

CORE LITERATURE AND WRITING SEMINAR

CLAWS

ENGLISH 1975

Course Descriptions

Fall 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

Karen Graziano, JD

Law & Literature*“In front of the law there is a doorkeeper.” – Franz Kafka, The Trial**“Literature is as old as speech. It grew out of human need for it, and it has not changed except to become more needed.” – John Steinbeck*

While Aristotle described “The Law” as “reason, free from passion,” both the discussion and evaluation of laws by society are passionately undertaken. “The Law” – its intended and unintended impact – is fiercely evaluated, aggressively commented on, and intensely critiqued by fiction and nonfiction writers, as well as by lawyers and judges themselves. Law in literature captures something that the dispassionate law itself cannot: its nuances. Characters in legal fiction and real life players in legal nonfiction experience the struggles presented by the application of the law or by its absence. For this reason, studying law and literature provides a unique opportunity to understand our legal system through literary devices that describe, emphasize, and explain both forcefully and feebly.

The significance of literature for understanding and even supporting law has been debated. “Literature is important for understanding law because it teaches a certain way of thinking -- one that is synthetic, creative, and comfortable with ambiguity and ambivalence,” states attorney and Law Professor Daniel Solove. As literature has been used to more fully understand law, “the use of literary references by courts to support substantive legal positions” has been used to provide a “rhetorical shortcut for negotiating the complexities of human existence,” explains John M. DeStefano III, in *On Literature as Legal Authority*. He argues that while Richard Posner in Law and Literature argued that “the substance of literature cannot help judges judge,” it has been shown to do so. By reading fiction, nonfiction, and legal journal articles, this course will cover the following themes in literature: depiction of the legal system, lawyers, and the rule of law; power and influence; interpretation and application; crime, punishment, retribution, and redemption; ethics and equity; and satire. We will explore how literary devices are used to convey ideas about the legal system, the law, and lawyers, and how these ideas impact the practice of law itself.

1975-004

MWF 10:30 AM - 11:20 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.

1975-005

MWF 11:30 AM - 12:20 PM

Evan Radcliffe

Family Matters

Our views of our families, present or absent, are central to how we define ourselves but also endlessly shifting—and so also are the literary uses of families. In this course, we will look at some literary portrayals of families and the relationships they contain. While most of these portrayals feature family love, they also include rivalries, tensions, and betrayals, as family members struggle with their roles, find their roles transforming with time, construct myths or discover truths about themselves and their siblings or parents or children, or look back at all of these with varying emotions and degrees of understanding. Our texts will include fiction (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*), plays (Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* and August Wilson's *Fences*), poems (by Seamus Heaney, Langston Hughes, Adrienne Rich, Robert Hayden, Theodore Roethke, Seamus Heaney, Alicia Ostriker, and others), and Alison Bechdel's graphic novel *Fun Home*. Becoming more perceptive readers and more skilled writers (with particular attention to the ways in which writing is a crucial form of thinking) are fundamental goals of the course. The course includes frequent writing, informal as well as formal.

1975-007

MWF 12:30 PM - 1:20 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.

1975-008

MW 3:00 PM – 4:15 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?

1975-009

MW 3:00 PM – 4:15 PM

Karyn Hollis

International Literature

This seminar focuses on ways that writers over the globe represent their fellow citizens' everyday lives as they encounter work, war, poverty, family, school, leisure--and especially--courtship and marriage. We will try to understand the commonalities and differences that arise among the people portrayed, examining cultural questions along the way. We'll read short fiction, poetry and critical essays by internationally acclaimed authors from Europe, Asia, South America, the Middle East, and Africa. The readings for the course will be accessed for the most part from prizewinning websites such as *Words Without Borders*. Several critical approaches will guide our exploration of contemporary literature: postcolonialism, New Criticism, Marxism, ecocriticism, queer theory, magical realism, feminism and the like. In addition, the literature will be studied in contexts: cultural, political, historical; and in terms of gender, race and class. You will write three papers for the course which include a narrative as well as expository format.

1975-010

MW 4:30 PM - 5:45 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 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)

1975-011

TR 830 AM – 9:45 AM

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.

1975-012

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?

1975-013

TR 10:00 AM – 11:15 AM

Gail Ciociola

Rebels and Outsiders in American Literature

In an era of both public protest and private uncertainty, it perhaps becomes a civic or moral imperative to understand what we mean by words like "outsider" and "rebel." While the contexts of this course have no political framework, the readings and activities serve to expand insight into how we define these ideas and, in particular, the realms of destructive vs. constructive rebels and of voluntary vs. involuntary outsiders. To that end, students will explore character and situational content in various genres of literature as well as the creative impulses of their authors, who include Allen Ginsberg, Kurt Vonnegut, Patti Smith, Quiara Alegria Hudes, Edward Albee, and Suzan Lori-Parks. Course requirements: a short, critical paper; one piece of creative writing; a five-minute presentation; and two open-book assessments.

1975-014

TR 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

Jenney Joyce

Narratives of Belonging in Contemporary Irish Literature

Welcome! What does it mean to belong? In what ways is it fundamental to the human experience? How might the act of belonging influence understandings of personal, familial, and national identities? In the 20th and 21st Century, Irish writers continue to explore expressions of belonging, and in contrast, separation and isolation, in narratives throughout multiple genres. This English Core Literature and Writing Seminar will analyze and respond to modern and contemporary Irish short stories, novels, drama, film and poetry in an effort to uncover the inextricable link between the vital experience of belonging and what it means to be Irish. Texts will range from Seamus Heaney, James Joyce, and Colum McCann, to Stacey Gregg and Claire Keegan, among others, which will offer tremendous occasion for critical thinking about the intersections of identity, nationhood, class, gender, and power in Ireland and within the global context.

This course counts toward the minor/concentration in Irish Studies

1975-015

TR 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

Megan Quigley

Journals, Diaries, and Blogs

"The journal," the young Susan Sontag wrote, "does not simply record my actual, daily life but rather--in many cases--offers an alternative to it." This course examines why and how we keep diaries and journals, asking: what is the purpose of journaling? We will read both diaries themselves and works that contextualize and (often) satirize journal-keeping. Readings will include: Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Virginia Woolf's *A Writer's Diary*, *Selected Poems* by W. H. Auden, Helen Oyeyemi's "if a book is locked there's a good reason for that don't you think," "Why I Blog," by Andrew Sullivan, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The course posits that keeping a diary promotes writing and reading even as it explodes the notion of coherent subjectivity. We will read a variety of genres--a play, a diary, poetry, a novel, a short story, and an essay--while we also learn the fundamentals of literary criticism.

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. And, of course, you will keep a journal where "you" will document your responses to it all.

ENG 1975-016

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?

1975-017

TR 1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

Mary Mullen

Coming of Age in 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 characters' 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, Kate O'Brien, James Joyce, Edna O'Brien; poetry by Eavan Boland and Seamus Heaney, and Brian Friel's play, *Translations*. This class is a writing intensive course, and will teach strategies for making interesting, convincing, and unified arguments about literary texts.



This course counts toward the minor/concentration in Irish Studies

1975-018

TR 1:00 PM - 2:15 PM

Ruth Anolik

The Cultural Uses of Horror and Terror

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 the patriarchy for women. We will read LeFanu's novella, *Carmilla* a nineteenth-century English text that reveal anxieties about the dangerous monstrosity of female sexuality. We will then move to nineteenth-century American culture to examine a variety of texts that express particularly American anxieties regarding the horrors of slavery: two Poe stories and a selection from the slave narrative of Frederick Douglass. Moving to the twentieth-century, we will read two texts – a short story by Edith Wharton and a novel by Shirley Jackson – that use the genre of horror to explore the situation of women. We will end the semester with Colson Whitehead's zombie novel, *Zone One*, and try to account for the cultural explosion of zombies. Throughout the semester, we will consider what these texts reveal about the social and political concerns of their time, including sexual and racial anxieties, the declining power of religion, the changing dynamics of the family, the cold war, and twenty-first century political anxieties. We will also have the opportunity to apply our strategies and conclusions to contemporary popular cultural artifacts – television, film, video games, anything else – to be determined 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 horror?

1975-019

TR 1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

Crystal Lucky

Through the Eyes of a Child: American Fiction and Film

This course considers questions of race, class, gender, violence, power, privilege, love, abandonment, hope and family in literature and film told from the child's perspective. We will read black and white American writers' attempts at adopting the child's narrative voice to ponder some of the most difficult questions of human development. How do artists envision the ways children react to trauma? How do they imagine children's resilience, pain, joy, disappointment? Each writer's offering is unique and is affected by the social and political climate within which he or she creates. We will read twentieth century poetry, short stories, and novels, and we will analyze two film adaptations of literary works. Authors include Willa Cather, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Harper Lee, James Baldwin, Melvin Kelly, Toni Morrison, Ernest Gaines, Edwidge Danticat and Edward Jones.

1975-020

TR 2:30 PM – 3:45 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.

1975-021

TR 2:30 PM – 3:45 PM

Hugh Ormsby-Lennon

Senses of an Ending: Finishes and Starts in Lit and Life

"In my beginning is my end," declared T. S. Eliot, Nobel Prize-winning poet and dramatist: "In my end is my beginning." In this seminar we shall explore how openings and closings--in literature, film, music, and life--interact with each other. We shall read Irish short stories by James Joyce, William Trevor, and Bridget Keegan; English poems by Philip Larkin and American poems by authors whom Camille Paglia includes in her anthology *Break, Blow, Burn*; as well as Alan Moore/Dave Gibbons' Anglo-American graphic novel *Watchmen* (from which we shall also view short movie sequences).

Students will keep a journal recording their responses to weekly readings (and to essays by Paglia on assigned poems). Students will also write three 3-5 page papers (to be revised) in which they focus upon a close reading of short works, and a 5-8 page term paper in which they integrate broader themes from our classroom discussions. Lively classroom discussion is essential; it will be factored into final grades based otherwise upon student essays and journals.

1975-HO4 The Wide Sky and the Long Green: Versions of Pastoral

TR 1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

Catherine Staples



What do modern day organic farming, bee-keeping, and bird-banding have to do with country life and the concept of the pastoral as seen in poetry, prose, and fiction, ranging from Virgil, Wordsworth, and Thoreau to Frost, Heaney, and Dillard? Is the desire to live and work deliberately and simply in the natural world an idealized notion or is it full of harsh realities and rural truths? Is it both? What is the nature of contentment? The course relies on primary texts and invites close reading through both critical and creative writing. Our field trips to Rushton Farm will be occasions for writing, for deepening the semester-long inquiry into pastoral traditions. As we tour Rushton farm, we might begin to understand the practical aspects of Virgil's two-thousand-year-old advice about planting, harvesting, and animal husbandry in the *Georgics*. With a warbler or saw-whet owl banding session, we'll get a glimpse of something Frost often explores: the intimacy between the human and the wild. The works we will read include Virgil's *Georgics*; poetry by Wordsworth, Heaney, Frost, and Kumin; short fiction by Bass; and prose by Thoreau, Muir, Beston, and Dillard.