CORE LITERATURE AND WRITING SEMINAR
CLAWS
ENGLISH 1975

Course Descriptions
Fall 2019

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.
Monsters in Literature

Monsters haunt literature and art across time periods, cultures, and genres. In works ranging from ancient epics to contemporary apocalypse narratives, monsters function as important vehicles for negotiating cultural and social anxieties and, ultimately, defining what it means to be human.

This course will consider key questions related to literary monsters: What is a monster? What do monsters do? How do monsters in literature and film work to engage issues of gender, sexuality, race, and embodiment? Why do certain literary monsters become powerful icons, resurrected in adaptation after adaptation?

In this course, we will study monstrous figures in poetry, fiction, and film. We will start by exploring the monstrosity of Beowulf’s Grendel, and go on to study mythical monsters in poetry by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, William Blake, and W.B. Yeats. We will consider monstrosity in fairy tales by Christina Rossetti and Angela Carter, and examine some of the great, iconic monsters — Frankenstein’s monster, Mr. Hyde, the vampire — as they evolve over time. We will also consider the intersection of monster narratives with science fiction in short stories by Octavia Butler and the films Alien (1979) and Ex Machina (2015) and finish with Colson Whitehead’s 2011 zombie novel, Zone One.

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.
Environmental Catastrophes in Narrative
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. Though we often imagine the natural world as a place of refuge and beauty, disaster narratives depict the environment in different terms – as a monster, a villain, or a victim of human excesses. 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 Defoe’s Journal of the Plague Year and Robert Barr’s The Doom of London, as well as more contemporary fictions including Helena Maria Viramontes’s Under the Feet of Jesus and Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide.

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.
1975-007
MW 3:00 PM – 4:15 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/effet 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.

1975-008
MW 4:30 PM - 5:45 PM
Ruth Anolik

The Cultural Uses of Horror and Terror
Horror and terror entertainments are often dismissed as irrelevant escapist. 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. Among the texts we will read is LeFanu’s novella, Carmilla a nineteenth-century English text 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: a story by Poe and a selection from the slave narrative of Frederick Douglass. We will read texts—including 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?
**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 is 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.

---

**The Marriage Plot Undone**
In this course, we will read a series of novels, poems, 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.

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 and poems, 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, John Donne, Emily Dickinson, and William Shakespeare, as well as work by contemporary poets.
The Marriage Plot  Undone

In this course, we will read a series of novels, poems, 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. 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 and poems, 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, John Donne, Emily Dickinson, and William Shakespeare, as well as work by contemporary poets.

1975-012
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.

1975-013
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.
1975-014
TR 11:30 AM – 12:45 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, disenchedted 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.

1975-015
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.

1975-016
MWF 11:30 AM – 12:20 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.
1975-017
TR 2:30 PM – 3:45 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 4:00 PM – 5:15 PM
Rena Potok

Borders, Migrations, National Identities
How do borders, migrations, and exile affect the formation of individual and collective national identity? 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 appear 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, short stories, memoirs, and poems by Irish, Afghan, Palestinian, Israeli, and Chicana writers who explore these and other matters. Among these are: Eavan Boland, Mohsin Hamid, Mahmoud Darwish, Dorit Rabinyan, and Gloria Anzaldúa. The course includes frequent writing, both formal and informal.
1975-019
TR 4:00 PM – 5:15 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.

1975-100
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.
**ENG 1975-DL1**
Fast Forward 2
Thursday, 10/24/19 – 12/12/19
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Judy Olsen

**Journeys**
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 take will be physical, spiritual, imaginative, and psychological; the characters on the journey may be coerced or willing, and the journey itself may be strenuous or easy. Our texts will include short stories, poems and memoir essays by such diverse writers as Edgar Allan Poe, Eudora Welty, Jhumpa Lahiri, Amy Tan, Isabel Allende and others.
We will evaluate fiction and nonfiction writing, developing our 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’ll read about writing and we’ll compose interpretive papers as well as personal essays.

*This course has a Part time studies restriction*

**ENG 1975 –HO4**
TR 1:00 PM – 2:15 PM
Catherine Staples

**The Wide Sky and the Long Green**

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, Thoreau and Frost to Henry Beston, Annie Dillard, Seamus Heaney, Maxine Kumin, Alison Hawthorne Deming, Claudia Emerson and Rick Bass? 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 of these texts through a variety of writing forms. The three field trips to Rushton Farm will be occasions for writing, for deepening the semester-long inquiry into the pastoral tradition. As we tour Rushton farm and hear Fred DeLong and Noah Kress speak about the challenges and joys of farming we’ll begin to understand the conscientious farmers of Virgil’s Georgics. When ornithologist Lisa Ziziuk places a newly banded warbler or saw-whet into your hands for a moment before its release, you’ll glimpse something Frost often labors to show us: the intimacy between the human and the wild.