

## COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

SPRING 2011

### GRADUATE COURSES

#### ENGLISH 264: RESTORATION & 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY LITERATURE

BODY LANGUAGE: Sensibility and Sexuality in the Later 18<sup>th</sup> Century

This seminar will consider fiction, poetry, drama, and non-fictional prose of the later eighteenth century from the perspective of bodily function (sensibility) and the expression of emotion. The embodiment of language and the bodily expression of feeling will be addressed. By considering the workings of desire within the concept of sensibility, it will be possible to suggest a great deal about the dynamics of power distribution in an age of social flux. It seems to me that the culture of sensibility itself, moreover, suggests the outlines of what Foucault calls "a completely new technology of sex." Works include: Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*; Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*; Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer*; Cowper, *The Task*; Boswell, *The Hypochondriack*; Burney, *Camilla*, Equiano, *Autobiography*; Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria and A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Bage, *Hermesprong*; Inchbald, *Nature and Art*; Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*; &c.

"--Dear sensibility! source in exhausted of all that's precious in our joys, or costly in our sorrows! thou chainest thy martyr down upon his bed of straw--and 'tis thou who lifts him up to HEAVEN--eternal fountain of our feelings!--'tis here I trace thee--and this is thy divinity which stirs within me."

George Haggerty Wed. 9:40-12:30

#### ENGLISH 270: TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

The Project of the American Novel

Many of us make readings of novels the center of much broader arguments about culture, identity, history, and society. In this seminar we will read a range of twentieth-century novels organized around novelistic categories of prose style, characterization, and plot structure in order to ask a question that often goes without saying: what do novels do? We will also read much of Michael Denning's study of 1930s cultural politics, which continue to inflect contemporary understandings of the "political," and selections from an anthology, *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, edited by Michael Hoffman and Patrick Murphy.

Week 1 and 2: Novels and Readers in the American Century

William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885)

Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin* (2000)

Weeks 3 & 4: Prose Style, the short and the long of it

Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)

William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)

Weeks 5, 6, and 7: Characters in History

John Dos Passos, *The Big Money* (1936)

Mary McCarthy, *The Company She Keeps* (1942)

Richard Wright, *Native Son* (1940)

Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (1997)

Weeks 8, 9, and 10: Reading for the Plot

James Baldwin, *Another Country* (1962)

Joan Didion, *Democracy* (1984)

Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994)

Katherine Kinney    Tues. 10:10-1:00

**ENGLISH 272: SEMINAR IN CRITICAL THEORIES**

SAID

Perhaps no contemporary critic has had a greater impact on literary and cultural studies than Edward Said. His *Orientalism* is acknowledged as the formative text of post-colonial studies in the academy. Earlier in his career he was considered a thoroughgoing poststructuralist, a theorist of "oppositional" criticism. Yet as a more mature critic he regularly identified himself as a humanist. His work was informed by thinkers as disparate as Auerbach, Foucault, Derrida, Fanon, Trilling, Williams, and Gramsci.

In this seminar we will examine some of the central works of Said's career, focusing on their intellectual context as well as their effect on literary and cultural studies (both in the academy and in the broader media). Major Said text will include: *Orientalism, Culture and Imperialism, The World, the Text, and the Critic, Humanism and Democratic Criticism, Reflections on Exile and other Essays, On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain*. We will also be reading some of the work that was important to his own thinking, including essays by many of the critics and theorists listed above.

Students will be encouraged to engage critically with Said's work and to consider how the literary, political, and theoretical implications of his positions and methods have contributed to the shaping of their own analytical agendas.

Joe Childers                    Tues. 2:00-5:00

**ENGLISH 275: SEMINAR IN FILM AND VISUAL CULTURE**

## An Introduction to Performance Studies

This seminar introduces students to some of the key themes and works in performance studies. Readings will cover J. L. Austen's *How to Do Things with Words* and the writing on performativity that it inspired, key statements on theatricality and visual culture, body art, race and the politics of performance, queer performance, "liveness" and performance documentation. Assignments will include presentation of a conference style paper, assumption of responsibility for leading one seminar discussion (and working with a group in doing so), and a 15-20 page seminar paper (based on the presentation).

Scholarship covered will include: Eve Sedgwick, Judy Butler, José Muñoz, Fred Moten, Amelia Jones, Michael Fried, Tavia Nyong'o, Jane Blocker, Peggy Phelan (and more).

Artists may include: Yoko Ono, Johanna Went, Ron Athey, Franko B, Bob Flanagan, Linda Montano, Carolee Schneemen, Tehching Hsieh, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, James Luna, William Pope L., Nao Bustamante, My Barbarian, Kalup Linzy, Vaginal Davis, Dynasty Handbag, the ASCO Collective (and more...)

Jennifer Doyle      Thurs. 2:00-5:00

## **ENGLISH 277: SEMINAR IN SEXUALITIES AND GENDERS**

### Black Queer Recoveries

Since Black Queer Studies coalesced in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a critical, pedagogical, and artistic set of practices within academic and cultural institutions, it has emphasized *recovery* as both methodology and thematic. Films such as *Looking for Langston* (Isaac Julien, 1989), *The Watermelon Woman* (Cheryl Dunye, 1996), *Brother to Brother* (Rodney Evans, 2004), and *U People* (Olive Demetrius and Hanifa Walidah, 2009), for example, have sought to reconstruct black cultural history to create, or *recover*, a usable past for black queer writers and filmmakers. At the same time, films such as *Tongues Untied* (Marlon Riggs, 1989) and *Litany for Survival* (Ada Gay Griffin and Michelle Parkerson, 1995), have stressed recovery from disease--both biological and social--as a terrain of intimate political struggle. Academic work, too, has uncovered invisible histories and recovered "lost" texts: while literary critic Dwight McBride recovers a queer James Baldwin to critique the guiding mythologies of black studies, sociologist Roderick Ferguson uncovers a lost chapter of Ellison's *Invisible Man* to show how disciplinary canons in the American university are unable to fully account for nonnormative black sexualities. The innovations and interventions of black queer studies scholars have, in this way, synthesized queer studies, feminist studies, and black studies while unsettling the normative assumptions

of those fields. Recovery has so proven a disruptive critical project rather than a neat objective with a predictable telos.

This course uses "recovery" as an analytic to chart a genealogy of black queer studies' critical and expressive archives. Putting scholarship by Jennifer Brody, Sharon Holland, Lindon Barrett, Dwight McBride, Elizabeth Freeman, E. Patrick Johnson, Kara Keeling, Roderick Ferguson and others in conversation with black queer film and poetry, we will explore how critical recoveries have motivated, organized, and unsettled both this varied body of work and the disciplinary formations it has developed in and against.

Erica Edwards

Fri. 2:00-5:00

### **ENGLISH 279: SEMINAR IN RHETORICAL STUDIES**

IN PRAISE OF SHADOWS: Rhetoric, Ornamentation, and the Struggle Over Knowledge

As did Plato with his placement of rhetoric in the shadows of the feminine and the excessive to support the enlightened hegemony of the philosophically *pure, objective, masculine, and rational*; architect Adolph Loos served the *dominant order of things* by criminalizing ornament--and by extension those peoples whose skin, practices, and adornments he deemed both excessive and therefore outside of history. In response, this seminar will take up novelist/architectural theorist Junichiro Tanizaki's call to *praise shadows* through revealing knowledges, methods, resistances, subjectivities, dirt, ornaments, and bare life partially cloaked by concepts of normalcy, democracy, neo-liberal capitalism, religion, patriotism, and truth. To this end, I will argue for the centrality of the criminal, the ornamental, to the construction of knowledge, subjectivities, and the nation-state. For the illumination of the very terrains of intelligibility informing our understanding of the human that Loos and those worst folks too often filled with fear and passionate intensity would deny.

Deploying scholars and practitioners as varied as Aristotle, Ella Baker, Friedrich Nietzsche, David Eng, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Kenneth Burke, Judith Butler, Zitkala-Sá, Maurice Wallace, Louis Kahn, Bernice Columbia, William E.B. Dubois, Jacques Derrida, Dolores Huerta, Nancy Fraser, Sagoyewatha, Chief Red Jacket, Frantz Fanon, Gail Okawa, Marjane Satrapi, Walter Benjamin, C.K. Ogden, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia J. Williams, Darrel W. Fields, Wayne Booth, Qiu Jin, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Audre Lorde and from a variety of disciplines and fields; seminar participants will peek beneath the supposed "clean" surfaces of objectivity and contemporary political rationalities to illuminate what Anne Cheng refers to as modernity's *second skin*. The seminar will include the following claims: philosophy and truth are rhetorical, excess and ornamentation are central to notions of normalcy, objectivity and the modern fact are historical

phenomena, they are not self-evident; resonance may be more significant than rationality; the human and the ethnic may be more productively understood through rhetoric rather than through sociology.

Required Texts:

-*Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface*, Anne Cheng

-*On Populism*, Ernesto Laclau

-*The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*, David Eng

-*Between Race and Reason: Violence, Intellectual Responsibility, and the University to Come*, Susan Searles Giroux

Vorris Nunley

Thurs. 5:00-8:00