

ENGL 602: First Year Seminar

Dr. Sally Robinson

F 12:40-3:40

Required for PhD students

This course is meant to introduce new Ph.D. students to graduate study in English here at Texas A&M and to facilitate conversations about what we do when we do “English Studies;” how English Studies fits into larger disciplinary, professional, and cultural pictures; and what methodologies are available for English Studies. In addition to reading articles which address these and other questions, we will also have different faculty members from the department come in and lead discussion of their research and, more particularly, their particular methodological approaches. These conversations will constitute the theoretical portion of the course, and will typically occupy us for the first half of a 3-hour class.

Each week, in the second half of the class, we will work on the practical matters of English Studies: writing CVs, grant proposals, professional statements, conference abstracts; planning professional development activities for the course of a 5-year program and starting to think about what a job search might look like; exploring career diversity options through Imagine PhD and other sources; hearing from more experienced students about the various milestones of our program (first-year review, preliminary examinations, dissertation prospectus, dissertation).

ENGL 603: Bibliography and Literary Research

Dr. Heidi Craig

MW 4:10-5:25

Required for MA Students

ENGL 603: Bibliography and Research Methods offers an intensive introduction to the theories, methods and practices of humanities research. Readings and presentations will establish the theoretical underpinnings and practices of bibliography and digital humanities. The completion of several short projects will provide a solid foundation for future work in the MA and PhD. Key topics include the different strands of bibliography (reference/enumerative, descriptive and analytical); primary resource literacy (especially artifactual literacy and archival intelligence); digital humanities literacy; and the politics of bibliography. Learning outcomes include the development of skills needed to find, interpret, use, understand, and engage with information productively and ethically.

All M.A. students must take ENGL 603. Ph.D. coursework must include ENGL 603 if the student has taken no comparable course at the M.A. level.

ENGL 618 Readings in 18th Century British Literature

Dr. Susan Egenolf

W 6 - 9

Literature, pre-1800

Wide reading in British literature of the 18th Century; introduction of major figures, genres, and issues in the period; introduction to current critical conversations in 18th Century literary studies, including historical and social contexts.

This course will examine works written by British subjects during the eighteenth century, a time of scientific, political and aesthetic revolutions. The emphasis of the course will be on how these texts relate to each other and to their sociopolitical contexts. Our objective is to understand the

historical, cultural and literary contexts in which these authors produced their works. The works we will be reading represent several genres—poetry, drama, novel, travel writing, political treatise—and we’ll be discussing the particular innovations in these genres during the eighteenth century. We will study visual and imperial culture during the period, attending to the ways that these writers and artists represented English and Continental cultures, as well as cultures of the Near East and the New World. We will also attend to developments in contemporary scholarship concerned with the writings of the eighteenth century. Students should be able to analyze primary texts, incorporate secondary texts into research, and produce well-argued analysis with awareness of the historical context for the works.

ENGL 623: Topics in Creative Writing

Dr. Susan Stabile

TR 3:55-5:10

Concepts, themes



As Rita Charon asserts, physicians must be prepared to offer themselves as “a therapeutic instrument” to their patients by gaining interpretative skills through the close reading and composition of literary texts in the interdisciplinary field of narrative medicine. Literary hermeneutics, applied in a medical setting, can transform the physician and patient interaction into stories. What are symptoms, diagnoses, and treatment protocols after all, but narratives? And those narratives require empathy: compassionately listening and responding to a patient. Inverting Charon’s clinical framework in our interdisciplinary creative nonfiction workshop, we read nonfiction illness essays (many in experimental lyric forms of flash, collage, braided, and hermit-crab essays) by patients and physicians alike. The essays raise questions about how medical practices too often determine the experiential nature of illness, suffering, healing, caregiving, death, and grief. We’ll also take into account the cultural constructions of and prejudices against (particular) sick bodies based on sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, and class. And you will practice and challenge the limits of your own empathy by questioning and shifting your role as readers (bearing witness to the personal illness narratives of others) as writers of your own personal illness narratives.

ENGL 655: History and Theory of Rhetoric since 1900

Dr. Josh DiCaglio

W 12:40-3:40

Theory

Over the course of the twentieth century, language, communication, and persuasion became scaled so that molecules and electromagnetic waves themselves contain the capacity to function as forms of rhetoric. The words that gather around this new mode of thinking about language are familiar to us: data, information, code, and sign (as understood by semiotics) all imply an embedding of communicative and rhetorical possibility within matter itself. But the scalar nature

of this shift has not consigned communication to the molecular, mechanical operation--it also extends to the global and ecological modes of in-forming that are already presupposed by propaganda and are developed in theories of communication based in systems theory. When combined with cybernetics, this mode of information also places interpretation front-and-center not as a function of meaning but as a function of effect looped back on itself. Information also makes it possible to consider mechanistic philosophy's standard notion of action/reaction in terms of informatic exchange, semiotic process, or communicative effect. These three phrases are strangely reminiscent of the fundamental concern of rhetoric: how do symbolic systems create effects (i.e. persuasion). What then is rhetoric after information theory renders communication as physical as matter itself? What is the flow of rhetoric conceptualized from this basis of information at multiple scales? Does it provide a new means of articulating the general rhetoricity of the Cosmos?

This course will use these questions as an entry point for contemporary theories of rhetoric, starting with semiotics and information theory and then tracing how these basic informatic frameworks run through related entangled theoretical developments in cybernetics, speech-act theory, systems theory, biosemiotics, cultural studies, feminist theory, and science studies.

ENGL 672: Topics in American Literature to 1900: The Mystical Experience

Dr. Larry Reynolds

R 6 - 9

Literature, post-1800; Concepts, themes



Background: This interdisciplinary course will explore forms of the mystical experience to be found within American cultural history before 1900, especially in literature, religion, and art. Contemplation, also known as meditation, is fundamental to Eastern religious thought, including Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism, and it was a feature of Christianity during the Middle Ages, when Dominican and Franciscan friars spread an appreciation of the religious mystical experience beyond the boundaries of the monastic life. Both Eastern and Christian traditions influenced forms of the mystical experience in America during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. The religious practices of Native peoples in the New World did so as well, resulting in a rich diversity of experiences, which this course will explore.

Description: The course will begin with selections from the spiritual autobiographies of devout Puritans and Quakers. It will then turn to the Shakers and other utopian religious groups of the

1840s. After an exploration of the writings of individual transcendentalists, including Emerson, Fuller, and Thoreau, we will look at the related landscape art of the Hudson River school of painters and the Luminists. Moving from New England to the Southwest and the plains, the course will examine the religious practices of Native Americans, as well as the influence of Catholicism on these practices. Sustained attention will be given to the vision quest, especially as recorded in *Black Elk Speaks*, and the course will conclude with study of African-American writings and spirituals, and with selected poems of Whitman and Dickinson.

ENGL 673: Topics in Transnational Literature: Black Transnationalism

Dr. Ira Dworkin

M 6 - 9

Literature, post-1800; Theory; Concepts, themes

This course begins with the Middle Passage as a foundational moment in the creation of modern Black Transnationalism, one in which African national identities are, following historian Michael Gomez, transformed into African American cultural formations. This course provides a multidisciplinary examination of the roots of the African Diaspora, through an excavation of keywords of nation, nationalism, transnationalism, internationalism, and diaspora. We will pay particular attention to the methodological implications of what it means to read transnationally across the Black Atlantic. What are the linguistic, disciplinary, and archival challenges of undertaking scholarship in this field? Students will, through the course of the semester, examine the transnational formations of Black literatures and cultures as foundational to broad formulations of modernity and globalization. As such, this course will be relevant to students interested in American studies, Africana studies, Global studies, and Modernism. Readings may include works by Kamari Clarke, Stephanie Smallwood, Ayi Kwei Armah, Sterling Stuckey, David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet, Martin Delaney, Olaudah Equiano, Mary Seacole, Ifeoma Nwankwo, Nourbese Philip, Dionne Brand, Saidiya Hartman, Vincent Brown, Erna Brodber, Paul Gilroy, Brent Hayes Edwards, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Walter Rodney, Robin D. G. Kelley, and Monique Bedasse.

ENGL 665: Topics in Cultural and Interdisciplinary Studies: Beowulf's Afterlives

Dr. Britt Mize

R 12:45-3:45

Concepts, themes

This course, for which no prior knowledge of Old English language or literature is expected, will consider the immense variety of adaptations, versions, and reimaginings of the 1000-year-old epic poem *Beowulf* that have appeared from the 19th through the 21st centuries. Our collective and individual engagements with these materials will be guided by questions about the nature, definition, and limits of adaptation as a mode of creation, questions that we will think through both as practitioners and as critical analysts. Related to adaptation, but at times discrete from it, is the issue of appropriation and repurposing, and we will consider what the *uses* (personal, ideological, institutional) of *Beowulf* seem to have been in specific modern moments.

The first two weeks of the course will be devoted to discussing *Beowulf* (a text of fairly short length) in a variety of translations. These two weeks will create a shared knowledge base about the story and its thematic concerns, which will serve as a common reference point for the class's subsequent treatment of the extraordinarily diverse material. But from the beginning, we will also be turning a critical eye onto these translations, developing sensitivity to translation as an

adaptational practice and considering how each of them responds to the environment and conditions of its making.

The bulk of the course's subject matter will comprise selections from the many inventive redactions of *Beowulf*. These include works of belletristic and mainstream fiction as well as sci-fi, cyberpunk, fantasy, and detective novels; comic book series and graphic novels; films and television productions; children's books; continuations and sequels; live retellings or recitals; musical settings (including rock songs, a bluegrass musical, and a full opera); stage plays; parodies; board and video games; and depictions in the visual arts. We will consider, also, other appropriations of *Beowulf*'s perceived value, such as attempts by religious groups to invoke *Beowulf*'s authority in support of their belief systems, intellectual and artistic assertions of its relevance to real wars, and the attempt by Paramount Pictures to replace any textual version of the story in schools with its 2007 CGI film. At the conclusion of the semester we will revisit historical and present-day uses of *Beowulf* in the academy, and how the questions of utility and value that we have asked all semester might influence our understanding of familiar scholarly and pedagogical enterprises like the production of new editions, interactive web resources, scholarly translations, and anthology extracts.

This course is designed to have appeal, and ready points of contact, for those interested in many different areas of English Studies: medieval, Romantic, Victorian, modern, and postmodern literature, literary and cultural theory, children's literature, speculative literature, film, rhetoric, and book history, at least. Because the corpus of available material is large, varied, and mainly non-canonical, students will be encouraged to find cultural objects of interest to them individually and to do truly original work on texts or other materials that have received little academic notice.

ENGL 697: Pedagogy

Dr. Anne Morey

TR 11:10-12:25

Required for new teachers

Effective pedagogy is a matter of good habits and specific techniques and strategies brought to bear in the classroom by a self-aware teacher. This course is designed to help teachers in training anticipate what they will encounter in and out of the classroom through lecture, panel discussion, general discussion, and assigned exercises, including at least one recorded microteach. While new teachers characteristically worry about mastery of the material they impart, this course does not directly address that concern. Instead, it looks closely at the phases of instruction that follow the teacher's own mastery of content (when you know the material but are not sure how to communicate it or how to measure student mastery of it). This course therefore exposes MA and PhD students in English to specific techniques in course and assignment design, classroom management, grading strategies, and approaches to the conduct of lecture and discussion. We will also consider how to devise a teaching persona that can be sustained by the instructor and that can be adapted over the length of a career.

