstone workshop in Narrative Studies. Through rigorous independent work and frequent peer workshops, students will create semester-long original independent projects, critical or creative, that mark the culmination of their Narrative Studies major.



We will look at these themes in a range of texts, from the historical and philosophical to the critical and literary. Here are some of the possible authors and texts (all subject to change): some of Edward Said’s extensive writing on Palestine, Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben on refugees, Philippe Sands on the origins of the terms “genocide” and “crimes against humanity,” Jacques Derrida on forgiving what is impossible to forgive, Judith Butler on the ethical demand to grieve not only those like us but those far away from us, Rashid Khalidi on the history of 20th century Palestine, Ilan Pappé on the ethnic cleansing that allowed the Israeli state to emerge, Omer Bartov on what has gone wrong with Israel, Peter Beinart on being Jewish after the destruction of Gaza, Pankaj Mishra on the world after Gaza, Mohammed el-Kurd on perfect victims, Omar El Akkad on liberal pieties that are safe to utter after genocides are concluded, along with essays, excerpts, and reportage from Gideon Levy, Amira Hass, Nadine Gordimer and Ghassan Kanafani, as well as novels by Hala Alyan, Susan Abulhawa, Emile Habiby, Amos Oz, and Adania Shibli.

The seminar will be focused on student presentations and discussion, so expect to read closely, to participate in class, and to be called on to answer questions. There will be a final project, but I haven’t made up my mind about it yet—students will likely have a choice of critical and creative options that address the content and themes of the reading.

ENGL-492

Narrative Studies Capstone Seminar

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Sligar, Sara	Th	2-4:50 pm	32764D

Capstone workshop in Narrative Studies. Through rigorous critical work, research, and peer workshops, students will create semester-long original independent projects that mark the culmination of their Narrative Studies major.

MASTER'S COURSES

ENGL-602

Writers in the World: Text and Context

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Johnson, Dana	T	4:30-7:20 pm	32802D

We are defined as writers by what we read, but we also read the world, our communities, our culture, and other lives. This class will offer an examination of how other writers and we, ourselves, are influenced by literature, but also by our lived experience. We will read a variety of assigned readings and write. Be prepared for in-class exercises around the themes of our discussions, and for take home assignments that we will workshop. Each student will also be expected to produce one longer piece of writing: 10 pages, in any genre, that grow out of the idea of how one's world view has been shaped by seminal pieces of literature—or experience.

ENGL-606b

The Literary Landscape: Digital Toolkit

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Ulin, David	W	3-4:20 pm	32805D

Research and identification of internships; preparation of application materials for submission to in-person and remote internship opportunities.

ENGL-607

Digital Publishing and Literary Writing for New Media

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Leal, Jonathan	M	2-4:50 pm	32807D

This is a course in digital writing and publishing tailored to the interests and prior training of students nearing completion of USC's progressive MA in Literary Editing and Publishing. The course combines contemporary literary critical analysis with hands-on digital design, focusing on topics such as linear and non-linear narrative, typography, visual, sonic, haptic, and immersive literary expression, audio storytelling, narrative interactivity, games and transmedia design, and emergent literary forms shaped by twenty-first-century internet experience. No prior experience in digital authorship, editing, or design is expected, and there are no technical prerequisites. During the semester, students will produce a critical essay grappling with ideas explored in readings and discussions, as well as an experimental creative project that can employ a combination of media forms: print, photography, video, sound, web design, and more. By the end of the course, students will have created two complementary projects—critical and creative—as well as acquired new skills to aid them in a literary ecosystem increasingly driven by multimedia poetics.

ENGL-608

Publishing on Both Sides of the Transom

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Ulin, David	W	5-7:50 pm	32808D

ENGL 608 is a publishing practicum, designed to function as a studio environment. What this means is that throughout the semester, students will work – individually and collaboratively – to create, edit, and publish a magazine. The class will convene weekly to discuss and engage in the mechanics of making a publication: developing an editorial structure, pitching and writing content, editing copy, engaging with one another about these edits, copy editing and fact checking the material, developing a design sensibility, finalizing the project using InDesign. The class is built around the hand's on work of moving text from manuscript through production to publication. Students will be assessed according to how successfully they meet the benchmarks of writing, editing, design, and production. At the same time, the engagement in these efforts will lead to more theoretical discussions of publishing and editing as arts unto themselves. To this end, students will also be expected to discuss and develop submission plans for their own work to outside venues, and to make at least one editorial submission and one pitch submission before the end of the semester.

ENGL-609b

Internship in Editing and Publishing: Eloquence and Ethics

INSTRUCTOR	DAYS	TIME	SECTION
Banerjee, Neela	W	3-4:20 pm	32809D

Practical experience in the publishing world for acquiring skills and knowledge beyond the classroom.



ENGLISH MAJOR & MINOR REQUIREMENT COURSES

- This chart only includes classes in the English department that count toward specific major or minor requirements in Spring 2026.
- In most cases, any upper-division ENGL class not listed here can count toward the upper-division elective requirement.
- Course offerings are subject to change. Check the [Schedule of Classes](#) for the latest schedule.

Course	Literature Track	Creative Writing Track	Minor
240	Core Seminar	Core Seminar	Core Seminar
261	Early Literatures (Lower-Division)	Early Literatures	Early Literatures
262	Later Literatures (Lower-Division)	Later Literatures	Later Literatures
263	Later Literatures (Lower-Division)	Later Literatures	Later Literatures
270	Interpretive Lenses: Genre and Media Studies	Interpretive Lenses	Interpretive Lenses
280	Interpretive Lenses: Genre and Media Studies	Interpretive Lenses	Interpretive Lenses
298	Interpretive Lenses: Genre and Media Studies	Interpretive Lenses	Interpretive Lenses
299	Interpretive Lenses: Genre and Media Studies	Interpretive Lenses	Interpretive Lenses
303		Introductory Prose Workshop	
304		Introductory Poetry Workshop	
305		Introductory Prose Workshop	
325	Early Literatures (Upper-Division)	Early Literatures	Early Literatures
342	Interpretive Lenses: Race, Gender, and/or Sexuality	Interpretive Lenses	Interpretive Lenses
344	Interpretive Lenses: Race, Gender, and/or Sexuality	Interpretive Lenses	Interpretive Lenses
361	Interpretive Lenses: Genre and Media Studies	Craft Emphasis: Contemporary/Modern Prose	
362	Interpretive Lenses: Genre and Media Studies	Craft Emphasis: Contemporary/Modern Poetry	
363	Interpretive Lenses: Genre and Media Studies	Interpretive Lenses	Interpretive Lenses
371	Interpretive Lenses: Genre and Media Studies	Interpretive Lenses	Interpretive Lenses
372	Interpretive Lenses: Genre and Media Studies	Interpretive Lenses	Interpretive Lenses
405		Craft Emphasis: 400-Level Prose Workshop	
406		Craft Emphasis: 400-Level Poetry Workshop	
407		Craft Emphasis: 400-Level Prose Workshop	
422	Early Literatures (Upper-Division)	Early Literatures	Early Literatures
430	Early Literatures (Upper-Division)	Early Literatures	Early Literatures
440	Early Literatures (Upper-Division)	Early Literatures	Early Literatures
446	Interpretive Lenses: Race, Gender, and/or Sexuality	Interpretive Lenses	Interpretive Lenses
491	Senior Seminar	Senior Seminar	

PRE-2023 ENGLISH MAJOR & MINOR REQUIREMENT COURSES

- This chart only includes classes in the English department that count toward specific major or minor requirements in Spring 2026.
- In most cases, any upper-division ENGL class not listed here can count toward the upper-division elective requirement.
- Course offerings are subject to change. Check the [Schedule of Classes](#) for the latest schedule.

Course	Literature Track	Creative Writing Track	Minor
261	Introductory Seminar	Introductory Seminar	Introductory Seminar
262	Introductory Seminar	Introductory Seminar	Introductory Seminar
263	Introductory Seminar	Introductory Seminar	Introductory Seminar
303		Introductory Prose Workshop	
304		Introductory Poetry Workshop	
305		Introductory Prose Workshop	
361		Literature Written After 1900	
362		Literature Written After 1900	
363		Literature Written After 1900	
405		400-Level Workshop	
406		400-Level Workshop	
407		400-Level Workshop	
422	Literature Written Before 1800	Literature Written Before 1900	Literature Written Before 1800
430	Literature Written Before 1800	Literature Written Before 1900	Literature Written Before 1800
440	19th Century Literature	Literature Written Before 1900	
491	Senior Seminar	Senior Seminar	

NARRATIVE STUDIES MAJOR & MINOR REQUIREMENT COURSES

- This chart only includes classes in the English department that count toward specific major or minor requirements in Spring 2026.
- Course offerings are subject to change. Check the [Schedule of Classes](#) for the latest schedule.

Course	Narrative Studies Major	Narrative Structure Minor
105	Writing and Narrative Forms	Lower-Division Requirement
261	Introduction to Narrative Media	
262	Introduction to Narrative Media	Lower-Division Requirement
263	Introduction to Narrative Media	Lower-Division Requirement
270	Core Requirement	
280	Introduction to Narrative Media	
302	Writing and Narrative Forms	Core Requirement
303	Writing and Narrative Forms	
305	Writing and Narrative Forms	
361	Contemporary Fiction and Drama	European and American Literary Narratives
363	Contemporary Fiction and Drama	Narratives in Visual Media
371	Introduction to Narrative Media	Narratives in Visual Media
372	Western Narrative in Historical Perspective	European and American Literary Narratives
422	Western Narrative in Historical Perspective	European and American Literary Narratives
430	Western Narrative in Historical Perspective	Narratives in Visual Media
440	Western Narrative in Historical Perspective	European and American Literary Narratives
492	Capstone Seminar	

ENGL D-CLEARANCE INFORMATION

- D-clearance is granted on a per-student, per-section basis.
- You'll choose which section (this is the five-digit number) you'd like d-clearance for during advisement.
- Course offerings are subject to change. Check the [Schedule of Classes](#) for the latest schedule.

Course	Section	Instructor	Day	Time	Instructions
240	32634	Sanford Russell	TTh	9:30- 10:50 am	Restricted to English majors and minors only.
240	32633	Leal	MW	10-11:20 am	Restricted to English majors and minors only.
240	32638	Levine	TTh	2-3:20 pm	Restricted to English majors and minors only.
302	32680	Ingram	Th	2-4:50 pm	Priority registration for Narrative Studies majors and minors.
302	32681	Brighde	M	2-4:50 pm	Priority registration for English and Narrative Studies majors and minors.
303	32684	Sligar	W	2-4:50 pm	Priority registration for English and Narrative Studies majors and minors.
303	32685	Ingram	T	2-4:50 pm	Priority registration for English and Narrative Studies majors and minors.
303	32686	Ulin	Th	2-4:50 pm	Priority registration for English and Narrative Studies majors and minors.
304	32689	Bendall	M	2-4:50 pm	Priority registration for English majors and minors only.
304	32691	Campbell	T	2-4:50 pm	Priority registration for English majors and minors only.
408	32738	Journey	Th	4:30- 7:20 pm	Application required.
491	32759	Nguyen	M	2-4:50 pm	Restricted to advanced juniors and seniors in the English major.
491	32760	Russett	Th	2-4:50 pm	Restricted to advanced juniors and seniors in the English major.
491	32761	Journey	T	4:30- 7:20 pm	Restricted to advanced juniors and seniors in the English major.
492	32764	Sligar	Th	2-4:50 pm	Restricted to seniors in the Narrative Studies major.
492	32765	Roman	W	4:30- 7:20pm	Restricted to seniors in the Narrative Studies major.
496	32769	Sanford Russell	Th	2-4:50 pm	Application required.

CONTACT US

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Mullins, Brighde
Nelson, Maggie

Nguyen, Viet
Román, David
Román, Elda María
Rose, Austen
Rowe, John
Russett, Margaret
Sanford Russell, Bea
Schor, Hilary
Siskel, Callie
Senna, Danzy
Sligar, Sara
Smith, Ian
Stott, Andrew
Theis, Catherine
Tomaini, Thea
Tongson, Karen
Treuer, David
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