

The English Department

Fall 2017

Faculty

- Mark C. Amodio**, Professor of English and Chair
Peter Antelyes, Associate Professor of English
Heesok Chang, Associate Professor of English
- * **Robert DeMaria, Jr.**, Professor of English
 - Eve Dunbar**, Associate Professor of English
 - Leslie Dunn**, Associate Professor of English
 - Donald Foster**, Professor of English
 - Jana Funke**, Visiting Professor of English, University of Exeter
 - Katie Gemmill**, Mellon Post-doctoral Fellow in English
 - Wendy Graham**, Professor of English and Associate Chair
 - Hua Hsu**, Associate Professor of English
 - Michael Joyce**, Professor of English
 - Jean Kane**, Professor of English
 - * **Paul Kane**, Professor of English
 - Amitava Kumar**, Professor of English
 - Sebastian Langdell**, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English
 - * **Kiese Laymon**, Associate Professor of English
 - M Mark**, Adjunct Associate Professor of English
 - * **Zoltán Márkus**, Associate Professor of English
 - * **Molly McGlennen**, Associate Professor of English
 - David Means**, Visiting Associate Professor of English
 - Hiram Perez**, Associate Professor of English
 - Karen Robertson**, Senior Lecturer in English
 - * **Paul Russell**, Professor of English
 - Ralph Sassone**, Adjunct Associate Professor of English
 - * **Tyrone R. Simpson, II**, Associate Professor of English
 - Susan Zlotnick**, Professor of English

For a description of faculty members' interests see pp 19-20. If you are looking for a senior thesis advisor, this is a good place to start.

- * *On leave in Fall '17.*

Requirements for Concentration:

Requirements for Concentration: A minimum of twelve units, comprising either eleven graded units and an ungraded senior tutorial, or twelve graded units. Four units must be elected at the 300-level, including at minimum one taken in the senior year. No AP credit or course taken NRO may be counted toward the requirements for the major.

Distribution Requirements:

Majors are required to take two units of work in literature written before 1800 and one unit of work in literature written before 1900. Majors may fulfill the historical distribution requirement in one of two ways: by taking three courses focused on literature written before 1800, or two courses focused on literature written before 1800 and one course focused on nineteenth-century literature.

Majors must also take one course that focuses on issues of race, gender, sexuality, or ethnicity. These courses must be taken at either the 200- or 300-level.

Recommendations:

English 101 and 170 are strongly recommended as foundational courses, and students are also strongly encouraged to work from the 200- to the 300-level in at least one field of study. Acquaintance with a classical language (Latin or Greek) or with one or more of the languages especially useful for an understanding of the history of English (Old English, German, or French) is useful, as are appropriate courses in philosophy, history, and other literatures.

Further information:

Applicants for English 209-210 (Advanced Creative Writing: Narrative), English 211-212 (Advanced Creative Writing: Verse), and English 305-306 (Creative Writing Seminar), must submit samples of their writing before pre-registration in the Spring; please check with the Department office for the exact date of the deadline. Applicants for English 203 (Journalism) and English 307 (Senior Creative Writing) must submit samples of their writing before pre-registration in the Fall; please check with the Department office for the exact date of the deadline.

Correlate Sequences in English:

The department offers seven correlates in English: Race and Ethnicity; Theory, Criticism and Transnational Studies; Poetry and Poetics; Literary Forms; British Literary History; American Literary History and Creative Writing. Further information on these correlates can be found in this booklet.

I. Introduction to Literary Study

English Freshman Course Descriptions

101.01

Mr. Hill

MR 3:10-4:25

Allegories of the Self

This seminar offers students intensive practice in close reading and interpretive writing and conversation through the examination of symbolic worlds inscribed in various media, including original works in Vassar collections, with a focus on the development of allegorical narrative in classical and Medieval textual sources and Medieval and Renaissance art. Our consideration of allegories as knowledge systems will introduce students to the formulation of liberal arts education in the medieval schools, as well as to the culture of libraries. Each member of the class will be asked to present an allegorical reading of a modern work selecting from narratives of literary authors such as Kafka and Orwell to works of painting and sculpture by artists such as Thomas Cole, Frida Kahlo, and Kara Walker, to fantasy and science fiction film, television series, and game environments.

101.02

Ms. Dunbar

TR 3:10-4:25

Troubling Girlhood

In 1692, the remote and wooded Massachusetts landscape as their backdrop, a group of Puritan teenage girls were at the center of a community panic that ended the lives of 14 women, five men, and two dogs. Haunted by the preternatural and cloaked in mystery, these Puritan girls mark the starting point of this freshman writing course. From witch trials to teenager girls stricken catatonic after their first sexual encounters, this course explores U.S. cultural anxieties surrounding the public and private lives of girls and women. The aim of the course is to “trouble,” to challenge and struggle over, our cultural assumptions about girlhood. Using novels, short stories, plays, historical documents, and visual texts we’ll consider and write about how race, class, gender, sexuality, and other identity categories trouble our sense of the various meanings of growing up gendered a “girl” in the United States.

101.03

Ms. Dunn

TR 3:10-4:25

In Search of Silence

“Silence is not acoustic. It is a change of mind, a turning around” (John Cage). Silence is often defined as the absence of sound, which makes sense when you live in a noisy world. But silence can also have presence and expressive power, whether as a formal element in the arts, an alternative language, a spiritual practice, or a political act. This course explores the meanings and uses of silence through a variety of encounters, both critical and experiential: through reading, watching, and listening, as well as walking, meditation, and field recording. Texts include a graphic novel (Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*), poetry (Emily Dickinson, ASL poets), film (Pat Collins’ *Silence*), writings and musical compositions (Takemitsu, Cage), and essays (Helen Keller, Audre Lorde). There will be frequent writing in a variety of forms, culminating in a final project.

101.04

Mr. Foster

TR 1:30-2:45

Playwork

Western drama, from Aeschylus through YouTube. Readings may include Sophocles, Medieval mystery plays, William Shakespeare, Eugene O’Neill, Bertolt Brecht, Lillian Hellman, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, Sam Shepard, Christopher Durang, and Sarah Kane. Some performance will be required. Writing will include theater reviews, historical research, literary criticism, and original dramatic scripts.

101.05

Mr. Joyce

MR 3:10-4:25

Contrasting Americas

Given the chaos, division, and hatred—but also the resolve, resistance and reaffirmation—unleashed by the last presidential election and the vast divide between not only the coasts and the imagined center, but also our visions of ourselves and/as others, perhaps the only way to consider where and who we are as a nation is from (at least) two directions at once. Thus this course offers an examination of American culture through contrary literatures, including meditative, polemical, lyrical, graphical (comic) texts; with themes including America Dreams, Walking and Falling, New English, The Western Passion, Fall of the Rustbelt Archipelago, and Rise of Creolized Cities. Readings may include Ana Castillo, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Susan Howe, Nella Larsen, Cormac McCarthy, Toni Morrison, Charles Olson, Joseph O’Neill, Suzan Lori Parks, Leslie Marmon Silko, Gertrude Stein, Chris Ware, and Karen Tei Yamashita.

101.06

Mr. Langdell

TR 12:00-1:15

Human Rites

This course focuses on rites of passage: from adolescence, to first love, adventure, loss, renewal, reinvention, death. We will work across a range of media – poems, novels, memoirs, essays, short stories, films, songs, graphic novels – to question the interplay between individual formation and communal rite. How do rites such as courtship, college acceptance, family tradition, or marriage define an individual life? How relevant is each rite today? Why do we turn to literature to remember our childhoods, our teenage years, the particular gut-punch of first love? Authors may include: Michael Chabon, Alison Bechdel, Jeffrey Eugenides, Justin Torres, Junot Diaz, Stuart Dybek, Jamaica Kincaid, Anne Carson, Joan Didion, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Dorothy Baker, Zadie Smith, James Baldwin, and J.D. Salinger. We’ll gravitate towards moments at which dimensions change; stories shift; feelings settle or inflate; and the world becomes noticeably wider and harder to explain.

101.07

Ms. Gemmill

TR 1:30-2:45

Playing with the Devil

As modern readers, we take it for granted that literature is a force for good in the world, but in fact it has a longstanding association with the devil. This course invites students to cultivate their critical skills by reading and writing about literature that engages the concept of evil—whether by imagining it, managing it, condemning it or being accused of it. We start by reading banned books, contextualizing them within the long history of cultural anxiety about the novel’s potential to corrupt young minds. Next, we turn our attention to the famous villains of literature, examining how writers have imaginatively explored the darkest human impulses through these characters. Finally, we will consider how writers have used writing for healing purposes, to process and purge acts of evil on both individual and collective scales. Students will regularly write short critical and creative responses; texts may include Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Bechdel’s *Fun Home*, Shakespeare’s *Othello*, Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Morrison’s *Beloved*.

101.08

Mr. Kumar

TR 1:30-2:45

The Essay Form

The high-school essay trapped in the Darth Vader facemask called the topic sentence. And the immobile drapery of the five-paragraph costume armor. This is an exaggeration, of course, but to write in more imaginative ways let us examine the experiments in prose undertaken by essayists of the past hundred years or so: George Orwell writing about shooting an elephant, James Baldwin on his father’s death and race riots, Jorge Luis Borges on his “modest blindness,” Susan Sontag looking at photographs, Joan Didion bidding goodbye to New York, Adrienne Rich recalling the strands that make up her identity. Also, Geoff Dyer on sex and hotels, Lydia Davis on “Foucault and pencil,” David Shields on the lyric essay, Jenny Boully on the body, Eliot Weinberger on what he heard about Iraq, and David Foster Wallace on anything. We will write brief essays (one to two pages) for each class and two longer essays (about eight pages in length).

101.09

Mr. Perez

MW 10:30-11:45

The Instruction of Citizenship

Emma Lazarus's celebrated poem, "The New Colossus," identifies the Statue of Liberty as the "Mother of Exiles" welcoming the world's "wretched" and "tempest-tost." However, the popular definition of the United States as a "nation of immigrants" repeatedly comes into crisis when the state faces the arrival of new groups. This course examines how literature by first- and second-generation Americans brings to light conditions that either bind or divide us as communities. Beginning with but not limited to scenes of classroom instruction (literal and metaphorical), we consider at what sites the instructing of citizenship takes place and what it means to be "naturalized" as an American. We also interrogate citizenship as a model of political inclusion. Some guiding questions for us: What do we gain or lose with assimilation? How is "cultural citizenship" different from formal, legal citizenship? How does immigrant writing respond to or disrupt abstract notions of American citizenship? What is at stake in the language we use to describe displaced people(s): exiles, refugees, migrants, immigrants, asylees, etc...? What might popular culture teach us about citizenship?

101.10

Ms. Zlotnick

MWF 10:30-11:20

Jane Eyres

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* tells the story of a heated romance between a "poor, obscure, plain" governess and a Byronic landowner with a Gothic past. Published pseudonymously in 1847, the novel was a literary sensation as well as a bestseller, even though Brontë's rebellious heroine upended nineteenth-century notions of propriety and femininity. While popular in its day, *Jane Eyre* has also had a hypnotic hold on subsequent generations of writers, who have revised and re-imagined Brontë's text in order to contest its representations of love, madness, colonialism, Englishness, feminism, and education. In this freshman seminar, we will explore *Jane Eyre*'s complicated relationship with its literary descendants and ask fundamental questions about literary influence, canon formation, narration, and women's writing. In addition to *Jane Eyre*, readings may include Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. We will also screen different film adaptations of *Jane Eyre* in addition to Hitchcock's *Rebecca*.

ENGL 101.10 is offered at the same time as FREN 186.01 (Madame Bovarys). Students enrolled in ENGL 101.10 and FREN 186.01 will have opportunities for exchange and engagement with each other.

101.11

Ms. Mark

MR 12:00-1:15

Deception: Some Truth About Lies

Narratives told by someone who can't be trusted invite readers to explore the ambiguous border between truths and lies. An author's perceptions may differ from those of the first-person narrator—the "I"—who tells the story, and that discrepancy opens up intriguing psychological space. "Good readers read the lines, better readers read the spaces," the novelist John Barth has written. This section of English 101 will analyze both words and spaces—both what is said and what is unspoken or unspeakable. We'll investigate a rogues' gallery of unreliable narrators who bring varying degrees of mendacity, self-aggrandizement, and self-deception to the stories they tell. Then, from both literary and neuroscience perspectives, we'll think about memory, the mind, and the brain. We'll ask: Are memories always fallible? Are they ever-evolving stories we tell ourselves? Is remembering an act of creation rather than straightforward retrieval of the past? Are we all unreliable narrators? Authors may include Alison Bechdel, James Baldwin, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Lydia Davis, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Ralph Ellison, Kazuo Ishiguro, Jamaica Kincaid, Tim O'Brien, Michael Ondaatje, George Orwell, Oliver Sacks, George Saunders, Charles Simic, Zadie Smith, and Oscar Wilde. Students will write both analytical and imaginative responses to the texts.

101.12

Mr. Means

TR 12:00-1:15

Into the Apocalyptic Landscape

This course will explore characters caught in the dreamscape of violence and apocalyptic visions that is perhaps unique to American history and culture, from slavery to skinheads to school shootings. We'll examine the concept--coined by rock critic Greil Marcus--of Old Weird America, a folkloric history that has spawned murder ballads, the music of Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash, and a wide range of literary work, including poetry by Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Lucille Clifton, and Etheridge Knight; stories by Edgar Allan Poe, Joyce Carol Oates, Flannery O'Connor, Christine Schutt, and Denis Johnson. Longer works may include novels by William Faulkner, Gayle Jones, Robert Stone, William Vollmann, Hunter Thompson, and the graphic artist, Lynda Barry.

101.13

Ms. Funke

WF 9:00-10:15

Banned Books: Literature and Censorship

In 1928, a journalist wrote about Radclyffe Hall's lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness*: "I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel." The book was subsequently banned as obscene in England, and all copies were ordered to be destroyed. On this course, we will examine the rich history of literature and censorship across different countries from the nineteenth century to the present day. We will explore various kinds of censorship, ranging from self-censorship to government-imposed bans. Who gets to decide whether a text is 'dangerous' or 'obscene'? What are the different reasons for censorship? What effect does it have? What arguments have people made for and against censorship? Do we need censorship today? The texts we discuss may range from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*.

101.14

Ms. Funke

WF 1:30-2:45

Banned Books: Literature and Censorship

In 1928, a journalist wrote about Radclyffe Hall's lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness*: "I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel." The book was subsequently banned as obscene in England, and all copies were ordered to be destroyed. On this course, we will examine the rich history of literature and censorship across different countries from the nineteenth century to the present day. We will explore various kinds of censorship, ranging from self-censorship to government-imposed bans. Who gets to decide whether a text is 'dangerous' or 'obscene'? What are the different reasons for censorship? What effect does it have? What arguments have people made for and against censorship? Do we need censorship today? The texts we discuss may range from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*.

I. Introduction to Literary Study

English 170

Entitled “Approaches to Literary Studies,” English 170 is designed as an introduction to the discipline of literary studies. While each section has a different focus (see descriptions below), they have a common agenda: to explore the concerns and methods of the discipline. Topics range from specific critical approaches and their assumptions to larger questions about meaning-making in literature, criticism, and theory. Assignments will develop skills for research and writing in English, including the use of secondary sources and the critical vocabulary of literary study.

As an introduction to the discipline, English 170 is recommended, but not required, for potential majors. It is open to freshmen and sophomores, and others by permission. Although the ideal sequence of English courses for freshmen interested in majoring in English is English 101 in the Fall and 170 in the Spring, 101 is not a prerequisite for 170. Freshmen wishing to take English 170 in the fall semester must have AP English credit. The English department does not recommend that students take 101 and 170 during the same semester. Note that English 170 does not fulfill the Freshman Course requirement.

170.01

Mr. Antelyes

TR 10:30-11:45

Approaches to Literary Studies

Topic for 2017a: *Changing the Subject*

Questions about the nature of subjectivity have become central to contemporary literary studies. What is the relation between the subject of the work of literature and the subjectivity of the author who produced it? How is that subjectivity constituted by and encoded in literary form? How have specific subjectivities, as well as subjectivity in general, been conceptualized in literary history, criticism, and theory? This course will consider such questions, and their implications for the study of literature generally, by focusing on current areas of contention over the claims of subjectivity, such as gender, sexuality, race, postcoloniality, and postmodernity. Works may include Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*, and Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* (gender and sexuality); Gayl Jones’s *Corregidora* (race); Nicholson Baker’s *The Mezzanine* (postmodernity); and Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (postcoloniality). In addition to placing these texts in their historical and cultural contexts, we will explore a variety of critical perspectives, including semiotics, feminism, psychoanalysis, and cultural studies.

English 174 - 179 – Special Topics

Courses listed under these numbers are designed to offer to a wide audience a variety of literary subjects that are seldom taught in regularly offered courses. **The courses are six weeks in length**, and the subjects they cover vary from year to year. Enrollment is unlimited and open to all students. Instructors lecture when the classes are too large for the regular seminar format favored in the English department. These courses do not satisfy the Freshman Course requirement. These courses are ungraded and **do not** count toward the major. They may be repeated.

177.01

Mr. Hsu

MW 12:00-1:15

Special Topics

Topic for 2017a: *Imagining the City*. This six-week course will survey various approaches to thinking and writing about the city. How do our surroundings change us? What power does an individual have to reshape or reimagine the vast urban landscape? We will consider the city via a range of topics, from the rise of automobiles and suburbs to the questions posed by gentrification, in a diverse array of depictions: the ethnic underground of Chang-rae Lee’s *Queens*; the forlorn Baltimore depicted in the television show *The Wire*; the midnight wanderings of Teju Cole and Junot Diaz; the global bustle of Jessica Hagedorn’s *Manila*; present-day graffiti artists and urban farmers reclaiming their “right to the city.”

1st Six Weeks.

II. Intermediate Studies

205a

Introductory Creative Writing

Study and practice of various forms of prose and poetry. Reading and writing assignments may include prose fiction, journals, poetry, drama, and essays. Not open to freshmen in the fall semester.

One 2-hour period and individual conferences with the instructor.

205.01

Mr. Joyce

M 6:30-8:30

Introductory Creative Writing

In this section we will pay special attention to poetic writing, including narrative poems and hybrid poetic forms, such as multimedia, imagetexts, and so on. The course is, however, not restricted solely to those interested in writing poetry and we will welcome (and benefit from) the contributions of those interested in narrative and dramatic writing as well as transgressive, experimental, and lyrical forms of writing that verge upon the graphical, kinetic, and performative.

205.02

Mr. Joyce

R 6:30-8:30

Introductory Creative Writing

In this section we will pay special attention to the idea of translation, whether translation as traditionally understood, i.e., between languages, as well as works that translate language into hybrid forms including multimedia, sound, imagetexts, and so on. Everyone will attempt at least one translation of each kind, although you will not have to be fluent in your second language or an accomplished media person or a visual or sound artist to take part.

205.03

Ms. Kane

W 1:00-3:00

Introductory Creative Writing

This course will help students develop their basic skills in writing verse and short prose forms. The assignments focus on some of the fundamental elements of writing in these genres, and all students will be expected to experiment with both genres in their own work. (Scripts, genre literature, and illustrated work will not be covered or accepted as submissions.) In addition, literary analysis of published writing is a crucial aspect of the course. Later in the semester, students will have the opportunity to generate longer, self-directed assignments. We will discuss student work as well as other readings, which aim to expand writers' repertoire of models, techniques, theories, and structures. Responsible participation in the workshop, through comment and discussion of all assigned reading and punctual submission of manuscripts, is an essential requirement. Each student must also meet with me in an individual conference at least twice during the semester. At the end of the term, each student will submit a final portfolio, which must include at least one substantial revision.

205.04

Ms. Mark

R 4:00-6:00

Introductory Creative Writing

Students in this course will read and write narratives in a number of modes. Though we'll focus on short fiction and the elements of its composition (characterization, plot, structure, point of view, dialogue, voice, style, and so forth), we'll also explore the increasingly permeable boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, prose and poetry. This section of Introductory Creative Writing is both a seminar and a workshop: students will read the work of experienced practitioners, analyze what they've read, and apply what they've learned to their own work. Readings may include works by Ashbery, Baldwin, Bambara, Barth, Barthelme, Beattie, Bishop, Bloom, Borges, Calvino, Carey, Carson, Chekhov, Cortázar, Edson, Erdrich, Faulkner, Hughes, Jen, Joyce, Kafka, Kincaid, Lahiri, Mullen, Munro, Nabokov, O'Connor, Packer, Paley, Saunders, Simic, Trevor, Wallace, Winterson, Wolff, and Woolf. Frequent conferences.

207 / 208 a or b Intermediate Creative Writing: Literary Non-Fiction

Development of the student's abilities as a reader and writer of literary nonfiction, with emphasis on longer forms. Assignments may include informal, personal, and lyric essays, travel and nature writing, memoirs. One 2-hour period and individual conferences with the instructor.

Prerequisite for 207: open to students who have taken English 205 or 206.

Prerequisite for 208: open to students who have taken English 207 or by permission of the instructor.

207.01

Mr. Hsu

M 3:10-5:10

Literary Nonfiction: *Writing About Culture*. This seminar considers the relationship between individuals and "culture" broadly defined, with special attention paid to the question of "taste." Guided by an eclectic range of text—music and film reviews, memoir, travel writing, arts reportage—we pursue the possibility of a cultural criticism attentive to the subjectivity and instability of personal experience. Our semester is guided by a few basic questions: does criticism matter? What shapes our personal tastes? What can we demand from culture? What does it mean to love or hate a song? And how do our arguments about books, bands and TV—the ephemeral stuff of "culture"—connect to broader dreams about politics, faith, our sense of the world?

209.01

Mr. Sassone

F 1:00-3:00

Advanced Creative Writing: Narrative

This year-long course will develop the student's abilities as a rigorous writer and reader of narrative, with particular emphasis on the short story. Students will be expected to write and revise comprehensively and to participate actively in discussions of peer and published work. The syllabus will be flexible according to the emerging needs of the class, but it will undoubtedly include the work of contemporary narrative writers as well as earlier masters of the form. Frequent conferences with the instructor will be required.

One 2-hour period and individual conferences with the instructor.

Writing samples are due before pre-registration. Check with the English office for the exact date of the deadline. Yearlong course 209-ENGL 210.

218.01

Ms. Dunn

MW 1:30-2:45

Gender, Sexuality, Disability

(Same as WMST 218) This course examines the intersecting categories of disability and gender, both in social constructions of disability and in the lived experiences of disabled people. We will explore how disability is gendered, and how it intersects with race, class, and sexuality in both historical and contemporary contexts. We will examine representations of disability, and the self-representations of disabled people, in a variety of literary forms and media, including poetry, essays, memoirs, comics, photography, film, and performance pieces. We will also attend to our own changing understandings of disability as the course progresses. Disability in this course is defined broadly, to include all the ways in which bodies and minds are construed as different from medical or cultural norms.

226.01

Ms. Graham

TR 9:00-10:15

American Literature, 1865-1925

Study of the major developments in American literature and culture from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Literary movements such as realism, naturalism, regionalism, and modernism are examined, as well as literatures of ethnicity, race, and gender. Works studied are drawn from such authors as Twain, Howells, James, Jewett, Chestnutt, Chopin, Crane, London, Harte, DuBois, Gilman, Adams, Wharton, Dreiser, Pound, Eliot, Stein, Yeziarska, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, O'Neill, Frost, H. D., and Toomer.

227.01

Ms. Dunbar

TR 12:00-1:15

The Harlem Renaissance and its Precursors

(Same as AFRS 227) This course places the Harlem Renaissance in literary historical perspective as it seeks to answer the following questions: In what ways was “The New Negro” new? How did African American writers of the Harlem Renaissance rework earlier literary forms from the sorrow songs to the sermon and the slave narrative? How do the debates that raged during this period over the contours of a black aesthetic trace their origins to the concerns that attended the entry of African Americans into the literary public sphere in the eighteenth century?

230.01

Mr. Perez

MW 1:30-2:45

Latina and Latino Literature

(Same as LALS 230) Students and instructor will collaborate to identify and dialogue with the growing but still disputed archive of “Latinx Literature.” The category “Latinx” presents us then with our first challenge: exactly what demographic does “Latinx” isolate (or create)? How does it differ from the categories “Hispanic,” “Chicanx,” “Raza,” “Mestizx,” or “Boricua,” to name only a few alternatives, and how should these differences inform our critical reading practices? When and where does Latinx literature originate? Together, we will work to identify what formal and thematic continuities might characterize a Latinx literary heritage. Some of those commonalities include border crossing or displacement, the tension between political and cultural citizenship, code-switching, indigeneity, contested and/or shifting racial formations, queer sexualities, gender politics, discourses of hybridity, generational conflict, and an ambivalent sense of loss (differently articulated as trauma, nostalgia, forgetting, mourning, nationalism, or assimilation).

235.01

Mr. Amodio

MW 10:30-11:45

Old English

(Same as MRST 235) Introduction to Old English language and literature.

237.01

Mr. Langdell

TR 3:10-4:25

Chaucer

This course serves as an introduction to Chaucer, as well as an introduction to Middle English. We will explore portions of Chaucer’s best-known work, *The Canterbury Tales*, alongside his other masterpiece, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and an assortment of “dream visions,” including *The House of Fame*. In doing so, we’ll situate Chaucer within a broader international context and chart out French, Italian, and Latin influences, including Dante, Boethius, and Boccaccio. We’ll also explore contemporary reactions to Chaucer – and witness how Chaucer’s works were transformed and responded to in the years following his death.

No prior experience with Middle English is needed. We will read slowly and carefully, and track Chaucer’s dynamic experiments with a molten language. Our areas of exploration will include: the role of gender and sexuality in Chaucer’s work; heresy and religious debate; self-censorship, and the limits of “free” expression; translation and adaptation; poetic authority; and the complexities of interweaving fiction, philosophy, fart jokes, and pseudo-autobiographical “I” narrators. We’ll see Chaucer himself dangle from the talons of an eagle. We’ll see him pen a masterpiece, and then immediately disavow it. When all is said and done, we’ll see Chaucer stumble his way to the helm of English literature.

240.01

Mr. Foster

TR 10:30-11:45

Shakespeare

“Shakespeare,” wrote Voltaire, “is a drunken savage with some imagination whose plays please only in London and Canada.” “Now we sit through Shakespeare,” wrote Oscar Wilde, “in order to recognize the quotations.” But here in Po’town, where the plays still please, we shall sift through Shakespeare in order to sharpen our critical pens, our wit, our rhetoric; to hone our skill as close readers, as performers, as observers of culture; and perhaps to ruin our faith, patriotism, complacency, and morals. In this course, kindred spirits

of the Bard—drama majors, English majors, undeclared geniuses, and the occasional drunken savage with some imagination—shall study Shakespeare’s great-and-above-average plays, early and late. Course objectives shall further include how to read a script, how to construct a critical argument, and how to write. **Not open to students who have taken English 241-242.**

255.01

Ms. Zlotnick

TR 10:30-11:45

Nineteenth-Century British Novels

W 1:00-3:00 (lab)

Readings vary but include works by such novelists as Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontës, Trollope, George Eliot, and Hardy.

The two-hour reading lab for ENGL 255 will be used for undistracted reading, reading aloud, film screenings and writing workshops.

277.01

Ms. Paravinisi-Gebert

TR 1:30-2:45

Crossings: Literature Without Borders

Topic 2017a: Victorian Revenants in Contemporary Caribbean Literature: Cultures in Dialogue

(Same as AFRS 277) The ongoing multidisciplinary dialogue between Caribbean literature and Victorian culture has been one of the most dynamic catalysts for the development of the novel in the region. The course examines a number of trans-Atlantic/Caribbean interchanges that include the exploration of the ghost story in M. R. James (*Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*, 1904) and Edgar Mittelholzer (*My Bones and My Flute*, 1955); the critique of Kew Gardens and its biota exchanges in Jamaica Kincaid (*My Garden Book*, 1999); the re-writing of British canonical texts in Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and Caryl Phillips’ *The Lost Child* (2015); Florence Nightingale, the Crimean War and the *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (1857); the Morant Bay rebellion (1865) and the Eyre Affair (1866) seen through H.G. de Lisser’s *Revenge* (1918) and V. S. Reid’s *New Day* (1949); British iconography (postage stamps and the Union Jack) in Derek Walcott’s *Omeros* (1992) and Austin Clarke’s *Growing Up Stupid under the Union Jack* (1980); and Michelle Cliff’s reversing of Marlow’s journey in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) in *Into the Interior* (2010).

280.01

Ms. Funke

WF 10:30-11:45

Modernism, Sexuality & Science, 1890-1950

This course will focus on the crafting of narratives that free us from traditional binaries of real or fake. The development of literary modernism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century coincides with the emergence of sexual science. In this historical moment, literary authors and scientists shared an interest in creating new forms of expression to understand sexuality and articulate sexual possibilities. You will examine how a range of canonical and lesser-known authors negotiated scientific ideas about diverse sexualities in novels, short stories and autobiographical works. You will also investigate how literature shaped scientific understandings of sexuality. The course explores tensions as well as moments of exchange and collaboration between literary and scientific writers. We will cover literary and scientific writings about diverse sexualities and consider the intersections of sexuality and gender, class, race, age, nationality, citizenship and religion. Literary texts may include Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Gertrude Stein’s “Melanctha,” E.M. Forster’s *Maurice*, Mina Loy’s “The Black Virginity,” Bryher’s *Development*, D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*, Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness*, Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood*, Christopher Isherwood’s *Goodbye to Berlin*, H. D.’s *Tribute to Freud*, and Carson McCuller’s *The Member of the Wedding*.

290 a or b.

Field Work

Field work is open by special permission of the associate chair, and is usually offered for one-half unit of credit.

Field Work projects are sponsored by individual faculty members in the department. Students interested in Field Work should see page 30 for further details on the requirements.

Independent Study

Independent Study is open by special permission of the associate chair. Independent Study is intended to supplement (not duplicate) the regular curricular offerings by defining special projects in reading and writing under the direction of an individual faculty member. **The prerequisite for Independent Study at the 200- or 300-level is 2 units of 200-level work in English.**

Application forms for Independent Study are available in the English department office.

298 a or b.

(1/2 Unit)

Open by permission of the associate chair. 1 unit of credit given only in exceptional cases.

399 a or b.

(1/2 Unit)

Senior Independent Work

Open by permission of the associate chair. 1 unit of credit given only in exceptional cases.

III. Advanced Courses

Senior Year Requirements

The College requires a special exercise to distinguish the work of the senior year in one's major. In the English department, that requirement takes the form of English 300, Senior Tutorial, or enrolling in at least one of the four required 300-level courses in the senior year.

Description of English 300: All senior English majors should consider taking this course. The tutorial should reflect and extend the intellectual interests you have developed in your earlier course work. The tutorial itself involves working with an individual faculty member to produce a long paper (approximately 10,000 words or 40 pages). The project may consist of a sustained critical essay or a series of linked essays, or one of several alternatives, such as primary research in the Special Collections department of the Library, a piece of translation, a work of dramaturgy, a work of fiction, a collection of poems, or a scholarly edition of a particular work or group of works.

300 a or b

Senior Tutorial

Preparation of a long essay (40 pages) or other independently designed critical project. Each essay is directed by an individual member of the department. *Special Permission.*

305.01

Mr. Means

T 3:10-5:10

Creative Writing Seminar

Advanced study and practice of various forms of prose and poetry. Open in the senior year to students concentrating in English. *Special Permission.*

Writing samples are due before pre-registration. Check with the English office for the exact date of the deadline. Yearlong course 305-ENGL 306.

307.01

Mr. Kumar

T 10:30-12:30

Senior Creative Writing

Swift immersion in writing culture. Engagement with diverse forms: fiction, nonfiction, journalism, poetry. Emphasis on experimental sampling and practice. (Credo: "Write the truest sentence that you know."-- Hemingway) *Special Permission.*

Open to seniors from all departments. Writing samples are due before pre-registration. Check with the English office for the exact date of the deadline.

317.01

Ms. Graham

R 1:00-3:00

Studies in Literary Theory

This course is designed as preparation for the senior thesis, as preparation for graduate level work (in an Anti- or Post-Theory environment), and as a capstone to the English major, answering the puzzling question of why certain critical perspectives are favored or ignored by professional readers of poetry, prose, epic, specific periods of literature, or literary schools. Although Derrida is dead and pundits and journalists seem all too ready to bury his legacy, we are not entitled to dismiss him without a reading. In addition, we will address questions pertaining to the relation of literature to history and to social life (Gadamer, Lukacs, Benjamin, Adorno, Said, Hayden White), literary language to 'objective' language (Saussure, Benveniste, Austin, Bakhtin), and metaphor to metonymy (Jakobson, J. Hillis Miller, De Man, Derrida, Lacan, Ricoeur) as well as Reader Response criticism (Iser, Fish) and theories of Discourse/Textuality (Foucault, Barthes).

319.01

Ms. Dunbar

W 1:00-3:00

Blacks and Blues

(Same as AFRS 319) Ralph Ellison wrote of the blues that it is “an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism.” This course takes the blues as a metaphor and follows it through canonical African American writing to consider multiple themes: black sonics, black vernacular traditions, sexuality and freedom, social critique, joy, pain, and futurities of blackness. Students interested in this course need not have a musical background, but interest in the links between sound and black literature will be expected.

329.01

Ms. Graham

T 3:10-5:10

American Literary Realism

Advanced study of literary realism and naturalism focusing on the historical bent of the great American novel between 1870 and 1910, the first period in American literature to be called modern. What constitutes reality in fiction? How is verisimilitude in characterization and context achieved? What is the relationship of realism to other literary traditions? Authors may include Henry James, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Charles Chesnutt, Frank Norris, William Dean Howells, Edith Wharton, Thorstein Veblen, Theodore Dreiser, and Willa Cather.

Topic for 2017a: *American Literary Realism and Naturalism: A Reading of Major American Novels Written Primarily Between 1870 and 1910.* After the Civil War, the U.S. experienced increasing rates of democracy and literacy, the rapid growth of industrialism and urbanization, an expanding population due to immigration, and a rise in middle-class affluence, which provided a fertile literary environment for writers interested in explaining these rapid shifts in culture. A grand explanatory narrative directs the plot and action of these novels. Authorial intentions give way to a set of laws or principles derived from the dominant ideologies that supported America's maturation into a super-power: Social Darwinism, the Gospel of Efficiency (new Protestant work ethic), or Imperialism (new Manifest Destiny). Surprisingly, the myth of American ‘progress’ is tested and found wanting in almost every book on the syllabus. In seeking scientific objectivity, writers plied a representational strategy focused on ‘hard facts’ and minute detail, which as often as not found the protagonist at odds with his or her environment. Though post-war, the terrain we cover is embattled: race riots, strikes, downward economic mobility, criminality, and homelessness. Shut out of the canon by reason of changing fashions in literary tastes, the less familiar authors on the syllabus belong to the emerging protest novel. Authors will include: Henry James, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Charles Chesnutt, Frank Norris, William Dean Howells, Edith Wharton, Thorstein Veblen, Theodore Dreiser, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison.

331.01

Ms. Kane

M 3:10-5:10

Postmodern American Literature

The seminar will examine the production of the “postmodern” as a period, an aesthetic, and a critical practice. Though the scholars and writers debate the term ceaselessly, it remains rather firmly entrenched in particular, often bracketed, premises. What happens to the stylistic gestures of fragmentation and decentering when they represent formulations that do not proceed from a prior assumption of coherence? Who provides the raw material of surface differences? How do pop genres and visual epistemologies resist or reinforce these structures? We will examine such questions through a variety of classic texts, theoretical and imaginative, as well as works that devise similar features or effects from different histories. Authors will include Gertrude Stein, Don DeLillo, Colson Whitehead, Lydia Davis, Harryette Mullen, and Nick Flynn.

352.01

Ms. Gemmill

T 6:30-8:30

Romantic Poets: Rebels with a Cause

Intensive study of the major poetry and critical prose of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats in the context of Enlightenment thought, the French Revolution, and the post-Napoleonic era. Readings may include biographies, letters, and a few philosophical texts central to the period. Some preliminary study of Milton is strongly recommended.

Why is it that the most influential and ambitious work in queer studies has rarely emerged from the field of Romanticism? As Michael O'Rourke and David Collings rightly note, "We have had [scholarly studies called] *Queering the Middle Ages*, *Queering the Renaissance*, *Victorian Sexual Dissidence*, and *Queering the Moderns*—but no *Queering the Romantics*." Accounting for this critical gap, Richard Sha argues that the Romantic period has been mischaracterized as a "seemingly asexual zone between eighteenth-century edenic 'liberated' sexuality...and the repressive sexology of the Victorians." In reality, this relatively brief cultural moment in England produced a diverse range of queer figures, both historical and literary: from Anne Lister, whose diary records hundreds of pages in code about her sexual relationships with women, to the Ladies of Llangollen, who openly cohabited with the support of English high society, to the myth of the modern vampire, a deeply sexualized and often queer figure. Given the richness of the terrain, then, why are queer studies lagging behind in Romantic circles?

In this advanced seminar, we will address this underdeveloped area of scholarly research through our reading of primary and secondary texts, our class discussion, and our critical research projects. Reading theory and criticism from Romanticism studies and adjacent scholarly fields, we will ask ourselves—what is queer about this literary-historical moment that has not yet been accounted for? Our goal will be to redefine the boundaries of queer Romanticism—beyond a simplistic search for queer characters in the primary texts—to include broader theoretical categories such as queer affect and queer temporality, among others. We will focus primarily on the poetry of the period, but will also attend to some prose genres, including the diary and the essay.

Notice to Majors

Students may receive credit toward the major for other courses offered in the programs (when taught or team-taught by members of the department) upon the approval of the curriculum committee. Please consult with the chair if you have questions about a particular course.

JWST 350

Mr. Antelyes

Confronting Modernity

Topic for 2017a: *American Jewish Literature*. This course is an exploration of the American Jewish literary imagination from historical, topical, and theoretical perspectives. Among the genres we will cover are novels (such as Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*, Philip Roth's *The Counterlife*, and Dana Horn's *A Guide for the Perplexed*), plays (Sholem Asch's *God of Vengeance*), stories (by Isaac Bashevis Singer, Bernard Malamud, Grace Paley, Melanie Kaye-Kantrowitz, and others), poems (by Celia Dropkin, Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, Irena Klepfisz, and others), essays (Adrienne Rich's "Split at the Root"), artists' books (Tana Kellner's *Fifty Years of Silence*), and graphic collections (Vanessa Davis's *Make Me a Woman*). Topics include the lineages of Talmudic hermeneutics and Midrash, the development of Yiddish American modernism, the (anti)conventions of queer Jewish literatures and the intersections of Jewishness and queerness, the possibilities and limitations of a diaspora poetics, and contemporary representations of the Holocaust. No prerequisites.

Courses That Fulfill English Major Requirements For Academic Year 2017-2018

pre-1800

pre-1900

Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality

<u>Course Title</u>	<u>Requirement Fulfilled</u>
213 The English Language	
215 Pre-Modern Drama before 1800	pre-1800
218 Literature, Gender, and Sexuality	Race, Ethn.
222/223 Founding of English Literature	pre-1800
226 American Literature 1865-1925	pre-1900
227 Harlem Renaissance/Precursors	Race, Ethn.
228 African American Literature	Race, Ethn.
230 Latina and Latino Literature in the U.S.	Race, Ethn.
231 Native-American Literature	Race, Ethn.
235 Old English	pre-1800
236 <i>Beowulf</i>	pre-1800
237 Chaucer	pre-1800
240 Shakespeare	pre-1800
248 The Age of Romanticism	pre-1900
249 Victorian Literature	pre-1900
251 Topics in Black Literature	Race, Ethn.
255 Nineteenth Century British Novels	pre-1900
256 Modern British/Irish Novels	
265-51 Select Author: Octavia Butler	Race, Ethn.
265-52 Select Author: Jane Austen	pre-1900
277 Crossings: Literature Without Borders	Race, Ethn.
280 Modernism, Sexuality, Science	Race, Ethn.
281 The Comics Course	
315 Studies in Performance: Writing for Performance	
317 Studies in Literary Theory	
318 Literary Studies: Gender/Sexuality	Race, Ethn.
319 Race and Its Metaphors	Race, Ethn.
320 Studies in Literary Traditions	
326 Racial Melodrama	Race, Ethn.
329 American Literary Realism	pre-1900
330 American Modernism	
331 Postmodern American Literature	
340 Studies in Medieval Literature	pre-1800
341 Studies in the Renaissance	pre-1800
342 Studies in Shakespeare	pre-1800
351 Studies in Nineteenth-Century British Literature	pre-1900
352 Romantic Poets: Rebels with a Cause	pre-1900
362 Text and Image	Race, Ethn.
365 Selected Author: Samuel Johnson and Johnsonians	pre-1800
370 Transnational Literature	Race, Ethn.
380 Then Whose Negro Are You? On the Art and Politics of James Baldwin	Race, Ethn.

*As course topics change, so do the requirements they fulfill. Therefore, this list is only applicable for the 2017-2018 academic year.

Correlate Sequences in English

The curriculum in English presents a broad array of courses representing a variety of subjects—literatures from different periods of history and geographical locations, genres, and approaches or methods of study. Given the scope of the discipline, the correlate sequences we offer allow students to tailor their programs to individual interests within the discipline while maintaining a broader understanding of the contexts surrounding that area of focus.

Here are the correlate areas:

1. Race and Ethnicity
2. Theory, Criticism and Transnational Studies
3. Poetry and Poetics
4. Literary Forms
5. British Literary History
6. American Literary History
7. Creative Writing

These correlates are designed to articulate coherent plans of study that build from a foundation in introductory and intermediate courses to great depth and complexity in advanced courses. Students are advised, then, to try to take the courses in sequence, beginning with either English 101 or 170 (or both), moving on to 200-level courses, and concluding with 300-level seminars. Each sequence offers a number of courses from which the students must elect six to complete the sequence.

The correlate sequences are defined, in part, to suggest intellectual compatibilities between literature and other disciplines. Students majoring in Africana Studies or Women's Studies, for example, will find that the correlate in "Race and Ethnicity" supplements and extends their work in the major. At the same time, because these correlates articulate issues of central interest within the discipline, English majors will discover in them useful guides for developing a sequenced and coherent plan of courses to fulfill the requirements in the major.

Since many of the courses in the English Department are topics courses that change from year to year, we cannot list all the courses that, in any given year, may be applied to correlate sequences. If you wish a special topics course to count towards one of the correlate sequences, you should check with the associate chair to make sure that course is appropriate for the correlate sequence you are pursuing.

Correlate Sequences in English

1. Race and Ethnicity

- * At least one of the following: English 101, 170
- * At least two of the following: English 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 251, 252, 261, 262, 275, 277
- * At least one of the following: English 319, 326, 370

2. Theory, Criticism and Transnational Studies

- * At least one of the following: English 101, 170
- * At least one of the following: English 217, 317
- * At least one of the following: English 218, 257, 262, 275, 277
- * At least one of the following: English 331, 362, 369, 370

3. Poetry and Poetics

- * At least one of the following: English 101, 170
- * At least two of the following: English 211-212, 222, 223, 236, 237, 250,
- * At least two of the following: English 315, 345, 352, 353, 355, 356

4. Literary Forms

- * At least one of the following: English 101, 170
- * At least two of the following:
English 207, 209-210, 211-212, 215, 216, 217, 240, 241-242, 247, 250, 255, 256, 257
- * At least two of the following: English 315, 317, 329, 342, 345, 352, 353, 355, 356

5. British Literary History

- * At least one of the following: English 101, 170, 222 and 223
- * At least one of the following:
English 215, 235, 236, 237, 238, 240, 241-242, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 255
- * At least one of the following: English 256, 260, 261, 262
- * At least one of the following: English 324, 340, 341, 342, 345, 350, 351, 352, 353

6. American Literary History

- * At least one of the following: English 101, 170
- * At least one of the following: English 225, 226
- * At least one of the following: English 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 251, 252
- * At least two of the following: English 326, 328, 329, 330, 331

7. Creative Writing

- * At least one of the following: English 101, 170
- * At least two literary courses in the genre or genres of focus
- * At least three of the following: 203, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209-10, 211-12, 307
- * At least one course in the correlate must be at the 300 level

The Faculty

The following list of the English department faculty suggests its range and vitality, and it reveals hidden talents and interests. Members of the department have described themselves in terms of their intellectual interests—the subjects they study and teach and the areas in which they have directed tutorials and guided independent studies. Please consult this list when you are selecting an advisor, a tutor, or looking for a faculty member to sponsor Independent Study or Field Work.

Mark C. Amodio: Old and Middle English poetry and prose; oral theory; history of the English language; literary theory; linguistics; Old Norse language and literature; Renaissance drama and poetry; Milton, Orwell; film and literature.

Peter Antelyes: American literature, Jewish Studies, comics and graphics novels, film, and music.

Heesok Chang: Twentieth-century British and Irish literature; literary modernism; critical theory; rhetoric; media and visual studies.

***Robert DeMaria, Jr.:** Milton; Seventeenth-century literature; Eighteenth-century literature; history of media; history of language; lexicography; biography.

Eve Dunbar: Nineteenth-and twentieth-century African American literature; Women writers of color; Science-fiction cinema.

Leslie Dunn: Early modern literature, including Shakespeare and women writers; feminist literary and cultural studies; literature and music; literature and medicine.

Donald Foster: Literature of the early modern period, dramatic and non-dramatic, especially Shakespeare; all periods of English and American drama; writing for performance; and journalism.

Wendy Graham: American Literature; American Culture, emphasizing issues of gender and sexual nonconformity as well as the relationship between fiction and the emerging social sciences (psychology, anthropology, museology, sociology, biophysics); Literary Decadence, Pre-Raphaelitism, and the notion of “sister arts”; literary and critical theory; African-American literature.

Hua Hsu: Transpacific/Asian American literature; 20th Century American literature and culture; literary transnationalism; philosophies of race and ethnicity; American historical fiction; protest literature; autobiography and genre; film and music criticism.

Michael Joyce: Hypertext fiction; media studies; modern literature; theory.

Jean Kane: Post-colonial literatures; modern and contemporary British literature; imperial discourse; women’s studies; creative writing.

***Paul Kane:** American and British literature; poetry; literature and the environment; Australian and other post-colonial literatures; literary theory and criticism.

Amitava Kumar: Reportage; essay-form, both in prose and film; literatures describing the global movement of goods and people; memory-work.

***Kiese Laymon:** Fiction, expository writing, African-American literature, Southern literature, gender studies. Very interested in close textual analysis of film, oral traditions and hip hop culture and music.

M Mark: Twentieth-century literature; contemporary literature; postcolonial literature; modern South Asian literature; modern Irish literature; literary modernism; drama; literature and film. Creative writing: fiction and literary nonfiction.

***Zoltán Márkus:** Early modern literature, especially drama; Shakespeare studies; European drama; cultural, literary, and performance theory.

***Molly McGlennen:** Native American literature, Native American Women and Feminisms, Native American Urban Experience, Native American literary theory, Ojibwe literature and identity, Contemporary Ethnic poetry, Poetry writing.

David Means: Creative writing; fiction and poetry; modern fiction.

Hiram Perez: Immigration and Diaspora, Critical Race Theory, Latina/o Literature, African American Literature, Asian American Literature, Feminism, Queer Studies, Film, Popular Culture, Psychoanalysis.

Karen Robertson: Renaissance drama, including Shakespeare, feminist studies; creative writing. Independents have included creative writing, contemporary women writers, Virginia Woolf, feminist theorists in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

***Paul Russell:** Twentieth and Twenty-first century prose fiction, especially Joyce, Woolf and Nabokov; Dickens; Queer Studies; Mormons.

Ralph Sassone: Creative writing; twentieth-century literature; contemporary fiction and literary nonfiction.

***Tyrone Simpson, II:** Literary Urbanism; Twentieth- Century American Literature; Nineteenth and Twentieth- Century African American Literature; Twentieth- Century Urban American Studies; Critical Race Theory, Critical Geography, American Cultural Studies, and Film Studies.

Susan Zlotnick: Victorian studies; gender studies; the novel; working-class literature; the intersections of history and literature; independent projects welcome.

*On leave in Fall '17.

Frequently Asked Questions

Area Requirements

Does English 226 (American Literature, 1865-1925) count as a pre-1900 course?

No. Although the course covers material from the latter half of the nineteenth century, it deals substantially with literary modernism. English 225 (American Literature, Origins to pre-1900) does satisfy the pre-1900 requirement.

Can area requirements be covered by courses taken JYA or during summer session?

Yes, with approval from the associate chair. In order to receive approval, make an appointment with the associate chair; bring with you a course description from the university catalogue and a copy of the syllabus.

Credit Questions

I received an AP credit in English. Does this count towards my English major?

No. Your AP English credit does not count as 1 of the 12 credits you need to complete the English major. However, *it does count towards your total college credits* (1 of 34 needed to graduate).

My English JYA credits appear in my transcript as ungraded work. Will they count towards the major, even though the departmental requirements state that 11 of the 12 required units must be graded units?

Yes. As long as your JYA credits are approved English credits, they will count towards your English major.

What about English credits taken over the summer at another institution? Do they also transfer as ungraded work; do they count towards my major?

Yes. But this work must be pre-approved by the associate chair of the department. In order to get approval make an appointment to see the associate chair; be sure to bring the catalogue course description and a copy of the syllabus.

Can any of the English credits I have earned at other schools, either JYA or during summer session, count as a 300-level credit?

Generally speaking, no. However, the associate chair will take into consideration certain cases where the student can demonstrate that the coursework in question was comparable to that undertaken in a 300-level English class at Vassar.

Can a Vassar course I have taken outside of the English department count towards my major?

Yes, under the following circumstances:

(1) You can count any course that has been cross-listed with the English department or if it has been approved by the associate chair to count as an English credit. The quickest way to find out if such a course will count towards your major is to ask the instructor, since she or he is responsible for petitioning the department for such approval.

(2) The department will accept one literature course from other departments or programs toward the English major. Please note that these courses will not count toward any of the English department's distribution requirements.

Before declaring my English major, I NRO'd an English course. I did well in the class and received a letter grade for it on my transcript. Can this course count towards the major?

Unfortunately, no. Even if you received an "A" for the course, the non-recording option counts towards the quota of your allowable nongraded units. Your transcript may show a letter grade for the course, but our records will indicate it was elected as NRO.

Independent Study and Field Work

How do I apply for English 298 (Independent Study), 399 (Senior Independent Study), or 290 (Field Work)?

Permission to elect Independent Study and Field Work is granted by the associate chair, but you first must find a faculty sponsor. If you wish to do 298, 399, or 290 and you don't know who would be an appropriate sponsor, consult the associate chair first. Occasionally, a request for Independent Study or Field Work requires permission of the chair after consultation with the associate chair.

What kinds of Field Work will the department sponsor to oversee?

The project must fall clearly within the scope of our concerns as an English Department. Projects involving a student's work in television, radio, or advertising, for example, are best referred to either the American Culture Program or the Department of Sociology (which offer courses in those fields).

You are required to submit a written proposal. The proposal should address the relevance of the project to your work as an English major (or work in English courses) as well as outline clearly and specifically your duties on the job.

Is there a Creative Writing Program at Vassar?

While there is not a separate program for creative writing within the Vassar English Department, we offer an array of creative writing courses. Students should begin with English 205: Introductory Creative Writing, which may be taken in either A or B semester. This course serves as an introduction to the writing of both fiction and poetry and is a prerequisite for English 206, also usually offered in both A and B semesters, is open to students who have taken 205. One section of 206 may be designated as a poetry section for those students who wish to work exclusively in that form.

The department has two year-long creative writing courses, English 209-210, Advanced Creative Writing: Narrative, and English 211-212, Advanced Creative Writing: Verse, that are open to both majors and non-majors. Students who wish to be considered for these courses must submit a writing portfolio prior to the beginning of pre-registration; please check with the English office for the exact due date. A portfolio should consist of 15 to 20 pages of fiction or 6 to 8 poems.

Creative writing courses are not open to first-semester Freshmen.

A writing portfolio is also required for students wishing to take English 305-306 the year-long Creative Writing Seminar; please check with the English office for the exact due date. This course is open only to senior English Majors.

Independent study in creative writing is also available for sophomores, juniors, and seniors, subject to the ordinary rules for independent study in the English department, and English majors may elect to undertake a creative thesis.

All of our creative writing courses include study of established authors as well as in-class consideration of student work.

Vassar sends many graduates on to MFA Programs in Creative Writing. Recent graduates have studied at the Iowa Writers Workshop, Columbia, NYU, University of Montana, University of Massachusetts, Washington University, University of Wisconsin, University of Texas, Brooklyn College, and University of Arkansas. Notable writers who have attended Vassar include Edna St. Vincent Millay, Elizabeth Bishop, Muriel Rukeyser, Mary Oliver, Jane Smiley, Erica Funkhauser, Elizabeth Spires, Carole Maso, Keith Scribner, Curtis Sittenfeld, Adam Ross, Amber Dermont, Jesse Ball, Aimee Friedmann, Miranda Beverly-Whitmore, Joe Hill, and Owen King.

Planning Your Senior Year

Students should begin planning their senior year well in advance. As a part of this process, there are a number of questions you should ask yourself. For example: How do my various courses connect with each other? What is my trajectory through the major and how might the senior year serve as a capstone for it? Do I want to write a thesis? If so, what kind of preparation do I need? Do I want to apply for the Creative Writing Seminar or the Senior Writing Seminar? If so, what preparation do I need? Are there ways in which my interests outside of the department connect to my work in my major? The department encourages English majors to think imaginatively about these and similar questions and to seek advice from their major advisers as well as their course instructors.

If you decide to enroll in English 300 and write a critical or creative thesis, you should make sure that you have adequately prepared yourself for undertaking the project. Take coursework in your chosen field before you write the thesis. Consider how your JYA experience, or courses taken in other departments might support/anticipate the work you want to do on your thesis. In the semester before you write the thesis, talk to both your major and thesis advisor about the kind of work you might be able to undertake independently over the summer or during winter break.

If you choose, in lieu of English 300 you can enroll in a 300-level seminar during your senior year. While the department hopes that students will sample the rich diversity of its offerings, the department also strongly encourages students to work up from the 200- level to the 300-level in at least one field.

Students wishing to apply for any of the senior writing courses should prepare themselves by taking the writing courses offered at the 200-level.

English 300: The Thesis

A term deadlines:

All students writing a critical senior thesis during a-term must meet two departmental deadlines: the first for a working title, due **September 20, 2017**, and the second for the final draft of the thesis, due **December 13, 2017**.

Within the first three weeks of the term in which you are writing the thesis, but no later than **September 20, 2017**, you must submit to the department office a typed sheet of paper with the following information: your name, your email, your thesis advisor, and the working title of your thesis.

Students and their individual advisors are responsible for determining interim deadlines for the drafting of the thesis. Some advisors ask that you submit a few pages each week; others may request that you submit completed chapters or sections during the semester. Whatever you do, be sure to have a discussion with your advisor early in the thesis process about interim deadlines so that you know what your thesis advisor expects.

B term deadlines:

All students writing a critical senior thesis during b-term must meet two departmental deadlines: the first for a working title, due **February 7, 2018**, and the second for the final draft of the thesis, due **May 8, 2018**.

Within the first three weeks of the term in which you are writing the thesis, but no later than **February 7, 2018**, you must submit to the department office a typed sheet of paper with the following information: your name, your email, your thesis advisor, and the working title of your thesis.

Students and their individual advisors are responsible for determining interim deadlines for the drafting of the thesis. Some advisors ask that you submit a few pages each week; others may request that you submit completed chapters or sections during the semester. Whatever you do, be sure to have a discussion with your advisor early in the thesis process about interim deadlines so that you know what your thesis advisor expects.

Creative Work in the Senior Year

What exactly is the Creative Writing Seminar (English 305-06)?

The Creative Writing Seminar is a liberal arts course in reading and writing like all other courses in the department; it is not solely a “writing workshop.” Reading is drawn for the most part from the twentieth century to provide examples of various types of writing: fiction, poetry, and nonfiction outside of literary criticism. Class time is divided between discussion of this reading and discussion of student writing.

Who can take Creative Writing Seminar and how can I apply?

This course is open only to senior English majors. To be considered for admission to English 305-306 (Creative Writing Seminar), you need to submit two copies of samples of your writing; please check with the English office for the exact date. Try to submit samples of the kind of writing that you think you may want to concentrate on in your senior project. However it is more important that you submit writing that you feel best shows your abilities than to predict what you will write in the Creative Writing Seminar. If you are interested in writing fiction, you should submit one or two completed stories; if poetry, a number of poems; if literary nonfiction, an extended prose piece, and so on. You may also wish to submit a variety of pieces (poetry and prose). You should not submit traditional critical essays (papers), although papers that veer toward literary nonfiction are a possibility. Feel free to use samples of writing you have done for other courses; that is, you need not write something new for this process. The names of students selected for English 305-306 will be posted outside the English Office. Enrollment is limited to twelve students.

What is the senior writing seminar?

The senior writing seminar is at present a one-term course open to English majors, students pursuing the creative writing correlate, and a limited number of non-majors who have taken one or more of the 200-level writing courses. To be considered for admission, you need to submit samples before pre-registration.

What other creative writing courses are open to seniors?

All the 200-level writing courses are open to seniors. Seniors may also elect to write a creative thesis (English 300).

Rumors and Queries

Do professors in the department keep secret grade books?

Some do and some don't. But even if a professor keeps a private entry of grades for papers, exams, oral reports, participation, and so forth, it functions more as a memory aid than an official record. Since your final grade will be determined by your performance over the course of the semester—taking into account factors like effort and improvement—the professor's written comments on papers will provide an index of how you are doing.

Why don't professors in the English department put grades on papers?

This long-standing practice in the English department is based on the theory that an English course is a conversation. The conversation takes place in class among students and teachers; it takes place in conferences and e-mail; and it takes place in the dialogue between a student's paper and a teacher's response. The placement of a grade on the paper puts an end to this part of the conversation. A student paper is not an exam but is rather an opportunity for the student to speak on a particular subject. The instructor's response is not a grade, but it is an informed response to what the student has said.

Why doesn't the department offer courses on literature in translation?

Because we are an English department, not a comparative literature department, foreign literatures in translation fall outside of our field.

Whom should one ask about graduate study in English?

The chair of the department and the associate chair are available by appointment to discuss graduate school plans and applications for post-graduate grants.

Guidelines for Requesting Letters of Recommendation

Every academic year, members of the English department write hundreds of letters of recommendation for students and former students. This is, of course, a part of their work as teachers and mentors, and students should not be shy about asking for recommendations. However, faculty members take considerable time on the task; write in detail and make every effort to present a candidate in the best possible light. They write different letters, of course, for each individual, and they write letters designed for a variety of applications, including graduate school, law school, medical school, summer fellowships, traveling fellowships, study abroad programs, prizes, employment prospects, and internships. Students, therefore, should do what they can to give faculty the time and information needed to write successfully on their behalf. Here are some guidelines, adapted from those issued to undergraduates at Harvard:

- * Give at least three, preferably four or more, weeks notice for any request. Even if you know that the instructor has a letter already on file, do not assume that it can be changed and quickly printed. Letters may need significant revision best to fit a particular purpose.
- * Include a written statement of the due date and whether it is a postmark or a receipt date.
- * Provide a written description of the purpose of the letter and/or a copy of instructions intended for the person writing. If there are multiple letters for different purposes, provide a description for each (e.g., graduate school, law school, traveling fellowship).
- * Make sure to provide the instructor with your statement of purpose or letter of intent for each application. This statement is crucial to the success of your application, and it is essential for your instructor to read it when writing on your behalf. If your instructor is willing to work with you on the statement, you should certainly take advantage of the opportunity.
- * Offer to provide copies of class papers and of any other papers directly relevant.
- * Fill out any forms as completely as you can. Do not expect the person writing for you to fill out any information that you yourself know.
- * Offer to provide a copy of your transcript (an unofficial one is fine) and a CV.
- * Offer to have an individual conference about the reasons for your application(s). At the very least, explain these reasons either by including a written statement or by including a draft of your project or statement of purpose submitted with your application.
- * Include fully addressed envelopes for each letter and affix sufficient postage.
- * Make certain to fill out any waiver request, either yes or no. This is easily missed.
- * Do not email requests for letters along with attachments. Print out everything and give or send all materials to the person whom you are asking to write for you. In other words, don't expect the person writing for you to print out your work or to visit a web site (unless strictly required by the party receiving the letter).
- * Never assume that a letter can be faxed or e-mailed at the last minute. This puts unacceptable constraints on the person writing on your behalf.