

CORE LITERATURE AND WRITING SEMINAR

CLAWS

ENGLISH 1975

Course Descriptions

Fall 2018

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 8:30 AM - 9:20 AM

Karen Graziano, JD

Law & Modern 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,” society undertakes both the discussion and evaluation of law passionately. Fiction and nonfiction writers fiercely evaluate, intensely critique, and subtly comment on the intended and unintended impact of “the law”. Law as a theme in literature captures something that the dispassionate law itself cannot: its nuances. Individuals and fictional characters’ legal challenges and struggles provide compelling points to examine. In the readings, we will explore how the authors present the role of law and lawyers in society and how they define justice, equality, and ethics. We will consider how literature plays a significant role in educating society on the law’s impact, and how it prompts its readers to question the purpose, application, and impact of the law.

1975-003

MWF 8:30 AM - 9:20 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.

1975-004

MWF 9:30 AM - 10:20 AM

Karen Graziano, JD

Leaders and Managers in Literature

“Leadership is not about titles, positions, or flow charts. It is about one life influencing another.”

– *John C. Maxwell*

“Leadership can happen anywhere, at any time.”

– *James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, The Leadership Challenge*

“You have to paint a powerfully compelling picture of the future for people to want to align with the vision.”

– *Vicky Ngo-Roberti*

“What makes a leader?” In his quintessential work to answer this question, Daniel Goleman coined a term: emotional intelligence. It encapsulates self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. Goleman found organizations could track success in the workplace directly to emotional intelligence. While researchers described this term as a new way to evaluate employees and to understand success in the workplace, emotional intelligence has always been literary currency for fiction and nonfiction writers. Steeped in the richness of emotional intelligence, providing themes that consider trust and motivation, power and influence, decision-making and re-creation, literature opens the door to consider real-life tradeoffs: from ambition to self-sacrifice, passion to indifference, success to failure, satisfaction to discontent. Fictional characters and individuals’ challenges and struggles provide compelling points to examine. In the readings, we will explore how the authors present the role of achievement, status, satisfaction, collegiality, loyalty, and, above all, responsibility, and acknowledge how specific leaders engage as effective managers, through their honest, motivational, ethical, and trustworthy interactions. We will consider how literature plays a significant role in educating society on how to be an effective leader, and how it prompts its readers to question the purpose, application, and impact of specific leadership styles as well as management techniques on characters and individuals.

1975-005

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.

1975-006

MWF 10:30 AM - 11:20 AM

Kate Neilsen

Environmental Catastrophes in Fiction

Contemporary culture is filled with depictions of environmental catastrophe – films like *The Day After Tomorrow* and *Wall-E* portray global disasters as obstacles for humanity to overcome on a path towards greater enlightenment, justice, and of course, survival. But who is the villain in such stories? Humanity? Or a natural world that is portrayed as threatening our very existence? In this class, we will examine how narratives of eco-disaster ask us to imagine the relationship between humans and their environment, and we will also investigate how historical disaster fictions have shaped contemporary depictions of environmental catastrophe. What role do concerns of race, class, and gender play in the rhetoric of natural disasters? We will consider both historical disaster narratives like Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* and Robert Barr's *The Doom of London*, as well as more contemporary fictions including Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and Don DeLillo's *White Noise*.

1975-007

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.

1975-008

MWF 12:30 PM - 1:20 PM

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.

1975-009

TR 1:00 PM - 2:15 PM

Megan Quigley

Transformations

Is it possible to transform your entire identity? These literary texts are all about characters trying to figure out their identities in the 20th 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 20th century in England. Why might literary experimentalism (revolutions in form, diction, even grammar) be connected to new ideas about subjectivity? How do later texts respond to earlier traditional texts and rethink ideas about identity, race, religion, and class? Readings will include works by Evelyn Waugh, Zadie Smith, W. H. Auden, Graham Greene, Helen Oyeyemi, and Tom Stoppard.

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 you will keep a journal where you will document your responses to it all.

1975-010

MW 3:00 PM - 4:15 PM

Yumi Lee

American Narratives of War

War has been fundamental to the American way of life, from the multiple crises of the present moment and the 20th-century rise of the U.S. as a global superpower to the violent establishment of both the first American colonies and the United States as a republic. This course investigates American narratives of war in two ways. First, we will read and engage with American literary narratives of war from the past 50 years. Second, building from our readings of these texts, we will critically examine the cultural and social narratives that America produces about its wars. How have participants of war – soldiers, survivors, refugees, civilians – represented their experiences in literary and cultural forms? How have authors used literature to process the violence and trauma of war? In what ways do we as a nation choose to recognize, remember, and memorialize different wars? How does war continue to draw the boundaries of national belonging and exclusion? And how do race, nationality, gender, sexuality, class, and ability shape our experiences of wartime?

This course will focus on wartime texts from the past several decades, but we will analyze war in relation to the legacies of foundational systems of settler colonialism, slavery, imperialism, and capitalism. We will read, interpret, and discuss a range of literary texts about war, including fiction in realist and speculative modes, memoirs, graphic novels, essays, and poetry. This class is a writing-intensive seminar in which you will develop your writing and revision skills through regular writing assignments and workshops, both formal and informal, that will culminate in a final thesis-driven critical essay. Readings may include works by Leslie Marmon Silko, Toni Morrison, Miné Okubo, Art Spiegelman, Mohsin Hamid, Sherman Alexie, Tim O'Brien, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Colson Whitehead, Moustafa Bayoumi, and others.

1975-012

TR 4:00 PM - 5:15 PM

Rena Potok

Borders, Migrations and Identities

How do borders, migrations, and exile affect the formation of individual and collective national identity? What does being “English,” or “American” mean to an Anglo-Indian novelist, a Chicana poet, or an Afghan-American memoirist? As writers migrate (both literally and figuratively) across national borders from one culture and nationality to another, and put down increasingly tenuous roots in exile, they explore the nature of identity and, indeed, of borders themselves. Borders may be configured as a physical barrier between two countries, the no-man’s land between two national territories, even the literal boundaries of the human body. They may also show up as imagined borders, such as psychological boundaries between individuals, or the constructed boundaries of national identity. This course will explore the complexities of borders, migration and exile, and the realities of dwelling in the space between nations and identities. We will read and discuss novels, memoirs, and poems by Irish, Indian, Afghan, Palestinian, and Chicano/Chicana writers who explore these and other matters. Among these are: Mohsin Hamid, Gloria Anzaldúa, Anton Shammas, Eavan Boland, and Salman Rushdie. The course includes frequent writing, both formal and informal.

1975-013

TR 8:30 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.

1975-014

TR 8:30 AM - 9:45 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.

1975-015

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.

1975-016

TR 10:00 AM - 11:15 AM

Ellen Bonds

“Identity and Difference”

In this reading and writing intensive course, we will examine how our sense of self—in terms of culture, ethnicity, and gender—influences how we read a text and how a text can influence our perspective. Focusing on American literature written by a diverse group of authors, from writers such as Walt Whitman to August Wilson, Toni Morrison, and Maya Angelou, we will consider the questions “How do American authors explore the tension between the dynamics of identity and difference?” “What factors comprise literary identity—the reader’s, writer’s, and characters’?” and “How does a literary work affect/effect individual and group identity?” Students will work to improve their writing by following a writing process of drafting, workshopping, conferencing, and rewriting four essays. Class participation will include both small group discussions and formal group presentations.

1975-017

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.

1975-018

TR 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

Ellen Bonds

“Identity and Difference”

In this reading and writing intensive course, we will examine how our sense of self—in terms of culture, ethnicity, and gender—influences how we read a text and how a text can influence our perspective. Focusing on American literature written by a diverse group of authors, from writers such as Walt Whitman to August Wilson, Toni Morrison, and Maya Angelou, we will consider the questions “How do American authors explore the tension between the dynamics of identity and difference?” “What factors comprise literary identity—the reader’s, writer’s, and characters’?” and “How does a literary work affect/effect individual and group identity?” Students will work to improve their writing by following a writing process of drafting, workshopping, conferencing, and rewriting four essays. Class participation will include both small group discussions and formal group presentations.

1975-019

TR 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

Jennifer 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

1975-021

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?

1975-023

MW 1:30 PM - 2:45 PM

Michael Berthold

American Gothic

This course will survey American literature's abiding fascination with the horrifying, the mysterious, and the uncanny and will examine a variety of texts from the eighteenth through the twenty-first centuries. We will consider how the Gothic tradition is Americanized, how it has evolved, and how it continues to be pertinent for contemporary American culture. Readings for the course include works by Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, H. P. Lovecraft, Octavia Butler, Richard Matheson, Joyce Carol Oates and Stephen King.

1975-024

TR 4:00 PM - 5:15 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?

1975-100

R 6:00 PM - 9:30 PM

Judy Olsen

Journey

Are you an intrepid traveler or an armchair adventurer? This course will explore how journeys invite us to experience a greater awareness of our world. The literary journeys we explore will be physical, spiritual, imaginative, or psychological; the characters taking the journey may be coerced or willing, and the journey itself strenuous or easy. Our texts will include short stories and memoir essays by such diverse writers as Edgar Allan Poe, Eudora Welty, Jhumpa Lahiri, Amy Tan, Isabel Allende and John Updike.

We will evaluate fiction and nonfiction writing, developing the ability to compare and contrast authors' writing styles and assess the effectiveness of techniques. We will begin with a review of the techniques utilized in fiction and nonfiction, as well as the challenges faced by writers. If you're new to reading and evaluating literature, don't worry. We will plan and compose thesis-driven writing as well as personal essays.

Distancing Learning, Fast Forward 2; 10/25 through 12/13

1975-101

MW 6:00 PM - 7:15 PM

Michael Berthold

American Gothic

This course will survey American literature's abiding fascination with the horrifying, the mysterious, and the uncanny and will examine a variety of texts from the eighteenth through the twenty-first centuries. We will consider how the Gothic tradition is Americanized, how it has evolved, and how it continues to be pertinent for contemporary American culture. Readings for the course include works by Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, H. P. Lovecraft, Octavia Butler, Richard Matheson, Joyce Carol Oates and Stephen King.