

CORE LITERATURE AND WRITING SEMINAR

CLAWS

ENGLISH 1975

Course Descriptions

Spring 2016

1975-001

MWF 8:30 AM - 9:20 AM

Robert Duggan

Apocalyptic Moments

Say “apocalypse” and people think of the end of the world, but the ancient Greeks knew it as meaning a “revelation” or “uncovering.” From Kate Chopin’s short gem “The Story of an Hour” to Alan Moore’s musings on time and eternity in the graphic novel *Watchmen*, we’ll uncover great “a-ha!” moments of knowledge—both good and bad—and reveal their impact on both characters and readers. We’ll time travel to experience the Greeks’ original tale of (not) seeing and (not) believing, Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*. Together, we’ll drift down the Congo River towards “The horror! The horror!” in Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness* and watch how Francis Ford Coppola reinterprets that tale in the film *Apocalypse Now*. From these literary experiences, we’ll discuss not just the works themselves, but also the intertwined nature of reading and writing to generate both informal and formal essays incorporating the writing process from thesis to draft to final (not necessarily finished) product.

1975-002

MWF 9:30 AM - 10:20 AM

Jody Ross

Literature and Medicine

This seminar is designed for (but not limited to) students with an interest in science, health, and medicine. Some of the texts were written by physicians, and others deal with the life-and-death subjects of physical well-being and illness. Students will analyze a wide range of genres including fiction, drama, poetry, and memoir. The works selected for the course encourage students to look into the minds and hearts of others and into their own, as they encounter both fictional characters (such as a woman dying of cancer) and real surgeons confronting their own errors in the operating room. The works, which span more than a century and a multitude of attitudes, will spark discussions about ethics, history, aesthetics, psychology, and literary

traditions. Most important, these works of fiction and non-fiction confront the uncertainty and complexity of life as it is experienced by people who most value certainty: scientists.

1975-003**MWF 10:30 AM - 11:20 AM****Jody Ross****Literature and Medicine**

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1975-004**MWF 10:30 AM - 11:20 AM****Jill Karn****The Marriage Plot Undone**

In this course, we will read a series of novels, short stories, and plays that fall within the pattern of the marriage plot, as well as those that show ways in which that “plot” comes undone. Beginning with Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, we will consider how the marriage plot becomes a vehicle for a heroine’s growth, and trace changes and expansions to the marriage plot that allow for an expansion of consciousness for the female characters. We will study both the novels and various film adaptations of these marriage plot stories. Some questions we’ll address: To what extent does a marriage plot “trap” a heroine? Is she sometimes “plotted against”? What happens when the female character resists the marriage plot? Must the heroine or the hero be “won over” to this plot? How does romance become suspect in these stories, must it be rewritten or reimagined? If all comedy ends in marriage, what do we do with a heroine who emerges at the end of the story unmarried, and yet still very much alive? Is this a new form of tragedy, or is the heroine afforded some measure of freedom having “escaped” the marriage plot? Authors will most likely include Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Henry James, Edith Wharton, and William Shakespeare, among others.

1975-005**MWF 11:30 AM - 12:20 PM****Jill Karn****The Marriage Plot Undone**

In this course, we will read a series of novels, short stories, and plays that fall within the pattern of the marriage plot, as well as those that show ways in which that “plot” comes undone. Beginning with Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, we will consider how the marriage plot becomes a vehicle for a heroine’s growth, and trace changes and expansions to the marriage plot that allow for an expansion of consciousness for the female characters. We will study both the novels and various film adaptations of these marriage plot stories. Some questions we’ll address: To what extent does a marriage plot “trap” a heroine? Is she sometimes “plotted against”? What happens when the female character resists the marriage plot? Must the heroine or the hero be “won over” to this plot? How does romance become suspect in these stories, must it be rewritten or reimagined? If all comedy ends in marriage, what do we do with a heroine who emerges at the end of the story unmarried, and yet still very much alive? Is this a new form of tragedy, or is the heroine afforded some measure of freedom having “escaped” the marriage plot? Authors will most likely include Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Henry James, Edith Wharton, and William Shakespeare, among others.

1975-006

MWF 11:30 AM - 12:20 PM

Earl Bader

Inventing the Truth: Walking the Fiction/Non-Fiction Borderline

Toni Morrison says to us in “The Site Of Memory” that facts tell us almost nothing. By themselves they are cold and inert and do little to make the interior life come alive. That process requires a leap of the imagination. We need a kind of magic. We must begin not with the facts but with the numinous images that emerge from the depth of the subconscious. “The image comes first and tells us what the memory is about” says Morrison. The creative process moves from picture to meaning to text. When, in *The Things They Carried*, Tim O’Brien says, “A true war story is neither true nor about war” he is pointing to the fact that all writers – fiction and non-fiction alike – “invent” the truth. Though O’Brien was actually a soldier in Vietnam, he is able to get at the psychological truth of that time only by imagining moments that never happened, yet he has been praised by other veterans for the accuracy of his “fiction.”

INVENTING THE TRUTH will inquire into the creative process itself and into the ever-shifting and fluid borderline between self and story, between non-fiction and fiction. All the authors are highly self aware and self referential about their own writing process. We will read three fictional texts: Robert Olen Butler: *A Good Scent From A Strange Mountain*; Tim O’Brien: *The Things They Carried*; Leonid Andreyev: *He Who Gets Slapped* and three non fictional texts: Richard Selzer: *Mortal Lessons*; Sharon Sloane Fiffer: *Home: American Authors Remember Rooms of Their Own*; William Zinsser: *Inventing The Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*

1975-007

MWF 12:30 PM - 1:20 PM

Robert O’Neil

American Dream

The underlying theme of this course is to explore the American Dream and the relationship between fact and fiction within a historical novel. Students will read three books: *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*, *The Corrections*, and *Libra*. The course will begin with the reading of short stories by authors such as Kate Braverman, Joyce Carol Oates, Raymond Carver, Mary Gaitskill, Denis Johnson, and Richard Ford. *The Corrections* by Jonathan Franzen will follow and it investigates the ever-changing concept of the American Dream. Have traditional family values been replaced by a consumer culture that stresses style and appearance? If so, what are the consequences of this change and, more importantly, is America itself in need of a 'correction'? Finally, *Libra* explores a definitive moment in U.S. history: the assassination of JFK. However, DeLillo approaches this historical moment through the eyes of Lee Harvey Oswald. The relationship between fact and fiction in a historical novel exposes students to a demanding reality; they need to pursue and develop their own truths about America's past. Throughout the semester, students will write three essays, which will vary in length and demand.

1975-008**MWF 12:30 PM – 1:20 PM****Mary Anne Schofield****War Literature of the 20th Century**

We will read literature (fiction, poetry, drama) of the First and Second World Wars: texts of Modernism, Intermodernism, Postmodernism, and Realism that explore the use, for example, of encrypted language in espionage fiction, of a projected post-war worldview written in the science fiction texts before the actual events of the war, of the semiotics and experiments with the language of telling a story that cannot be told. War literature, as Hannah Arendt observes, "compresses the greatest opportunities into the smallest space and the shortest time, [and] that is its fascination." It is literature of both conscience and consciousness; it is literature oftentimes written from the extreme edge of being, which will enable students, using their active reading of the texts, to examine and challenge their own understanding of the uncertainty and complexity of life.

1975-009**MW 1:30 PM – 2:45 PM****Charles Cherry****Confronting Satan in American Literature: From Hawthorne to Hellboy**

This seminar is interdisciplinary. We will spend the semester exploring the origins and evolution of the concept of Satan as reflected in a variety of sources. What are some of the myths created to explain evil? To what extent are conceptions of human nature embedded in economic, political, and psychological theories related to Satan? How have some important writers grappled with this problem in their lives and in their works? What does the study of this theme teach us about ourselves?

You will be asked to engage, discuss, and write about a variety of works (fiction and nonfiction) that directly or indirectly deal with the concept of Satan. While drawing on works from other

cultures, the particular emphasis will be on America and its changing sense of Satan and evil from the 18th to 21st centuries.

Possible Texts*

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. CoursePack

Melville, Herman. CoursePack

Morrison, Toni. Beloved

New Testament Gospel of Mark

O'Connor, Flannery. CoursePack

Poe, Edgar Allan. CoursePack

Schindler's List (film)

Silence of the Lambs (film)

Twain, Mark. Mysterious Stranger

1975-010

MW 1:30 PM - 2:45 PM

Gail Ciociola

The Rebel-Outsider in Contemporary American Literature

Against an alleged norm of what constitutes good social standing and personal success, American literature evinces a startling number of “outsiders” to those ideals through iconoclastic authors whose literary style or personal philosophy challenges the norms, and/or through fictional and dramatic characters whose “difference” defines textual content. In this course, students will examine writers like Edward Albee, Allen Ginsberg, and Patti Smith for their artistic and private “otherness,” and consider works across multiple genres that feature rebels or outsiders like those, for instance, in *THE LARAMIE PROJECT* (Moises Kaufman) , *TOPDOG/UNDERDOG* (Suzan Lori Parks), and *MOTHER NIGHT* (Kurt Vonnegut). As the course also supports the development of thesis-driven writing, students will work toward improving ideas, organization, and edit for college-level essays. Two short papers, one longer one, and two tests are tentatively planned for grade assessment.

1975-011

MW 3:30 PM - 4:15 PM

Gail Ciociola

The Rebel-Outsider in Literature

Against an alleged norm of what constitutes good social standing and personal success, American literature evinces a startling number of “outsiders” to those ideals through iconoclastic authors whose literary style or personal philosophy challenges the norms, and/or through fictional and dramatic characters whose “difference” defines textual content. In this course, students will examine writers like Edward Albee, Allen Ginsberg, and Patti Smith for their artistic and private “otherness,” and consider works across multiple genres that feature rebels or outsiders like those, for instance, in *THE LARAMIE PROJECT* (Moises Kaufman) , *TOPDOG/UNDERDOG* (Suzan Lori Parks), and *MOTHER NIGHT* (Kurt Vonnegut). As the course also supports the development of thesis-driven writing, students will work toward

improving ideas, organization, and edit for college-level essays. Two short papers, one longer one, and two tests are tentatively planned for grade assessment.

1975-012**MW 4:30 PM - 5:45 PM****Ruth Anolik****Voices in African-American Literature**

This course is an exploration of one of the many delights of literature: the development of a rich and resonant context of reading. The more we read, the more we appreciate literature, as we expand the context of our reading and attune our ears to the textual voices that haunt each text. In this class, we will read Gloria Naylor's late-twentieth-century novel, *Mama Day*, a wonderful book in itself. We will listen carefully to the voices within Naylor's novel, in which various characters tell the story, and in which mysterious meanings unfold in the narrative. We will also read some of the many texts to which Naylor alludes from within her novel, including passages from the Bible, two of Shakespeare's plays, a Gothic novel and a story of slavery. We will discuss each of these texts on its own merits and then consider how our appreciation of *Mama Day* is enhanced by our understanding of these texts. Using strategies of critical thinking, we will explore, in class discussion and in writing, the meaning of hearing the echoes of other texts in Naylor's novel. Every student will also be encouraged to discover personal echoes in each work that we read.

1975-013**MW 4:30 PM - 5:45 PM****Robert O'Neil****American Dream**

The underlying theme of this course is to explore the American Dream and the relationship between fact and fiction within a historical novel. Students will read three books: *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories*, *The Corrections*, and *Libra*. The course will begin with the reading of short stories by authors such as Kate Braverman, Joyce Carol Oates, Raymond Carver, Mary Gaitskill, Denis Johnson, and Richard Ford. *The Corrections* by Jonathan Franzen will follow and it investigates the ever-changing concept of the American Dream. Have traditional family values been replaced by a consumer culture that stresses style and appearance? If so, what are the consequences of this change and, more importantly, is America itself in need of a 'correction'? Finally, *Libra* explores a definitive moment in U.S. history: the assassination of JFK. However, DeLillo approaches this historical moment through the eyes of Lee Harvey Oswald. The relationship between fact and fiction in a historical novel exposes students to a demanding reality; they need to pursue and develop their own truths about America's past. Throughout the semester, students will write three essays, which will vary in length and demand.

1975-014**TR 8:30 AM – 9:45 AM**

Mary Ellen Fattori**Portraying Disability in Literature**

Reading and writing about disability in literature can help us better understand our responses to situations and events around us that might be quite different from our own. Through close readings of fiction, drama, and poetry, students will experience how writers have created literary characters exhibiting various forms of disability throughout the centuries. These depictions include physical, mental, emotional, and social disabilities of all types. A few memorable examples include Shakespeare's Richard III, Hemingway's Jake Barnes, Williams' Laura Wingfield, and Dickens' Tiny Tim.

Traditionally, these literary inventions were often used metaphorically as diabolical symbols of evil, or realistically as actual challenges to overcome, or even sentimentally as figures of pity and pathos. Contemporary authors, however, are reconsidering how to utilize disability as literary device, thereby requiring their readers to re-examine their own perception of what it means to be "disabled." This introspection often leads to the realization that such categorization frequently undermines and marginalizes a vast proportion of society, calling for vast political or social reforms.

However, since this is a literature course rather than a sociology course, its primary focus will remain on critically reading, interpreting, and writing about these works as literature. In addition, a significant amount of class time will be devoted to the teaching of formal writing, especially the thesis-driven critical essay, and improving presentation skills by delivering an end-of-the semester oral report.

1975-015**TR 10:00 AM - 11:15 AM****Ellen Bonds**

"Identity and Difference" will explore the ways that gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality shape how authors write as well as how we read texts. By reading, discussing, and writing about diverse literature from both women and men authors, students will learn how literary expression can enhance our understanding as well as expand our perspectives of who we are and how we relate to others.

Reading works of fiction, poetry, and drama by diverse authors such as Toni Morrison, Amy Tan, August Wilson, and Sandra Cisneros, for example, students will consider some of the following questions: What perspectives do we gain by considering how men write about male experience, how they write about female experience; conversely how women authors write about female and male experience? Is form and content influenced by race and gender and how so? How do authors explore the intersections of race and gender/ethnicity and history to reveal the forces that factor into the development of individual identity? In what ways do certain works challenge or affirm conventional attitudes toward others of different gender, race, orientation, and beliefs?

1975-016

TR 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM**Ellen Bonds**

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ENG 1975-017**TR 11:30 AM – 12:45 PM****Kamran Javadizadeh****Privacy and Literature**

Privacy, we are told, is disappearing. That sense of crisis has been fueled by a wave of revelations about our surveillance state and by the constant broadcasting of our daily lives in the form of digital newsfeeds. This course will give you the chance to step back from our current moment and to look instead at the intersection of literature and the concept of privacy over (roughly) the last century. The very idea of privacy, we will see, has been bound up with the long history of our technologies of textual production and circulation (ranging, for instance, from the postal service to the internet), and literary texts provide us with especially fertile ground for investigating the shifting contours of what it means to have a private life. We will read stories, novels, poems, and plays in which the category of privacy is worried over, violated, guarded, and freely given up. We will investigate a series of literary figures who include the hermetic poet, the private eye, the willing confessor, and the unseen voyeur. Assignments will include several short papers and informal oral presentations. Readings may include works by Emily Dickinson, Raymond Chandler, Vladimir Nabokov, Elizabeth Bishop, James Baldwin, J.D. Salinger, Anne Sexton, Philip Roth, and others.

1975-018**TR 1:00 PM - 2:15 PM****Hugh Ormsby-Lennon****“Senses of an Ending: Finishes and Starts in Literature and Life.”**

“In my beginning is my end,” declared T. S. Eliot, Nobel-prize-winning author: “In my end is my beginning.” In this seminar, we shall explore how starts and finishes--in literature, film,

music, and life--interact with each other. We shall read novels by Alan Moore/Dave Gibbons, Bernard McLaverty, and Ian McEwan--*Watchmen*, *Cal*, *Enduring Love*--and examine how the beginnings and ends of the novels are represented on screen. We shall also read short stories by James Joyce and William Trevor as well as twentieth-century poems by Philip Larkin as well as by some seventeenth-century writers.

1975-019

TR 2:30 PM - 3:45 PM

Ellen Bonds

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ENG 1975-020

TR 4:00 PM – 5:15 PM

Mary Mullen

Coming of Age Ireland

This class will consider what it means to come of age--to grow up--in Ireland. As we track how characters mature and fail to mature, how readers are treated like innocent children and all-knowing adults, how Irish settings and histories shape the trajectory of growth, we will ask big questions about constructions of childhood and adulthood, literature and place, gender, and development as a social, historical and economic process. We will read short stories and novels by Maria Edgeworth, J. Sheridan LeFanu, Edith Somerville and Martin Ross, James Joyce, Edna O’Brien, and Patrick McCabe; poetry by Lady Wilde, Eavan Boland, and W. B. Yeats, and the play *Cathleen ni Houlihan*. This class is a writing intensive course, and will teach strategies for making interesting, convincing, and unified arguments about literary texts.

This course counts towards the minor/concentration in Irish Studies.

1975-100

MW 6:00 PM - 7:15 PM

Charles Cherry**Confronting Satan in American Literature: From Hawthorne to Hellboy**

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Silence of the Lambs (film)

Twain, Mark. Mysterious Stranger