

## CORE LITERATURE AND WRITING SEMINAR

# CLAWS

ENGLISH 1975

*Course Descriptions*

*Spring 2017*

### **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

#### **Lit 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 9:30 AM - 10:20 AM

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### **1975-004**

TR 4:00 PM - 5:15 PM

Joseph Drury

### **The Gothic**

Why do we read stories that scare us, that make our skin crawl and our stomachs turn? Why in a modern, disenchanting world do we take so much pleasure in stories of ghosts and monsters, demons and vampires? Why have Gothic tropes—gloomy castles, howling winds, dark passageways—proved so successful and durable in so many different kinds of writing and performance? In this course students will learn the history of Gothic writing, how it emerged out of British anti-Catholic feeling around the time of the French Revolution, and how it evolved into a sophisticated form for addressing the unspoken fears and unconscious desires of readers in periods of social upheaval and unrest. Readings may include Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*, Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*.

### **1975-005**

MWF 10:30 AM - 11:20 AM

Jody Ross

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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.

### **1975-006**

TR 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

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?

### **1975-007**

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.

**1975-008**

MWF 11:30 AM - 12:20 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**

TR 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

Megan Quigley

**Modernity's Transformations**

Is it possible to transform your entire identity? These literary texts are all about characters trying to figure out their identities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and experiencing transformations (to varying degrees). We will read a variety of genres—a play, a short story, poetry, novels and an essay—and learn the fundamentals of literary analysis. We will also consider the ways in which these changes are related to the transformation in the idea of a text at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Why might literary experimentalism (revolutions in form, diction, even grammar) be connected to new ideas about subjectivity? Readings will include works by Oscar Wilde, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, and Ian McEwan.

At the same time, this writing intensive course aims to transform your writing skills and to demystify the process of the analytical thesis-driven essay. You will learn to think through the writing process and to develop your skills in argument and revision.

**1975-010**

MWF 12:30 PM - 1:20 PM

Jody Ross

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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.

### **1975-011**

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.

### **1975-012**

TR 1:00 PM - 2:15 PM

Ruth Anolik

#### **The Uses of Horror and Terror Literature**

Horror and terror entertainments are often dismissed as irrelevant escapism. Yet, a careful examination of horror and terror fiction reveals that it actually hides and projects the deepest fears – social and psychological – of the culture that generates it. In this course, we will examine moments of horror and terror in literature from the time of the Renaissance. We will read the most horrifying play of William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, which presents the twin figures of the monstrous woman and the innocent victim of violent rape, as well as the evil, inhuman African. Turning to a high moment of horror and terror, the eighteenth-century Gothic (which was openly influenced by Shakespeare) we will read Ann Radcliffe's terrifying *Sicilian Romance* – a meditation on the dangers of marriage for women. We will read two nineteenth-century English texts that reveal anxieties about the dangerous monstrosity of female sexuality. We will move to nineteenth-century American culture to examine a variety of texts that express particularly American anxieties regarding the horrors of slavery. We will then read two novels that reflect anxieties of post-war America, Richard Matheson's 1954 novel, *I Am Legend* and Shirley Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. The last book will be *Zone One* (2011), the apocalyptic zombie novel by one of America's hottest new writers, Colson Whitehead. We will consider what these texts reveal about the social and political anxieties of their, and our,

time, including concerns about the new roles of men and women, the changing dynamics of the family, race, global tensions, the environment, and terrorism. Because we will be discussing the ways literary horror mirrors social anxiety, we will also read short pieces that provide context and background for the social, cultural and political issues that emerge in the texts we discuss. We will also have the opportunity to apply our strategies and conclusions to contemporary popular cultural artifacts, including television programs to be chosen by the students. At each moment we will ask: what real social anxieties lurk within the fantastic text? What are the cultural, social and psychological uses of such expressions? And why is our present cultural moment witnessing such an explosion of apocalyptic (and zombie) horror?

### **1975-013**

MW 1:30 PM - 2:45 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.

### **1975-014**

TR 2:30 PM - 3:45 PM

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?

**1975-015**

MW 3:00 PM - 4:15 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.

**1975-016**

TR 4:00 PM - 5:15 PM

Mary Ellen Fattori

**“Portraying Disability in Literature”**

As an art form, literature often creates, reflects, or questions cultural messages about what is “normal” and “abnormal” in our lives. As a result, reading and writing about the experience of disability in literature can help us better understand our responses to situations and events around us that might be 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.

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.

One note - because 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 paper presentation.

**ENG 1975-017**

MW 4:30 PM - 5:45 PM

Ellen Bonds

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**1975-100**

MW 6:00 PM - 7:15 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 Authors\*

Hawthorne, Nathaniel

Melville, Herman

Miller, Arthur. The CrucibleMorrison, Toni. BelovedO'Connor, Flannery. The Complete Short StoriesOld Testament, The Book of Job

Poe, Edgar Allan

Schindler's List (film)Silence of the Lambs (film)