

Undergraduate English Spring 2009 Course Descriptions (Partial Listing)

xV41.0126.001 History of Drama and Theatre II

This course is a survey of dramatic literature and major theatrical movements from the middle of the seventeenth century to the present. We begin with a consideration of Restoration and eighteenth-century English comedy and continue through Romanticism and Naturalism/Realism to the anti-realistic experiments of the twentieth century. The focus will be on the plays and the approaches to theatrical art they represent. Among the playwrights we study in this course are: Wycherly, Congreve, Sheridan, Goethe, Buchner, Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Shaw, Pirandello, Brecht, O'Neill, Beckett and representative contemporary writers.

xV41.0132.001 Drama in Performance

Combines the study of drama as literary text with the study of theatre as its three-dimensional translation, both theoretically and practically. Drawing on the rich theatrical resources of New York City, approximately 12 plays are seen, covering classical to contemporary and traditional to experimental theatre. On occasion, films or videotapes of plays are used to supplement live performances. Readings include plays and essays in theory and criticism.

xV41.0180.001 Writing New York

This course examines the evolution of New York City as a literary construct as well as the city's emergence and continual reinvention as one of the country's--and the world's--premiere sites of literary and cultural production. Beginning with the earliest New York theaters in the eighteenth century and continuing to the present, we will examine a range of drama, fiction, non-fiction, and poetry that reveal a variety of New York experiences. *Patell and Waterman*

V41.0200.001 Literary Interpretation

Introduction to the interpretation of literary texts. Teaches the student to talk and write about literature. Through study of the various forms of poetry, the short story, the novel, and the drama, students develop a critical language and approach appropriate to the experience of each work. Required of all English majors.

V41.0210.001 British Literature I

Survey of English literature from its origins in the Anglo-Saxon epic through Milton. Close reading of representative works, with attention to the historical, intellectual, and social contexts of the period. Recitation required. *Archer*

V41.0220.001 British Literature II

This course offers an intensive introduction to major works of British literature drawn from poetry, prose, fiction and drama from the Restoration to the early 20th Century. We will consider how these writers responded to the conflicts and continuities of their culture, paying close attention to their explorations of questions of genre, power and the status of literary writing. Through lectures, class discussion, written responses, and longer essay assignments, students will master the fundamentals of literary history and critical reading and writing.

V41.0230.001 American Literature I

A survey of the literature of colonial Anglo-America and the early national United States, from 17th-century engagements with "the New World" to the literature of the "American Renaissance" on the eve of the Civil War. We will read high and low literary genres, the sermons, lyrics, captivity narratives, literacy primers, autobiographies, journals, tales and novels that arose in response to the historical pressures of migration, of encounters between cultures, of independence from England, of slavery and abolition, of Indian "removal." Along the way, we will consider the status of children in a historically and demographically young nation; the expansion of the print marketplace and the spread of literacy; the rise of sentimentality and domestic ideology; and the drive to create a national literature. Recitation required.

xV41.0252.001 Topics: Symbolism and Decadence*

Focusing on Parisian culture between 1860 and 1905, a period in which writers, artists and intellectuals confronted a new world wrought by industrial production, urban concentration, and political reorganization, this course will cover major literary and artistic movements (late naturalism, symbolism, decadence, impressionism). Special emphasis will be placed on themes of pathology, degeneration, political scandals, the crowd, mass entertainment, fashion, bohemia, cabaret culture, absinthe, the poetics of the occult, phantasmagoria the representation of woman as commodity, consumer, athlete, aesthete, and sex worker, the retreat to the interior as a site of psychological exploration and artistic innovation, imperial spectacles. Authors will include: Zola, Baudelaire, Huysmans, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, and Rachilde.

No prerequisites, Course Requirements: Mid-term and Final Exam.-*Apter*

xV41.0252.002 Topics: Post-Modern Travel Fiction*

This class studies travel narratives by post-World War II authors and film makers of the Americas, including the Caribbean. It is designed to investigate the relationships that exist between travel narratives and the legacy of colonialism in the Americas; between the concept of "freedom" embodied in travel writing and the ideology of conquest engraved in historical memory; between lost idealism of youth and melancholic romps across continents; between literary representation and the perpetuation of racialized myths about North and South America. It explores the gendered dynamic of traveling across the Americas and writing about it as well. How are our notions about freedom and mobility tied to sexuality? Why do the protagonists of these novels and films—be they white, black, Latino, Asian-American, or indigenous—"go West," South, East, or North? Why do they ping-pong among these geographic and symbolic poles? What are the evaluative meanings assigned to the cartographically given spaces these protagonists choose to visit and these authors/directors choose to revise in their novels and films? Central to this course is a consideration of the political significance of representation. What are the psychic and social effects of these authors'/directors' representations of places and races of people in their novels? How might autobiographical desire of the authors underwrite the journeys of these texts' protagonists? What do we make of the images of "the West," of "ol' Mexico", of "mother Africa," and of "exotic Asia" that these protagonists inevitably confront and/or perpetuate in their travels? In some cases, authors unwittingly participate in a literary "expansionism" and "Manifest Destiny" analogous to imperial expansion by Europeans in the Americas. In other cases, authors and film makers respond to the effects of this literal imperialism with their own alternative travel narratives representing different kinds of migrations and interpretations of freedom. In all cases, these authors/directors and their narratives have contributed to a re-figuration of the construct of identity in a post-modern Americas, where temporal, geographic and psychic distances between the self and the other have collapsed. Consequently, this course also investigates the rise of the postmodern aesthetic in travel writing and films, and its role in representing these new, discordant proximities. This postmodern aesthetic emerges after the nuclear devastation of World War II and the failure of modernity to deliver on its promises. Consequently, most of the authors we study consciously adopt postmodern aesthetics as a form of protest writing. Writ large, we are asking ourselves how identity is constructed by the authors in a post-modern "Americas"? Theoretical essays on modernism, post-modernism, and subjectivity by Foucault, Freud, Jameson, Habermas, and Hall will supplement our fiction reading and film viewing.-*Saldaña*

Please Note: V41.0252.001, 002 Do Not Fulfill the Senior Seminar Requirement of the English Major.

V41.0320.001 Colloquium: Chaucer

Colloquium: Chaucer is an introduction to Chaucer's poetry, with particular attention to 'Troilus and Criseyde' and 'The Canterbury Tales'. We will begin with a series of workshops on Chaucer's language, his versification, and some of the more interesting aspects of his style so that it will be possible to read his poetry, not only with pleasure, but closely. We will pay some attention to important trends in the criticism of Chaucer (particularly the insights feminist, psychoanalytic, historicist approaches have brought to his writing of late), as well as the more important cultural facts shaping Chaucer's art (the availability of Continental writings, contemporaneous controversies in and around the church, insurgency, political complacency as well as unrest). Our main task will be to tease out what is particularly 'Chaucerian' in individual works and all the works we read taken together. The pay off will be an enjoyment of Chaucer's writing in exactly those particulars that have made it so lasting.-*Cannon*

V41.0411.001 Shakespeare Survey II

Shakespeare II is a survey of nine plays by William Shakespeare from the second half of his career, beginning in 1600. The course will meet twice a week, on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00 to 3:15. The reading list contains examples of the major tragedies, the problem comedies, and the late romances. Students will write two essays and take a midterm exam and a final.

Attendance will be taken at each class, and unexcused absences or lateness will result in grade penalties if they become habitual. I'll pass around a signup sheet during each lecture.

I will hold office hours after class on Mondays and before class on Wednesdays in Room 504, 19 University Place.

The assigned text is *The Riverside Shakespeare*, but you may use any other text you own or wish to buy (a collected works or individual plays), provided that it contains editorial matter (notes, introductions) and act, scene and line numbers. Other required readings include whatever is posted on the course website, which is found at www.nyu.edu/classes/horwich. Check each week for links connected to whatever play we're reading.

My e-mail address is richard.horwich@nyu.edu. Don't hesitate to get in touch, either by e-mail or in person, to discuss matters pertaining to the course.

READING LIST

TWELFTH NIGHT

OTHELLO

MACBETH

KING LEAR

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

THE WINTER'S TALE

THE TEMPEST

V41.0445.001 Colloq. The Renaissance Writer: Issues with Marlowe

Before Shakespeare, there was Marlowe. Why did the sixteenth-century authorities have "issues with" Christopher Marlowe, to use a current phrase, and what critical issues does his work continue to raise today? Born in 1564, the same year as Shakespeare, Marlowe was murdered at the age of 29, when he was already an accomplished playwright. He was also a reputed atheist, lover of men, occasional spy, and devotee of tobacco. In this seminar, we will read all of Marlowe's plays and his major poems. We will also read a range of critical essays that address such issues as Marlowe's sexuality, his attitude toward religion, the representation of race and empire in his plays, and his dramatic technique. Works by Marlowe include "Hero and Leander," the Tamburlaine plays, Edward II, and both texts of Doctor Faustus; we will also read a few plays by Shakespeare and perhaps other dramatists for comparison. Two papers and a report are required.-*Archer*

V41.0501.001 Mid and Later 18thC British Literature

This course has two main goals: i) to introduce students to major literary works of the mid- and later eighteenth century, especially works that can be challenging to read on one's own yet surprisingly enjoyable with a little help, and ii) to introduce NYU students to valuable research resources available to them, ranging from rare (pre-1800!) books to new electronic databases. We will read fiction, poetry, drama, satire, and biography, including authors such as Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Samuel Johnson, Thomas Gray, Oliver Goldsmith, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Ann Radcliffe, and Jane Austen. We will supplement these

written texts with visual and audio materials such as William Hogarth's Engravings and recordings of ballads. Typical concerns will include the development of the English novel and literary biography; sentimentalism, social satire, and the comedy of manners; the ballad revival and its influence on the poetic tradition; the poetry of agrarian enclosure, and the position of women. Two of our class meetings will be held in the Fales Library and Special Collections of Bobst Library, allowing students a rare opportunity to work with three hundred year-old materials in their own oral and written projects.- *McDowell*

V41.0510.001 The 18th Century English Novel

The purpose of this course will be to study the major 18th-century novelists, including Defoe, Richardson, fielding, Sterne and Burney. *Siskin*

V41.0565.001 American Fiction, Twain to Faulkner

This course offers a survey of American novels and short stories written in the half-century between the 1880s and 1930s. Class discussions will focus on close readings of the texts, with special attention to form and genre, as well as on the fiction's relation to historical circumstances. We will consider how these works shaped and were shaped by the major social, economic, and political transformations of the years between the Civil War and World War II: racial segregation and the failures of Reconstruction; the Gilded Age and its consolidation of a super-wealthy class; the rise of immigrant and laboring classes; the despair and disillusionment following World War I; and the unchecked materialism of the Jazz Age. We will begin with Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and conclude with Faulkner's *Light in August*; other writers on the syllabus will likely include James, Crane, Dreiser, Chopin, Chesnut, Wharton, Cather, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Larsen.-*Baker*

V41.0635.001 American Fiction 1900-1945

American fiction in this period embodies the variety and anxiety of an era of rapid change. How writers and critics attempted to define and respond to the idea of the "new" or the "transformed" illuminates specific works of literary art and the cultural contexts in which they were created. In literary practice and critical discourse, passages from realism to naturalism to modernism and the reinvention of forms in an era of variety and synthesis help shape the imagination of domestic and political reality. Through readings in fiction and selected critical essays, this course explores an aesthetic of change forged by working artists and analyzed by critics. The course is intended as a survey of forms and practices with an emphasis on modernism and contemporary, eclectic style. *Hendin*

V41.0712.001 Major Texts in Critical Theory

In this course we study key texts in critical theory from Plato to Derrida. The first half of the course focuses on four major types of critical theory: mimetic, ethical, expressive, and formalist. The second half turns to 20th-century critical schools—such as Russian and American formalism, archetypal criticism, structuralism, psychoanalytic criticism, feminism, reader theory, deconstruction, and historicism. *Patell, Shireen*

V41.0721.001 History & Lit of the South Asian Diaspora

America is not always the answer. This class offers an introduction to the many and varied fictions that have been produced by diasporic South Asians across the globe over the last 150 years: in Australia, Africa, Europe, Caribbean. Our exploration of the poetics of immigration will involve looking at writers of canonical renown (VS Naipaul, Anita Desai), as well as younger voices such as Amitava Kumar, Anjalika Sagar, Hanif Kureishi, Hari Kunzru and Rana Dasgupta. There will be a strong film component with screenings and discussions of a diverse range of challenging and rarely-seen features, documentaries and avant-garde cine-essays. Our reading matter will encompass an eclectic array of critical and creative texts, including those from neglected genres such as science fiction, horror and comics. Particular attention will be paid to the diverse geographies of Asian migration – be they plantations, dance floors, restaurants or call centres. Themes to be addressed include abjection, globalisation, coolitude, gender and sexuality, the impact of 9/11 and techno-servitude. *Sandhu*

V41.0724.001 Italian American Life

Italian American writers have expressed their heritage and their engagement in American life in vivid fiction or poetry that reflects their changing status and concerns. From narratives of immigration to current work by "assimilated" writers, the course explores the depiction of Italian American identity. Addressing and challenging stereotypes, the course explores depictions in film and television as well as the changing family relationships, sexual mores, and political and social concerns evident in fiction and poetry. Situating the field of Italian American Studies in the context of contemporary ethnic studies, this course highlights its contribution to American literature. *Hendin*

V41.0735.001 Readings in Contemporary Literary Theory: Reading Derrida

This course will assume no prior knowledge of Derrida's thought: its aim is to provide students with the experience of reading Derrida's writing in a close and sustained manner. The first half of the course will focus on two early works, 'Of Grammatology' and 'Writing and Difference,' which we will study in conjunction with the texts (by Rousseau, Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Freud, Levinas, Hegel and others) that Derrida addresses there. The second half of the course will be concerned with Derrida's later writings as these address the topics of literature, politics, and psychoanalysis. Requirements are engaged and informed participation in class discussion (which is to say it will be necessary to do the reading for each class), one short paper, and one long final paper. *Fleming*

V41.0761.004 Topics Irish Lit: Writing Ireland

This course introduces students to the remarkable literary achievements and literary culture created in Ireland from the early myths of ancient Celts to the contemporary poets, playwrights and novelists of Ireland's turbulent history, students will gain an understanding of the complexities of a country with the oldest vernacular literature in Europe, but a history unique in Europe of colonial trauma and subjugation. Topics considered in the class will include the unique forms of Gaelic literary culture and the Bardic order; the emergence of Irish literature in English in the writings of Jonathan Swift; the literature of the republican enlightenment and the first Celtic Revival in the late eighteenth century; the beginning novel in Ireland; Romantic Cultural nationalism and the modern search for a heroic past; the politics of literary culture and resistance to the Union to England; Yeats and the Irish Renaissance; James Joyce and the Irish contribution to literary modernism; the Irish Dramatic Movement of Yeats, Synge, and the Abbey Theatre; literary treatments of the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War; partition and the nation state in Ireland and Northern Ireland; cultural conservatism in Ireland and the resistance to censorship, 1930-1970; literary responses to the crisis of Northern Ireland. Students will learn to think critically about the forms, achievements and the social and political conditions of literature, as it emerged in a country shadowed by the political, military and literary power of England. -*Waters*

V41.0925/0926 Senior Honors Thesis/Colloquium

To complete the honors program, the student must write a thesis under the supervision of a faculty director in this individual tutorial course. The student chooses a topic (normally at the beginning of the senior year) and is guided through the research and writing by weekly conferences with the thesis director. Students enrolled in the thesis course are also expected to attend the non-credit colloquium for thesis-writers (V41.0926). Consult the assistant director of undergraduate studies for honors concerning the selection of a topic and a thesis director. Information about the length, format, and due date of the thesis is available on the department's website. *Patell*

V41.0950.001 Topics: Visual Lit and Culture

Course description coming soon.

V41.0950.002 Topics: Medieval English Literature: Religion, Spirituality, Magic

When we consider medieval literature, we tend to think of romances and heroic poems. And yet many of the medieval texts that have come down to us deal with religious topics as their main themes. Even secular narratives that concern heroic or romantic actions of the protagonists use religious images and spiritual language for aesthetic purposes. This course will therefore explore the intersections of the religious and the secular, the Christian and the pagan, the spiritual and the material. Students will consider, among others, how religious ideals are reflected in secular characters; in what way different religions are represented in various narratives; how the religious sought to lead a spiritual life; how religious controversies spilled over to vernacular writing. Readings for the course will include canonical texts (*Beowulf*, the *Gawain* poet, Chaucer) as well as texts representative of diverse medieval genres: e.g. drama, romance, lyric, hagiography, and mystical or devotional compositions (many of which were written for or by women). The course material will also include theoretical writing, both medieval and postmodern.

Topics that may be discussed in the course include:

- The rhetoric of religion
- Paganisms
- Images of Christ
- Angels and devils
- Communicating with the divine
- Heresies
- Magic and *scientia* ('knowledge/science')-*Momma*

V41.0953.001 Topics: Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Drama

'Tis the Intent and Business of the Stage,

To Copy out the Follies of the Age;

To hold to every Man a Faithful Glass,

And shew him of what Species he's an Ass. –Vanbrugh's *The Provok'd Wife*

British drama from 1660 to 1800 is at the heart of some of the most significant literary debates and events of modernity: the first female professional authors, the emergence of the modern idea of media entertainment, the origin of modern copyright law, the star system of actors, and the public debate over the morality of entertainment, just to name a few. This term we will read some of the best plays of this period, examining them in the light of the emergence of a new age of literature and media culture. This course aims to further your skills at archival research (we will look into staging practices in the period); you will also work on your skills at oral presentation and writing.-*Starr*

V41.0955.001 Topics: War Literature and Culture

What impact has war had on twentieth century literature and popular culture? How have writers struggled to create during wartime in the face of censorship, propaganda, trauma and the technologies of violence? This course examines representations of modern warfare in a range of British and American novels, poems, and films. Focusing in particular on questions of gender, imperialism and resistance, we will read texts from the First World War, World War Two and beyond. Readings may include the work of Ford, West, Woolf, Hemingway, Cather, Faulkner, H.D., Bowen, Waugh, Heller, Pynchon, Didion, Ballard, and Barker. *Deer*

V41.0963.001 Topics: Afr. American Lit.: Cultural Memory in African American Literature and Culture

This seminar addresses cultural memory in African American “texts.” In recent years, memory has become a critical object of inquiry across academic disciplines. Narratives and acts of memory are credited with bridging the past and the present, contesting history’s silences and omissions, and shaping collective identities. Hence, memory studies attest to the contested nature of the past. With this in mind, we will consider the politics of memory: how power, class, gender, and sexuality condition what events and figures are remembered and how they are mourned and/or commemorated. We will analyze literature, music, monuments, performance, and visual culture as narratives of cultural memory.-*Williams*

V41.0965.001 Topics: Transatlantic Lit: The Politics of Modesty in 18th-Century Literature

A wide range of eighteenth-century British and American genres collectively extolled the virtues of modesty. In novels, poetry, plays, satirical writing, political pamphlets, sermons, captivity narratives and guides to household management, the concept of modesty defined an accordingly wide range of political, intellectual, sexual, and even commercial activities. Novels like Richardson’s *Clarissa* and Eliza Wharton’s *The Coquette* describe the ideal sexual modesty of women. Contemporary critics feared, however, that women who read novels might imitate the sexual immodesty of some fictional characters. Charles Johnstone’s novel *Chrysal, or Adventures of a Guinea*, describes the so-called modest production and circulation of money. Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* satirizes British colonial policy with an immodest image of baby-eating in Ireland. America’s founding fathers John Adams and Benjamin Franklin cited modesty as a basis of democratic governmentality. This course will explore the network of genres that shared and collectively defined the concept

of modesty in its broadest senses. We will build a working definition of the concept that accounts for its various uses in various contexts.

We will also consider the way that the concept became more narrowly defined over the course of the eighteenth century as modesty was increasingly associated with feminine sexuality and sexual morality. Modern feminist theory and criticism has chiefly focused on the narrower conception of modesty as evidence of the restrictions imposed on women and their participation in political, intellectual, religious and sexual domains. By tracking the broader expressions of “modesty” throughout the period we will revisit and critique these narrow feminist interpretations.

Students will use digital archives and resources in the Fales Library at NYU to rebuild the textual networks out of which the broad conception of modesty emerged. Our syllabus will include works by writers living in Britain and America including John Adams, Jane Austen, Frances Burney, Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Benjamin Franklin, William Hill Brown, Charles Johnstone, Cotton Mather, Thomas Paine, Samuel Richardson, Mary Rowlandson, Jonathan Swift, Royall Tyler and Eliza Wharton. -*Adams*

V41.0970.001 Topics: Critical Theory: Reading Walter Benjamin

As a writer and theorist Walter Benjamin was *sui generis*. His individual works have spawned such competing interpretations and applications that critics often concur only on agreeing to their importance (as well as to their difficulty). In this seminar we will read a selection of Benjamin’s works, noting their inter-disciplinary consequence, attending to the texture of their writing, and discussing the un-orthodox ways in which they produce their meanings.

Requirements are: regular attendance at and informed participation in class discussion; one 5 page paper, one 12 page paper.-*Fleming*

V41.0970.002 Topics: Critical Theory: Classical Aesthetics and Cognitive Science

This class is divided into two parts, one in which we study classical aesthetics, and one in which we explore the new field of neuroaesthetics, the investigation of aesthetic experience using the tools of cognitive science. We will start with the *Symposium*, and move to Augustine, Aquinas, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Burke, Hogarth and Kant. Students will have the opportunity to participate in experiments in cognitive aesthetics. Questions we will look at will include: What are the key debates in aesthetics? How does aesthetics relate to ethics, hermeneutics,

and psychology? How do we account for aesthetic emotions, and what are they? How do the tools of modern cognitive science help approach aesthetic questions? -*Starr*

V41.0973.001 Topics: My Space: Writing Modern Selves, from the Diary to the Internet

Why do people write diaries, and how should we read them? What kind of evidence do journals or blogs offer about the historical and social contexts from which they emerge? What can they tell us about the physical and virtual spaces in which people come to recognize themselves as individuals and about cultural meanings and forms of individuality in general? This course explores the meaning and practice of diary-writing as it has evolved with technologies of manuscript, print, and digital computing. The course will have two major objectives. First, we will seek to situate contemporary internet sites of self-presentation such as Facebook, My Space, You Tube ["Broadcast yourself"], and blogs in historical and literary perspective. We will consider how the diary has been shaped by religious traditions of self-examination, changing concepts of time, and the expansion of literacy, and define its relation to other literary genres such as the chronicle, autobiography, the novel, and the essay. Second, we will seek to develop a set of concepts to guide us in the interpretation and practice of self-representation across various media. Reading both celebrated and obscure examples of the diary, and conducting research on contemporary digital culture, this seminar will develop cross-cultural perspectives on literary practices of self-creation and the experiences of isolation, sincerity, narcissism, theatricality, privacy, and networking that inform them. -*Augst*