

## Spring 2025 Course Descriptions

- ENG 8560 Pathologies of Modernity  
Dr. Joe Drury
- ENG 9540 Before Gay and Trans: Deviance in Nineteenth-Century American Literature  
Dr. Travis Foster
- ENG 9730 Post-Colonial Thought & Indian Literature  
Dr. Tsering Wangmo
- GWS 8000 Critical Perspectives on Gender  
Dr. Raka Shome

ENG 9560: *Pathologies of Modernity*

Dr. Joe Drury

**CRN 36558**

Thursday from 5:20 pm to 07:20 pm



The theory and practice of medicine underwent dramatic changes between the eighteenth and early twentieth century. Medical knowledge was transformed by the rise of experimental science and the discovery of the circulatory and nervous systems, the introduction of new technologies, therapies, and drugs, the success of small-pox inoculation, Darwin's theory of evolution, the emergence of public health and hygiene, anaesthesia, and germ theory. At the same time, medical practitioners raised their social status by establishing teaching hospitals, medical schools, and professional societies. Physicians began to present themselves as public authorities capable of diagnosing and treating the pathologies of modernity, while pointing to luxury, industrialization, urbanization, distraction, immigration,

and empire as causes of sexual deviance, nervous illness, and degeneration. Diagnoses drew on cultural stereotypes concerning race, gender, and class. This class will consider how the literature of this period responded to these developments. We will ask: what use did British literary authors make of new medical discourses? What did they understand to be the potentially medicinal uses of reading literature? How did new theories of the human body and mind shape their portrayal of the human subject and its environment? How did fiction writers represent medical practitioners and how seriously did they take their claims to have solutions to large-scale social problems? Readings may include Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*, Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*.

*\*This course fulfills the pre-1800 British/Irish literature requirement*

ENG 9540 *Before Gay and Trans: Deviance in Nineteenth-Century  
American Literature*

Dr. Travis Foster

**CRN 36562**

Wednesday 5:20-7:20 pm



*Lithograph image of Mary Jones from the Harry T. Peters "America on Stone" Lithography Collection, National Museum of American History. Henry R. Robinson, New York: 1836.*

This course explores the history of sex, gender, and desire before the emergence of sexuality, gender, and their attendant identity categories such as homosexuality, heterosexuality, and transgender. We will pay special attention to how nineteenth-century American literature represents experiences and expressions of what we now call sexuality and gender, but in ways that resist the rigid classifications those terms imply. Rather than

focusing solely on tracing what might now be labeled as queer or trans identities, we will ask broader questions about how the nineteenth-century world articulated sexual and gendered possibilities that diverge from or even challenge contemporary understandings of identity.

Our goal as readers will not be simply to locate trans or queer content within these texts, but to engage deeply with the complexities of how atypical desires and nonconforming femininities or masculinities were expressed before trans and gay. We will consider the methodological challenges of interpreting pre-sexological depictions of homoeroticism, gender nonconformity, and transgender expression: Are these depictions early indicators of our contemporary ideas about sexuality and gender, or do they offer alternative ways of thinking about embodiment, identity, and desire—possibilities that have been overshadowed by modern frameworks?

In addition, the course will foreground the biopolitics of sex, gender, and race. Many of our texts explicitly position representations of sexuality and gender within the dominant racial order of the time, particularly the black/white color line. We will critically examine how discourses of race, slavery, scientific racism, and fears surrounding interracial sex shaped ideas about sex, gender, and desire. Through these lenses, we will interrogate how trans histories and queer histories intersect with racial histories and how both were shaped by the socio-political context of nineteenth-century America. By focusing on these intersections, we will gain a deeper understanding of how sexual and gendered identities were constructed in relation to broader systems of power and oppression, including white supremacy and settler colonialism.

By the end of the course, students will be equipped with the critical tools to read and interpret texts that resist familiar identity categories and will be able to engage with the broader historical, social, and racial contexts that shape our understandings of sex, gender, and desire. Ultimately, this class asks not only how we might locate trans and queer histories within the past but how we might envision alternative futures for these histories—futures that challenge and expand our current understanding of identity.

Secondary scholarship will likely include articles, monographs, and book chapters by Susan Stryker, Jules Gill-Peterson, C. Riley Snorton, Michel

Foucault, Siobhan B. Somerville, Greta LaFleur, Rachel Mesch, Jennifer Morgan, Marcia Ochoa, and Tavia Nyong'o. Literary texts will likely include Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), selected poems by Emily Dickinson (1850s – 1880s), Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), Theodore Winthrop's *Cecil Dreeme* (1861), Henry James's *The Bostonians* (1886), Herman Melville's *Billy Budd, Sailor* (Written 1888-1891, Published 1924), Francis Ellen Watkins Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892), Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896), selected stories by Sui Sin Far (Edith Maude Eaton) (1890s – 1910s), and selected stories by Charles Chesnutt (1899).

*\*This course fulfills the pre-1900 American Literature Requirement (NB: this requirement is currently suspended and under review)*

ENG 9730 *Post-Colonial Thought and Indian Literature*

Dr. Tsering Wangmo

**CRN 36563**

Monday 5:20-7:20 pm

In this graduate seminar we will reflect on the historical backgrounds, colonial practices, anticolonial strategies, and issues of identity represented and interrogated in literary and cultural works from India. Using postcolonialism as a framework we will explore how writers and scholars whose histories and identities have been shaped by the colonial encounter do the following: make sense of the period of postcolonialism; study power and its effects on systems of knowledge; use literature as a strategy of resistance; discuss representation, difference and issues of social justice; and offer concepts of hybridity, gender, and the subaltern in the formation of colonial and postcolonial identities.

Reading novels, short stories, poems, and essays, we will examine the relationship between nationalism, migration, and literary form and themes. How do we define “identity,” and “modern,” in a time of change and what do we make of national identities in a globalizing world? Are they structured by hierarchies of religion, caste, and gender? Who gets to speak and in whose/what language in a global culture? How do postcolonial texts get studied in the West? We will also look at other investigations of postcolonial theory such as subaltern studies and diaspora studies to evaluate shifts in debates on what it means to have political subjectivity and home.

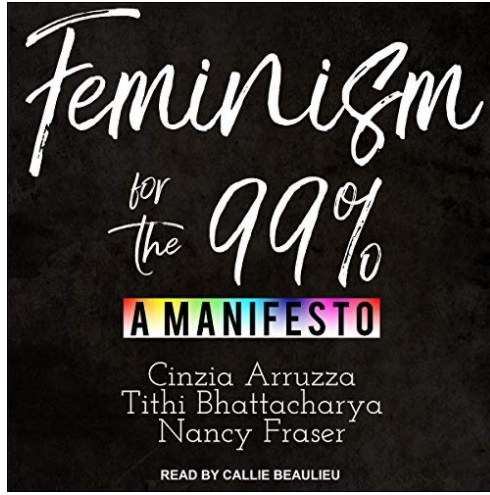
Literary texts may include works by M.K. Gandhi, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Raja Rao, Faiz Ahmed Faiz. We will also read the works of Postcolonial theorists such as Edward W. Said, Gayatri C. Spivak, Homi J. Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty.

GWS 8000 *Critical Perspectives on Gender*

Dr. Raka Shome

CRN 36747

Tuesday 6:15-9:15 pm



This course will offer an introduction to some of the historical and contemporary theoretical debates that have helped to shape both feminist studies and understandings of gender. We will interrogate the relationship between gender and power, understand what “feminism” means, including across different geographical contexts. We will discuss why “feminist theory” is needed and its political utility in advancing not simply women’s power but also rethinking traditional ideas of masculinity, gender binaries, race and sexuality. In particular the course will survey debates regarding “feminism” and “gender” from various perspectives: critical race feminism (including debates on intersectionality); postcolonial and transnational feminism; feminist media studies; the post-secular turn in feminism; queer and transgender studies; feminist critiques of the Anthropocene; and feminism from the Global South. Some perspectives will be given greater attention than others, given the time limits posed by 15 weeks. Our primary goal will be to use feminist theories as a basis for understanding social



inequalities, and as a way of developing forms of resistance to those inequalities.

**Tentative Assignments** include heavy class participation; leading discussion on a reading or topic of your choice for 20 or so minutes, a research paper proposal and a research paper.

*NB: This is a Communications course which we will consider as counting toward the English MA; it will NOT count toward one of your two allowed 'courses outside the department'*

**ENG 8090: Thesis Direction**

**CRN 36555**

Direction of writing of the thesis, focused research on a narrowly defined question, under supervision of an individual instructor.

**ENG 8092: Field Examination**

**CRN 36556**

A broader exploration of a theme or area of literature than a thesis. The examination comprises a comprehensive statement essay and an oral exam component.

**ENG 9031: Independent Study**

**CRN 36559**

A special project pursued under the direction of an individual professor.

**ENG 9080: Thesis Continuation**

**CRN 36561**

**ENG 8093: Field Exam Continuation**

**CRN 36557**

ENG 9035

Dr. Evan Radcliffe

**CRN**

### **Professional Research Option (PRO)**

This option for second-year graduate students is a three-credit independent study in which students identify one or a cluster of jobs or professions in which an advanced degree in literature is of benefit. In the course of the semester, students will research the career options of interest, identifying one or two fields as the focus of their work. They must generate a research paper that explores the history and future prospects of the field of interest, as well as current information about the requirements of the work, geographical information about centers of activity for the profession, and desirable employers. This research should include at least two meetings with professionals who work in the field. The paper must also analyze how advanced study of literature serves to enhance the students' desirability in the profession in question. As part of their final project, students must develop a cover letter outlining the ways their particular training makes them suitable to work in this field. Students will make their research available to other students in the program by uploading part of their final project onto a special section of the Graduate English Program blog. Potential fields of research include the following:

E-Book Industry

Teaching

Public relations

Rare book broker

Advertising

Web design

College admissions

Journalism

University administration

Testing industry

Arts administration

Tutoring industry

Library science

Technical writing

ENG 9800

**CRN**

### **Internship in Teaching English**

Second-year graduate students have the option to serve as an intern for a graduate faculty member in an undergraduate English course. Interns will attend all class sessions, confer at least once with each student on their written work, lead two or three class sessions under the supervision of the faculty member, and complete a final project that is either (1) a substantial critical essay concerning the subject matter of the course or (2) a research project concerning trends and issues within college-level pedagogy. The aim of the program is to provide students with teaching and classroom experience. Students may apply to serve as interns by consulting with a faculty member who is teaching in an area of interest, and, if the faculty member is amenable, submitting a one-two page statement, outlining how this course addresses their larger intellectual goals, and what they hope to accomplish as an intern.