

English Department

Graduate Course Descriptions

Summer and Fall 2010

Summer 2010

ENGL 539-01

Dr. Susan Howard

The Brontes: Literature and Film

TR 5:00-8:25 May 10-June 18 (6 weeks)

Course Description:

In this course we will read Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and Anne Bronte's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) as literary texts, analyzing such things as methods of characterization, treatment of place, narrative techniques, plotting, and the historical context of the novels; and we will study many of the film adaptations of these three novels, examining them cinematically, with attention to such basics as casting, costuming, lighting, and set design, but as well to the ways in which these films create their visual and emotional effects through special effects, camera motion, the positioning of characters within frames, and so on. While we will look at each medium individually, we will also of course explore how the films interpret the novels, adding another "textual surface" to the mix of what it is we see the text of the novels to be. A major focus of the class will be an exploration of how gender is treated in the novels and films, including such issues as the function of the male gaze; the Brontes' depictions of the male and female hero and subversion of the conventional feminine and masculine ideals; the representation and valuation of women's work (that of the governess as well as the artist); configurations of family, motherhood, and romantic relationships; and the cinematic representations of the conflicting Romantic and Victorian world views.

Course Objectives:

Through this course students will come to better understand the literary, historical, and cultural attributes of the Brontes' fiction as well as appreciate and critique the interpretive aspect of the film adaptations of the novels. Students will become familiar with the specialized vocabulary used to talk about novels and films and some of the many critical approaches one can use to analyze these media so that in their written and oral analysis of both novels and films, students will be able to utilize the appropriate terms and methodologies of their choice.

Course Requirements:

Students will write issue papers for each novel, and an analytical paper on one of the novels and its film adaptations. Course requirements also include in-class writing on the novels and/or films and/or criticism; an oral presentation (20-30 minutes) analyzing scenes from a novel and its film adaptation(s); and active participation in class discussion.

Fall 2010

ENGL 500-01 **Aims and Methods**

Dr. Anne Brannen **MW 4:30-5:45**

“Aims and Methods,” the department’s introductory course for its incoming graduate students, covers, as you might expect, our aims – that is, what are we planning to accomplish in the next few years – and our methods – that is, how do we get that done. Over the course of the semester, we will be covering the traditions and innovations of literary scholarship, with an eye to understanding how we ourselves best work in the field; we will be covering the tools and methods used by literary scholars; we will be working on individual projects meant to ground us theoretically and practically in a literary work.

ENGL 519-01 (HC 619-01) **Milton and 17th Century Religious Poetry**

Dr. Danielle St. Hilaire **T 6:00-8:40**

During the 17th century in England, religious concerns were at the center of politics and culture—to the point of motivating and justifying civil war, the beheading of a king, and the establishment of a new form of government. The poetry of the period provided a unique venue for thinking through some of the most difficult, personal, and radical aspects of Protestant theology. This course will examine the religious poetry of the 17th century, focusing in particular on John Milton’s greatest work, *Paradise Lost*, in order to help us think about some of the theological problems at stake in Milton’s epic and how those problems relate to the larger theological and poetic contexts of the period, we will be reading *Paradise Lost* beside other 17th century religious poetry, including works by John Donne, George Herbert, and Andrew Marvell. Readings will also include shorter works from Milton, and possibly a selection of his prose.

ENGL 549-61 (HC 649-01) **19th Century African American Literature**

Dr. Kathy Glass **M 6:00-8:40**

This course will examine multiple forms of black literary production from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century. The course readings emphasize some of the ways in which African-American cultural production is structured and shaped by race, class, region, and gender. We will also consider the role that black literature has played in “imagining community” (producing a national identity for black Americans) and in engaging dominant constructions of identity.

During the course of the term we will consider the recurring motifs in African-American literature, the key elements of the African-American literary tradition, the social and historical contexts in which it emerged, and the dialogue between black literature and other forms of cultural production such as art and music. The reading list will include poetry, essays, autobiography, and novels. In this course, students will acquire a general understanding of African-American creative expression, literary forms, and theories. The reading list will include primary texts by Phillis Wheatley, Maria Stewart, Hannah Crafts, Frederick Douglass, Charles Chesnut, David Walker, and others. We will also draw on the views of theorists such as Hazel Carby, Claudia Tate, Val Smith, Henry Louis Gates, and Michael Awkward to explore current debates around theory and practice.

ENGL 552-61 (HC 652-61) British Modernism

Dr. Judy Suh

W 6:00-8:40

Without a doubt, modernists re-defined the vocations of British literature and criticism in the turbulent era between 1890 and 1945. Virginia Woolf, commenting on this era, claimed that human nature changed "on or about December 1910." We will concentrate on how the modernists perceived and represented modern shocks in culture and politics in writings that comprised the twentieth-century "revolution" in literature. While we will read mostly canonical fiction writers like Oscar Wilde, Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf, we will also take some forays into poetry, popular fiction, and perhaps some films of the time in order to understand the wider context and some surprising influences. Moreover, because we are still living with the effects of those shocks (including war, globalization, commodity culture, and modern sexuality), we will peek beyond the era to try to gauge the ongoing power-and reassessment-of modernist literature. Assignments include: regular participation, presentation, short position papers, and essays.

ENGL 558-61 (HC 658-61) American Fiction Since the 1960s

Dr. Magali Michael

R 6:00-8:40

This course will introduce students to American Fiction since the 1960s. Texts will be considered individually as well as in relation to their larger cultural, historical, and intellectual contexts. Some critical/theoretical reading will be required to help provide that context. The course will examine recent American fiction's engagement with difficult issues such as violence, race, ethnicity, gender, class, and colonialism—issues that are usually intertwined, that have dominated globally at the turn of the twenty-first century, and that have become increasingly visible to Americans since 9/11—and the difficulties fiction faces in engaging such issues in the wake of the questioning of representation and language that has characterized twentieth century fiction. The course is also intended to enhance the students' experience and skills of critical thinking, reading, and writing about literature. The course will be structured to emphasize active and engaged intellectual exchange among all participants and thus will take the form of seminar-style discussions—oral participation is a must.

The class will read fiction such as Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1966), Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965), Robert Coover's "The Babysitter" (1969), Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1975), Tim O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* (1975), Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), Don DeLillo's *Libra* (1988), Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* (1998), Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* (2003), and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005).

ENGL 564-61 (HC 664-61) Modern English Grammar

Dr. Jeannine Fontaine

M 6:00-8:40

This course will delve into a full range of issues in modern linguistics, emphasizing topics that have particular relevance for the English language. Areas to be covered will include phonology (sound systems), morphology (word forms), and syntax (phrase and sentence patterns), as well as the sociolinguistic and pragmatic considerations that affect everyday usage. Participants will explore topics of immediate social relevance, such as the relationship between language and gender, the status of non-standard dialects, the growing global presence of English, and the emergence of creole varieties based on English. Elements from the history of English will be covered selectively as they relate to the topics listed here. Implications for the teaching of English, as both first and second language, will be regularly incorporated into our discussions; participants with a special interest in literature will be encouraged to explore applications of linguistic concepts to the analysis of literary works.

ENGL 568-01 (HC 668-01) Theories of Composition

Dr. Jim Purdy

TR 4:30-5:45

In this course, we will explore theories of composition that seek to explain how we write (or should write), ranging from approaches that aim to account for the complex and recursive nature of writing (including process, cognitive, and social constructionist theories) to views that aim to account for new textual genres and changing writing technologies (including post-process and cultural-historic activity theories). We will consider the historical contexts in which these theories arose, how they respond to one another, and their educational and social implications. The course will be organized around (roughly chronological) units that focus on particular theoretical perspectives and practical applications of these theories. Through discussion of course readings and writing projects, students will get a fuller picture of English studies by learning about one of its subfields, composition studies; learn—and enact—strategies for teaching themselves and other composers to write effectively; and become acquainted with the prevailing theoretical approaches that shape writing policies and pedagogies.

ENGL 692-01

18th Century Scottish Nationalist Lit.

Dr. Susan Howard

MW 4:30-5:45

W. B. Yeats wrote that “National literature is the work of writers who are molded by influences that are molding their countries, and who write out of so deep a life that they are accepted in the end . . .” This seminar explores literature by Scottish writers primarily of the late 18th and early 19th centuries--after the Union of 1707 between Scotland and England and the creation of Great Britain--whose fiction, poetry, and nonfiction prose reflect their struggle with questions of national identity, in both subject matter and style. Because Scotland’s past is never far from its present, many of these works reflect upon or reference important events or people in Scottish history, in particular the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, and such figures as William Wallace; these figures or events act as markers for imaginative writers of this period whose ends were political but whose means were literary. The texts we will read by such writers as Burns, Baillie, Scott, Smollett, Boswell, Grant, and Ferrier, along with anonymous writers of Jacobite songs, could be said to compose a national literature with a nationalist agenda. Some of the questions we will be asking of these texts include: What kind of nation did Scottish writers of this period describe and envision—was it Scottish or was it British? What rhetorical strategies did they use to do so? What kinds of dialogue did these works create or promote regarding the issue of nationalism and nation? With what concrete ideological, political, or literary results? What role does the past have in these works? How do different genres serve the discussion? Course Requirements: Active participation, oral presentation, short paper, long paper, final exam.