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
Katie Gemmill, Adjunct Instructor
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
Dorothy Kim, Assistant Professor of English
Amitava Kumar, 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
* Ronald A. Sharp, Professor of English
Tyrone R. Simpson, II, Associate Professor of English
* Patricia Wallace, Professor of English
Susan Zlotnick, Professor of English

For a description of faculty members’ interests see pp 20-21. If you are looking for a senior thesis advisor, this is a good place to start.

*On leave in Spring ’16.
**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. In other words, majors may fulfill the historical distributional 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. They 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 spring break. Applicants for English 203 (Journalism) English 307 (Senior Creative Writing) must submit samples of their writing before pre-registration in the fall. Details about these deadlines will be posted on the bulletin board outside the department office.

**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 is in this booklet.
I. Introduction to Literary Study

English Freshman Course Descriptions

101.51
Mr. Perez
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.
Where does the instruction of citizenship take place and what does it mean to be “naturalized”
as an American? 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? And finally, what might popular culture teach us
about citizenship and about ourselves?

101.52
Ms. Kim
Reading the Romance
Romance fiction accounts for over a quarter of all books sold annually with an estimated
revenue of 1.37 billion dollars. Though immensely popular, this genre is ignored by both
academia and mainstream media. All other genre fictions—mystery, westerns, scifi, fantasy—
have a place in the New York Times book review and in the college classroom. Yet, romance
remains invisible. This class will consider why and how the genre has become culturally
marginalized. What does romance’s historical trajectory and contemporary status say about
gender, class, race, capitalist culture, and the shape of the literary canon? How did we get from
the genre of romance being an important node in English literary production to a popular
moneymaker but invisible cultural player? What about the audience? How do these reading
communities from the Middle Ages to today impact the genre’s shape? We will explore a variety
of romance texts in verse, prose, and drama including: Apollonius of Tyre, Lais of Marie de
France, The Romance of Silence, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, St. Juliana, the works of
Shakespeare, John Donne’s poetry, Aphra Behn’s Oronooko, Jane Austen’s Emma, E. M.
Forster’s A Room with A View, and popular paperback romances.
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 description 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 with AP English credit may take English 170 in the fall semester. Those freshmen who are not currently enrolled in 101 may choose to take 101 in the b-semester and 170 simultaneously; the English department, though, suggests that freshmen take the opportunity to explore other areas of study before committing to the major. Note that English 170 does not fulfill the Freshman Course requirement.

170.52
Ms. Graham
TR 9:00-10:15
Intro to Literary Studies: The Bad and The Beautiful: Literary Decadence at the Fin de siècle
This course examines the relationship between literary works redefining gender and sexuality through their depiction of androgynous hero/ines, femmes fatales, and outré sexual practices and the 'invention of the homosexual' at the close of the nineteenth century. The course will detail the legal and social constraints on sexual difference that frustrated writers’ efforts to affirm same-sex passion, which Oscar Wilde called “the love that dare not speak its name.” The coded nature of homoerotic themes in texts will encourage close reading of works that reward literary scrutiny as well as polemical interpretation. The course will employ psychoanalysis and queer theory to address the male aesthete’s quandary: homophobia and misogyny encourage him to align himself with the privileged Victorian male through his vilification of women (as tasteless and insatiable consumers of objects and men), at the same time, he is drawn to the feminine. Theorists consulted: Foucault, Lacan, Butler, Barthes, Deleuze, Sedgwick, Felski. Authors read: Flaubert, Balzac, Poe, Sacher-Masoch, Wilde, Swinburne, Pater, James, Bataille. Wherever possible, we will try to draw connections between the nineteenth century and our own embattled times.

170.53
Ms. Kane
TR 12:00-1:15
Intro to Literary Studies: Approaches to Literary Studies: Journeys of Transformation
The course investigates the journey as a representation of fundamental change. Not only a plot of movement through space, the journey acts as a figure for transformation in or disruption of physical, emotional, and spiritual states of being, in individuals and groups. The class focuses on the journey as a productive "plot" of ontological change in works such as Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Art Spiegelman’s Maus, Edgar Rice Burrough's Tarzan, Colson Whitehead's The Intuitionist, and Wilde’s Picture of Dorian Gray. Each unit will also address a philosophical framework, an interpretive issue, or an analytical practice important to literature as a discipline. Students will develop their skills through class discussion, short, directed assignments, and longer essays, including a research essay and an annotated bibliography.
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. Does not satisfy Freshman Course requirement. These courses are ungraded and do not count toward the major. They may be repeated.

174.51
Mr. Kane
TR 3:10-4:25
Special Topics
Topic for 2016b: Poetry and Philosophy: The Ancient Quarrel. When Plato famously banished poets from his ideal Republic, he spoke of an ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy. That argument has continued, in various forms, down to the present, culminating in Heidegger's notorious question, "What are poets for?" This six-week course looks at a number of key texts in this contentious history, along with exemplary poems that illustrate the issues. Writers include Plato, Aristotle, Dante, Shelley, Wordsworth, Wilde, Eliot, Blanchot, Derrida, and others.
No specialized knowledge of poetry or philosophy required.
This class is ungraded.
2nd Six Weeks.

177.51
Ms. Graham
TR 12:00-1:15
Special Topics
Topic for 2016b: Henry James in Context. Henry James's literary career began just after the Civil War and ended on the brink of the First World War. Within this time frame, James evolved from a Transatlantic novelist of manners, preoccupied with the adventures of nouveau riche Americans, into a master stylist living abroad, paving the way for the next generation of expatriate American modernists. This course will chart James's trajectory from conventional writer to timorous avant-gardist through a chronological reading of select novels, stories, travel writing, memoirs, and criticism, by and about Henry James. In the century following James's death in 1916, the contours of literary criticism changed, partly in response to the richness of this particular writer's imagination and production. Following the publication of the Golden Bowl (1904), James confessed to a friend: "I can't read the new novel, and I wonder that I am condemned to write it." This course will decipher that paradox.
1st Six Weeks.
II. Intermediate Studies

203.51
Mr. Kumar TR 10:30-11:45

These American Lives: New Journalism
(Same as AMST 203) This course examines the various forms of journalism that report on the diverse complexity of contemporary American lives. In a plain sense, this course is an investigation into American society. But the main emphasis of the course is on acquiring a sense of the different models of writing, especially in longform writing, that have defined and changed the norms of reportage in our culture. Students are encouraged to practice the basics of journalistic craft and to interrogate the role of journalists as intellectuals (or vice versa).

Not open to first-year students.

205b
Introductory Creative Writing
Sections of Introductory Creative Writing are open by application to the department. No writing sample is required, but an application form available in the English department office must be completed prior to the end of the pre-registration period. Spaces in the course are assigned according to the students’ preferences and the priorities indicated in the College Catalogue. All sections are writing intensive, but the focus of the individual sections will vary. See descriptions below.

One 2-hour period and individual conferences with the instructor.
Not open to first-year students.

205.51
Mr. Sassone F 10:30-12:30

Introductory Creative Writing
This course will develop the student’s abilities as a rigorous writer and reader of creative prose, with a particular emphasis on short fiction. Students will be expected to produce short exercises, stories, and comprehensive revisions and to participate actively in discussions of peer and published work. The syllabus will be flexible according to the emerging needs of the class. Frequent conferences with the instructor will be required.

205.52
Ms. Mark R 1:00-3:00

Introductory Creative Writing
Students in this course will read and write stories 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, text and image, prose and poetry. This section of Composition 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: works by Ashbery, Atwood, Baldwin, Barth, Barthelme, Beattie, Bechdel, Bishop, Borges, Calvino, Carey, Carson, Chekhov, Cortázar, Danticat, Erdrich, Faulkner, García Márquez, Hughes, Jen, Joyce, Kafka, Kincaid, Komunyakaa, Lahiri, Moore, Mullen, Munro, O’Brien, O’Connor, Packer, Paley, Pardlo, Rankine, Satrapi, Saunders, Simic, Trethewey, Wallace, Winterson, Wolff, and Woolf.
**206b**

**Introductory Creative Writing**
Study and practice of various forms of prose and poetry. Open to any student who has taken English 205 or an equivalent course. Registration is by draw number as in any other course. Special permission is not required. No application form is required.

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

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

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**206.51**

Mr. Means  
T 1:00–3:00

**Introductory Creative Writing**

This course will focus on the writing of narrative forms, in particular the short story. Students will be asked to cross genres from fiction to poetry, although the emphasis will be on further developing your own unique voice, subject, and style in the short story. An independent reading/inspiration project will be required. In addition we’ll be examining other art forms (music, photography, painting) in relation to the story, and reading a wide range of short fiction, from traditional to experimental, along with Italo Calvino’s book, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* and Donald Barthelme’s *Not-Knowing*. The class will operate in a collaborative workshop format. Frequent conferences with the instructor will be required.

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**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.

**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.

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

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**207.51**

Mr. Kumar  
T 1:00–3:00

**Intermediate Creative Writing: Literary Non-Fiction**

Continued study and practice of various forms of prose and/or poetry.  
**Topic for 2016b: Writing About the City.** (Same as URBS 207) The city as a liberated zone, open for the play of difference. The city as a mood. The city as style. The city as designed space, as a site of anonymity, or a meeting place for the masses. The city as a no-name development zone in the desert. The city as history. The city as Ground Zero. The city as the place whose whole point is to leave behind the dull death through boredom that is suburbia. The idea of the city as it is imagined in the half-light of the remote town or village. The city as a disaster. The city as civilization. These and other meanings are present in what we will read in class. This is a writing course. I am interested in your writing about cities, both familiar and unfamiliar, in a way that is original and revealing.

Reading packet will have excerpts from Zadie Smith, Orhan Pamuk, Rem Koolhaas, Walter Benjamin, Susan Sontag, Vivian Gornick, Teju Cole, Edwidge Danticat, Don DeLillo, Amit Chaudhuri, David Foster Wallace, Suketu Mehta, Sukhdev Sandhu, Sean Wilsey, Andrew O’Hagan, Luc Sante, Lillian Ross, Svetlana Alexiyevich, and others. Mr. Kumar.
### Intermediate Creative Writing: Literary Non-Fiction

**Topic for 2016b: A Question of Taste.** 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 texts—music and film reviews, memoir, travel writing, arts reportage—we will pursue the possibility of a cultural criticism attentive to the subjectivity and instability of personal experience. Our semester will be 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? Possible authors include: Wesley Morris, J. Hoberman, Ellen Willis, Eula Biss, Greil Marcus, Susan Sontag, Pauline Kael, Dave Hickey.

### Intermediate Creative Writing: Literary Non-Fiction

**Topic for 2016b: File Under “Memoir/Non-Fiction”**. The past few years have seen an explosion of “first-person” and memoir-inflected writing, particularly on the Internet. This advanced seminar is an attempt to historicize and interrogate this phenomenon, particularly the ways in which personal experience can inform our engagement with politics and culture. Our models will not be confessional or diaristic per se. Instead, we will consider a range of playful, opaque approaches to locating, dissecting, hiding or disappearing oneself in an essay. Possible authors include: Maggie Nelson, Eula Biss, Hilton Als, Claudia Rankine, Joan Didion, Ken Chen, Luc Sante.

### 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. This is a year-long course. One 2-hour period and individual conferences with the instructor.

### Advanced Creative Writing: Verse

Development of the student’s abilities as a writer and reader of poetry. In addition to written poetry, other forms of poetic expressions may be explored, such as performance and spoken word. This is a year-long course. One 2-hour period and individual conferences with the instructor.

### Pre Modern Drama before 1800:

Study of selected dramatic texts and their embodiment both on the page and the stage. Authors, critical and theoretical approaches, dramatic genres, historical coverage, and themes may vary from year to year.
Topic for 2016b: Gender Transgression on the Early Modern Stage. (Same as WMST 215) This course explores the theatre as a site for representing challenges to the gendered social order of early modern England. Our subjects include cross-dressers, disobedient wives, scolds, witches, husband-murderers, incestuous siblings, and characters whose erotic desires cross boundaries of gender and class. Our approaches to the plays will be varied: we will situate them in their historical and cultural contexts, examine their structure and language, and read them through the lens of contemporary theory and criticism. Throughout the semester we’ll pay special attention to the plays as plays, learning to read them as scripts for performance, watching videos, and occasionally performing scenes ourselves.

216.51
Mr. Markus
TR 3:10-4:25

Modern Drama: Text and Performance after 1800
Study of modern dramatic texts and their embodiment both on the page and the stage. Authors, critical and theoretical approaches, dramatic genres, historical coverage, and themes may vary from year to year.

Topic for 2016b: Dysfunctional Families. This course explores modern American plays that present debacles in the private sphere and its most widely accepted, codified, and institutionalized social manifestation: the family. As a site of incessant conflicts and negotiations between the individual and the other, and between the intimate and the public, the family offers an ideal framework and subject matter for commentary on a variety of moral and social issues. Through an overview of twentieth (and early twenty-first) century American drama, this course pays particular attention to the vestiges of the American Dream in a range of dramatic representations of dysfunctional families. As a survey with a special focus, the course includes plays by Edward Albee, Lorraine Hansberry, Lillian Hellman, David Henry Hwang, Tracy Letts, Marsha Norman, Eugene O’Neill, Suzan-Lori Parks, Sam Shepard, Tennessee Williams, and August Wilson. We also read selected theoretical texts about the role and significance of family in the 20th century. We place a great emphasis on the performative aspects of our discussed plays: we perform selected scenes as well as view and discuss a theater production staged at Vassar or in our larger area during the semester.

218.51
Ms. Dunbar
TR 10:30-11:45

Literature, Gender, and Sexuality
This course considers matters of gender and sexuality in literary texts, criticism, and theory. The focus varies from year to year, and may include study of a historical period, literary movement, or genre; constructions of masculinity and femininity; sexual identities; or representations of gender in relation to race and class.

Topic for 2016b: Black Feminism: From the Combahee River Collective to Beyonce as feminist figure, this course will push you to consider the ways in which black American women have historically and contemporaneously negotiated the intersections between race, class, gender, and sexuality in order to formulate their own feminist theory and praxis.

223.51
Mr. Márukus
TR 10:30-11:45

Founding of English Literature
ENGL 222 and ENGL 223 offer an introduction to British literary history through an exploration of texts from the eighth through the seventeenth centuries in their literary and cultural contexts. ENGL 222 begins with Old English literature and continues through the death of Queen Elizabeth I (1603). ENGL 223 begins with the establishment of Great Britain and continues through the British Civil War and Puritan Interregnum to the Restoration. Critical issues may include discourses of difference (race, religion, gender, social class); tribal, ethnic, and national
identities; exploration and colonization; textual transmission and the rise of print culture; authorship and authority. Both courses address the formation and evolution of the British literary canon, and its significance for contemporary English studies.

**Topic for 2016b: From The Faerie Queene to The Country Wife: Introduction to Early Modern Literature and Culture**

This is a thematically organized “issues and methods” course grafted onto a chronologically structured survey course of early modern literature and culture. Its double goal is to develop skills for understanding early modern texts (both the language and the culture) as well as to familiarize the students with a representative selection of works from the mid-1500s through the late 1600s. With this two-pronged approach, the students acquire an informed appreciation of the early modern period that may well serve as the basis for pursuing more specialized courses in this field. We explore a great variety of genres and media, including canonical authors such as Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton, but we also attend to less well-known authors, many of them women, through whose writings we can achieve a more nuanced and complex understanding of the times. By paying special attention to correlations between literature and other discourses, as well as to issues of cultural identity and difference based on citizenship, class, ethnicity, gender, geography, nationality, race, and religion, we engage early modern literature and culture in ways that are productive to the understanding of our own culture as well.

**Please note that Engl-222 is not a prerequisite of this course; it is open to all students, including freshmen.**

**231.51**  
Ms. McGlennen  
TR 3:10-4:25  
**Native-American Literature:**  
This course examines Indigenous North American literatures from a Native American Studies perspective. Native American literature is particularly vast and diverse, representing over 500 Indigenous nations in the northern hemisphere and written/spoken in both Indigenous languages and languages of conquest (English, Spanish, French). Because of this range of writing and spoken stories, our goals for the class are to complicate our understanding of “texts,” to examine the origins of and evolution of tribal literatures (fiction, poetry, non fiction), and to comprehend the varied theoretical debates and frameworks that have created and nurtured a robust field of Native American literary criticism. A Native American Studies framework positions the literature as the creative work of Native people on behalf of their respective communities and complicated by the legacy of colonialism.

**236.51**  
Mr. Amodio  
MW 10:30-11:45  
**Beowulf**  
Intensive study of the early English epic in the original language.  
**Prerequisite: English 235 or demonstrated knowledge of Old English, or permission of the instructor.**

**237.51**  
Ms. Kim  
TR 1:30-2:45  
**Chaucer:**  
The major poetry, including The Canterbury Tales.  
**Topic for 2016b: Producing Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales**  
Who decided the Miller, the Wife of Bath, the Knight, the Cook should be included in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales? Chaucer’s longest and unfinished work has a textual history that spans the early manuscripts (Ellesmere and the Hengwert) to Caxton’s early printed edition and to the luxurious late-nineteenth century production of the Kelmscott Chaucer. In this class, we
will not only read all the *Canterbury Tales* in the *Riverside Chaucer*, but we will also consider the apocryphal tales that never got into the *Riverside*, yet were often attached to earlier editions of the *Canterbury Tales*. We will evaluate what goes into producing the *Canterbury Tales*. What are the agendas at stake? Who are the readers/viewers of these Tales? What does the manuscript, printed, and new media history of the *Canterbury Tales* tell us about this work’s place in the English canon? The class will consider a wide-range of different Canterbury Tales productions: early manuscripts (Ellesmere, Hengwert); early printed books (Caxton, Speght, Dryden); later luxury editions (Kelmscott); film and television productions (A Knight’s Tale, BBC’s Canterbury Tales); and on the Internet (Geoffrey Chaucer Hath a Blog) and hip-hop.

**242.51**  
Mr. Foster  
TR  
10:30-11:45  

**Shakespeare**  
(Same as DRAM 242) "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: year-long course in progress.**

**248.51**  
Ms. Gemmill  
TR  
1:30-2:45  

**The Age of Romanticism 1789-1832**  
Study of British literature in a time of revolution. Authors may include such poets as Blake, Wordsworth, and Keats; essayists such as Burke, Wollstonecraft, Hazlitt, Lamb, and DeQuincey; and novelists such as Edgeworth, Austen, Mary Shelley, and Scott.

**251.51**  
Ms. Dunbar  
TR  
1:30-2:45  

**Topics in Black Literature**  
This course considers Black literatures in all their richness and diversity. The focus changes from year to year, and may include study of a historical period, literary movement, or genre. The course may take a comparative, diasporic approach or may examine a single national or regional literature.  
**Topic for 2016b: Zombies, Monsters and Time Travelers in African American Literature.** (Same as AFRS 251) This course will examine how African American writers have employed monsters as tropes, crafted tales haunted by terrible working conditions, and contorted language beyond standard recognition in order to tell a horrific story of black life within the United States. Works may be drawn from writers such as Toni Morrison, Richard Wright, Kiese Laymon, Gwendolyn Brooks, Victor LaValle and others.

**253.51**  
Mr. Perez  
MW  
10:30-11:45  

**Topics in American Literature**  
The specific focus of the course varies each year, and may center on a literary movement (e.g., Transcendentalism, the Beats, the Black Mountain School), a single work and its milieu (e.g.,
Moby Dick and the American novel, Call It Sleep and the rise of ethnic modernism); a historical period (e.g., the Great Awakening, the Civil War), a region (e.g., Southern literature, the literature of the West), or a genre (e.g., the sentimental-domestic novel, American satire, the literature of travel/migration, American autobiography, traditions of reportage, American environmentalist writing).

**Topic for 2016b: Narratives of Passing.** (Same as AFRS 253) The phrase “passing for white,” peculiar to American English, first appears in advertisements for the return of runaway slaves. Abolitionist fiction later adopts the phenomenon of racial passing (together with the figure of the “white slave”) as a major literary theme. African American writers such as William Wells Brown and William Craft incorporated stories of passing in their antislavery writing and the theme continued to enjoy great currency in African American literature in the postbellum era as well as during the Harlem Renaissance. In this class, we will examine the prevalence of this theme in African American literature of these periods, the possible reasons for the waning interest in this theme following the Harlem Renaissance, and its reemergence in recent years. In order to begin to understand the role of passing in the American imagination, we will look to examples of passing and the treatment of miscegenation in literature, film, and the law. We will consider the qualities that characterize what Valerie Smith identifies as the “classic passing narrative” and determine how each of the texts we examine conforms to, reinvents, and/or writes against that classic narrative. Some of the themes considered include betrayal, secrecy, lying, masquerade, visibility/invisibility, and memory. We will also examine how the literature of passing challenges or redefines notions of family, American mobility and success, and the convention of the “self-made man.”

**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 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, or a scholarly edition of a particular work or group of works. Senior projects that are not essays in themselves should be accompanied by a complementary essay. Students admitted to 305-306 (Creative Writing Seminar), must also enroll in English 300 in the a-term, and it follows the special guidelines established in the context of 305-306.

**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.

**306.51**
Ms. Kane M 3:10-6:10
**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.
This is a year-long course.

**307.51**
Ms. McGlennen F 1:00-3:00
**Senior Creative Writing**
An advanced writing course in parallel with the long-established senior composition sequence, accommodating the multiple approaches, genres, forms and interests that represent the diversity of a contemporary writing life.
Open to seniors from all departments.
Writing samples are due after the October break.
One 3-hour period with individual conferences with the instructor.

**329.51**
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.
Studies in Medieval Literature:
Intensive study of selected medieval texts and the questions they raise about their context and interpretation. Issues addressed may include the social and political dynamics, literary traditions, symbolic discourses, and individual authorial voices shaping literary works in this era. Discussion of these issues may draw on both historical and aesthetic approaches, and both medieval and modern theories of rhetoric, reference, and text-formation.

Topic for 2016b: The Figure of the Jew in Medieval England.
Historically, the Jews migrated into England with William the Conqueror and the Anglo-Normans as royal bankers in 1066. By the twelfth century, they lived in most of the major urban centers throughout the British Isle and eventually in Ireland. They were officially expelled in 1290, and though we have evidence of conversion houses in the 14th and 15th centuries, their presence in Britain only began to increase during the Renaissance. This seminar will consider the anti-Jewish polemic in medieval England and the real and imagined figure of the Jew in legal, debate, play, miracle, romance, history, and bestiary discourse. We will think about Latin debate and sermon materials Contra Iudeos as well as blood-libel legends, miracles of the virgins, and the Croxton Play of the Sacrament. We will not only examine the anti-Semitic materials circulating in England, but also the philosemitic documents and practices also in evidence during the period. This will include the production of Hebrew manuscripts for Christian readers and the linguistic interaction and evidence of Christian readers of Hebrew. We will read some of the following texts: Josephus's The Jewish Wars; The Life of Thomas of Norwich; The Life of Hugh of Lincoln; The Croxton Play of the Sacrament; The Siege of Jerusalem; Chaucer’s “Prioress’s Tale”; Gower’s Confessio Amantis; works of John Lydgate; Arma Christi rolls; and the Vernon Manuscript.

Studies in Shakespeare:
Advanced study of Shakespeare's work and its cultural significance in various contexts from his time to today.

Topic for 2016b: Wholly Hamlet! "Are the commentators on Hamlet really mad," inquired Oscar Wilde, "or only pretending to be?" It has been said that "Hamlet invented modern subjectivity"; that Hamlet engages us "not as a work by Shakespeare but as a work of western culture," "a field of operation for thoughtful play," "a poem unlimited." The Hamlet story survives in medieval folk tales and in a thousand modern redactions, including three substantially different "Shakespeare" scripts (1603, 1604, 1623). In this interdisciplinary seminar we shall consider folk Hamlets, stage Hamlets, printshop Hamlets, burlesque Omelets; Hamlet as transposed to the painter's canvas and to the silver screen; Hamlet in textual scholarship, literary history, classroom editing, dramatic theory, art history, psychiatry, anthropology, philosophy, gender studies, queer theory, kiddie lit, theology, Bardolatry, anti-Stratfordianism, pop culture, world culture, and the Internet. Nor shall Ophelia drown without notice.

Studies in Nineteenth-Century British Literature:
Study of a major author (e.g., Coleridge, George Eliot, Oscar Wilde) or a group of authors (the Brontës, the Pre-Raphaelite poets and painters) or a topical issue (representations of poverty; literary decadence; domestic angels and fallen women; transformations of myth in Romantic and Victorian literature) or a major genre (elegy, epic, autobiography).
**Topic for 2016b: The Gothic.** This course explores the development and the evolution of the Gothic novel in Britain from the mid eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. We begin with Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis, three of the most important practitioners of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel, before moving to Victorian adaptations and transformations of the Gothic form. Students read a wide variety of texts, including *The Castle of Otranto, A Sicilian Romance, The Monk, Northanger Abbey, Wuthering Heights, The Woman in White,* and *Dracula,* as well as some of the key theorists of the Gothic. The course addresses different aspects of Gothic writing (e.g., female Gothic, economic Gothic, alien Gothic, urban Gothic) in order to consider how the Gothic’s mad, monstrous and ghostly representations serve as a critique and counterpoint to dominant ideologies of gender, race, nation and class.

**362.51**  
Mr. Antelyes  
**Text and Image:**  
Explores intersections and interrelationships between literary and visual forms such as the graphic novel, illustrated manuscripts, tapestry, the world-wide web, immersive environments, the history and medium of book design, literature and film, literature and visual art. Topics vary from year to year.  
**Topic for 2016b: Sequential Art.** An advanced exploration of topics in comics history, theory, aesthetics, and politics. Subjects and texts may include: conflict comics (Jacques Tardi’s *It Was the War of the Trenches* and Joe Sacco’s *Safe Area Gorazde*), women’s diary comics (Julie Doucet’s *My New York Diary* and Gabrielle Bell’s *July 2011*), comics, genre, and gender (*Wonder Woman* from origins to contemporary permutations), comics and colonialism (Herge’s *Tintin* and Goscinny and Uderzo’s *Asterix*), disability comics (the Oracle series and Matt Fraction’s *Hawkeye*), comics and sexuality (Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home*), comics and culture (shoujo manga, particularly *Ouran Social Club*), comics and race (Jennings’ and Duffy’s *The Hole: Consumer Culture, Volume 1*), comics and silence (Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*), and comics out of the box (Chris Ware’s *Building Stories*). Readings will also include materials in comics studies, media studies, and literary studies.

**370.51**  
Mr. Kane  
**Transnational Literature:**  
This course focuses on literary works and cultural networks that cross the borders of the nation-state. Such border-crossings raise questions concerning vexed phenomena such as globalization, exile, diaspora, and migration-forced and voluntary. Collectively, these phenomena deeply influence the development of transnational cultural identities and practices. Specific topics studied in the course vary from year to year and may include global cities and cosmopolitanisms; the black Atlantic; border theory; the discourses of travel and tourism; global economy and trade; or international terrorism and war.  
**Topic for 2016b: Reading Australia.** Postcolonial cultures are often divided into two types: indigenous and settler, according to the circumstances of colonization and subsequent history. This course will examine one of the settler cultures, Australia, through the lens of its literature, as it has developed since the nation’s origins as a British penal colony. The focus, however, will be mainly on modern and contemporary literature, which has developed with extraordinary vitality in recent decades. In addition to exploring the dynamics of this new Australian literature, we will consider the impact of British and American influences, and the unique situation of Aboriginal culture in Australia. In placing it in the broad context of globalized writing in the 21st century, we seek to understand Australia’s ongoing contribution to anglophone literature. Authors may include Peter Carey, Helen Garner, David Malouf, Gwen Harwood, Alice Pung, Les Murray, Alex Miller and others.
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 315.51: American Jewish Literature
This course is an exploration of the American Jewish literary imagination from historical, topical, and theoretical perspectives. Among the genres we cover are novels (such as Henry Roth’s *Call it Sleep* and Dara Horn’s *A Guide for the Perplexed*), plays (Sholem Asch’s *God of Vengeance*), stories (by Isaac Bashevis Singer, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, 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*), comics and graphic novels (Vanessa Davis’s *Make Me a Woman*), and films (*The Plot Against Harry*). Topics include the lineages of Talmudic hermeneutics and Midrash, the development of Yiddish American modernism, Jewish feminisms, the (anti)conventions of queer Jewish literatures and the intersections of Jewishness and queerness, the assumptions and strategies of diaspora poetics, and contemporary representations of the Holocaust. No prerequisites.
Mr. Antelyes.
Courses That Fulfill English Major Requirements  
For Academic Year 2015-2016

**pre-1800**  
**Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Requirement Fulfilled</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>215 Pre-Modern Drama before 1800</td>
<td>pre-1800</td>
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<tr>
<td>216 Modern Drama</td>
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<tr>
<td>217 Literary Theory and Intrepretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>218 Literature, Gender, and Sexuality: <em>Black Feminism</em></td>
<td>Race, Ethn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>222/223 Founding of English Literature</td>
<td>pre-1800</td>
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<tr>
<td>227 Harlem Renaissance/Precurors</td>
<td>Race, Ethn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>228 African American Literature</td>
<td>Race, Ethn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>230 Latina and Latino Literature in the U.S.</td>
<td>Race, Ethn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>231 Native-American Literature</td>
<td>Race, Ethn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235 Old English</td>
<td>pre-1800</td>
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<td>236 Beowulf</td>
<td>pre-1800</td>
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<tr>
<td>237 Chaucer</td>
<td>pre-1800</td>
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<td>238 Middle English Literature</td>
<td>pre-1800</td>
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<tr>
<td>240 Shakespeare</td>
<td>pre-1800</td>
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<td>241 Shakespeare</td>
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<td>242 Shakespeare</td>
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<tr>
<td>248 The Age of Romanticism 1789-1832</td>
<td>pre-1800</td>
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<tr>
<td>251 Topics in Black Literature: <em>Zombies, Monsters &amp; Time Travelers</em></td>
<td>Race, Ethn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>253 Topics in American Literature: <em>Narratives of Passing</em></td>
<td>Race, Ethn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>257 The Novel/English after 1945</td>
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<tr>
<td>261 Literatures of Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>315 Studies in Performance: <em>Performing Disability</em></td>
<td>Race, Ethn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>318 Literature Studies in Gender/Sexuality</td>
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<tr>
<td>325 Studies in Genre: <em>The Gothic</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>329 American Literary Realism</td>
<td>pre-1900</td>
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<td>330 American Modernism</td>
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<tr>
<td>340 Studies in Medieval Literature</td>
<td>pre-1800</td>
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<tr>
<td>341 Studies in the Renaissance</td>
<td>pre-1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>342 Studies in Shakespeare</td>
<td>pre-1800</td>
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<tr>
<td>351 Studies in 19th Century British Literature</td>
<td>Race, Ethn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>355 Modern Poets</td>
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<tr>
<td>362 Text and Image</td>
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<td>365-01 Selected Author: <em>JD Salinger and the Craft of Writing</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>365-02 Selected Author: <em>Fanny Howe</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>370 Transnational Literature</td>
<td>Race, Ethn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>380 The Blues In/And Black</td>
<td>Race, Ethn.</td>
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*As course topics change, so do the requirements they fulfill. Therefore, this list is only applicable for the 2015-2016 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:
   * 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
   * English 222 and 223
   * At least one of the following:
   * 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:** Primary interests: Old and Middle English poetry and prose; oral theory; history of English language; literary theory; linguistics. Secondary interests: 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; disability studies; sound and silence.

**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.

**Dorothy Kim:** Old English, Middle English, history of the book, medieval Celtic literature, medieval Scandinavian literature, romance, medieval Arthurian tradition, medieval
manuscripts, literature and music, literature and visual culture, women writers, devotional literature, literacy, multilingualism, multiculturalism, border culture.

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


**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.

*Ronald Sharp:* Romanticism; critical theory; Australian literature; contemporary poetry; the literature of friendship.

**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.

*Patricia Wallace:* Twentieth-century poetry and prose; contemporary American literature, including minority writers; poetic theory; feminist studies; American Culture, multidisciplinary approaches to literature and creative writing.

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

*On leave in Spring ’16.
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 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?**

No. Even if you received an “A” for the course, the non-recorded 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 usually 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. English 206, also offered in both "a" and "b" semesters, is open to students who have taken 205. One section of 206 is usually 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 a week before spring break in the semester before the courses begin. Please check with the English department for the exact due date. A portfolio should consist of 15 to 20 pages of fiction or 6 to 8 poems.

These courses are not available to Freshmen.
A writing portfolio is also required for students wishing to take English 305-306 the year-long Creative Writing Seminar. This course is limited to senior English Majors, and entails the writing of a Senior Thesis—a collection of poems, short stories or a novel.

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.

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, 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 thesis, you should make sure that you have adequately prepared yourself for undertaking an original research 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.
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 23, 2015**, and the second for the final draft of the thesis, due **December 16, 2015**.

Within the first three weeks of the term in which you are writing the thesis, but no later than **September 23, 2015**, 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. The working title should indicate both the author(s)/text(s) that are your focus and the approach you will be taking to those materials. This information will be distributed among the faculty and senior thesis writers.

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. Below is one possible template for interim deadlines. This template is intended to serve as a useful model rather than a requirement. 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.

**Model Template for Interim Deadlines:**

**September 23, 2015**
A three-page abstract, with an attached bibliography, is due to the thesis advisor. In the abstract, the student must state: the project’s primary and secondary texts, the principle questions, the structure (i.e., chapters), and the methodologies and/or critical approaches he or she will take.

**October 7, 2015**
Draft of significant section of the thesis is due, approximately 15-20 pages. Comments will be returned by the advisor the week after October break.

**November 11, 2015**
Draft of second half of the thesis is due, approximately 15-20 pages.
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 10, 2016**, and the second for the final draft of the thesis, due **May 10, 2016**.

Within the first three weeks of the term in which you are writing the thesis, but no later than **February 10, 2016**, 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. The working title should indicate both the author(s)/text(s) that are your focus and the approach you will be taking to those materials. This information will be distributed among the faculty and senior thesis writers.

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. Below is one possible template for interim deadlines. This template is intended to serve as a useful model rather than a requirement. 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.

**Model Template for Interim Deadlines:**

**February 10, 2016**
A three-page abstract, with an attached bibliography, is due to the thesis advisor. In the abstract, the student must state: the project’s primary and secondary texts, the principle questions, the structure (i.e., chapters), and the methodologies and/or critical approaches he or she will take.

**March 2, 2016**
Draft of significant section of the thesis is due, approximately 15-20 pages. Comments will be returned by the advisor the week after Spring break.

**April 13, 2016**
Draft of second half of the thesis is due, approximately 15-20 pages.
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. The instructor of the course is also the supervisor of each student’s senior tutorial (English 300). In other words, once you are registered in English 305-306, you do not have to seek out a separate tutorial advisor. The creative work you do for the course will count toward your senior tutorial. But in addition to creative work for the tutorial, students will be expected to write critical papers for the course. You likely know already that admission to the Creative Writing Seminar is highly competitive (see below) and that many fine writers have gone on from Vassar to graduate schools and successful writing careers without taking English 305-306.

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 to the English department office before spring break (see the bulletin board outside the department 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. A committee of at least three faculty members reads the submissions and selects the members of this course. The course instructor is not necessarily a member of the committee. The names of students selected for English 305-306 will be posted outside the English Office. Enrollment is limited to twelve students.

Are there other options for creative theses?

Under special circumstances seniors may undertake creative work, including a linked creative and analytical piece or a work of literary non-fiction, after careful discussion with a prospective advisor and permission of the chair. These projects may not normally take the form of creative writing of the sort undertaken in Creative Writing Seminar (English 305-306). Usually senior projects with a creative component are accompanied by a complementary essay or introduction.

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 in the fall.
What other creative writing courses are open to seniors?

All the 200-level writing courses are open to seniors with the following understandings: Introductory Creative Writing 205-206 and Intermediate Creating Writing, 207, are open by special permission, to sophomores, juniors, and seniors, in order of their draw numbers, with priority given to English majors. English 208 is open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors who have successfully completed either 205 or 207. See the section “Registration for Introductory Creative Writing,” elsewhere here for more information.

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 probably provide a more accurate 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. We do not prohibit some translations from being taught in our regular course offerings. On the contrary, several of us use translations in our classes in order to ramify historical and cultural understandings of the literature in question.

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.