

Graduate Course Descriptions
Spring 2013

English 279: Rhetorical Studies – Rhetorial Reconsidered

What is the art of rhetoric, really? The seminar will investigate ideas and practices that define traditional and “new” rhetoric, including approaches to rhetorical aspects of literary texts. How does rhetoric relate to poetics? How does persuasion relate to catharsis? What is the relation between a philosophy of rhetoric and rhetorical pedagogy? Is that relation something one can engineer, or is it more like the oxygen we breathe -- almost inescapable yet worth reflecting upon, not to be taken for granted as manipulable in ways we think we can control? In what sense can rhetoric be political? As moderns and post-moderns, have we underestimated and perhaps fundamentally misunderstood the implications of political rhetoric? What is an audience, really? Does the operation of rhetoric require a certain kind of subject matter? How is rhetoric connected to the teaching of composition? Readings will be drawn from among the following: *Francis Bacon and the Rhetoric of Nature* (Briggs), *Lincoln’s Speeches Reconsidered* (Briggs), some of Lincoln’s speeches, a selection from Wayne Booth’s work on the rhetoric of fiction, Richard Weaver’s *Ethics of Rhetoric*, Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Cicero’s *De Oratore*, Bacon’s *New Atlantis* and *Great Instauration*, McKeon’s writings on the history of the trivium, Churchill’s speeches and his essay “The Scaffolding of Oratory,” and selected poems and other works.

Briggs. T 0210PM-0500PM

English 269: American Literature to 1900 – Cannibalism and Metaphors of Incorporation

First, a confession. This seminar doesn’t begin with literature written in 1630, commonly considered the foundational date of American literature, as the course description in the catalog states. In fact, many of the works under consideration for this course end before 1630, the year John Winthrop and his Puritan colleagues established the Massachusetts Bay colony. Instead, this seminar can be considered a prehistory of the Anglophonic presence in the Americas. Over the course of the quarter, we will examine a rich, fascinating, and challenging period of over one thousand years of literary production that preceded the Pilgrim and Puritan invasion and settlement of the “New World.” This course is designed to propel students to reimagine the linguistic, cultural, theoretical, and geo-political terrain of hemispheric early American literature and to acquaint you with a range of transnational discursive responses to contact with the “Other” from Indigenous oral narrative to the 17th century in what is now known generically as the “Americas”: Canada, the United States, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.

We will question and think critically about the ways in which encounters between Native Americans and Europeans are figured in literature and popular culture through the critical lens of cannibalism. We will focus on how discussions of race and gender inform this vast body of literature, thinking specifically about how the trope of cannibalism works as a powerful and pervasive way of incorporating; (mis)understanding; rendering hypervisible and invisible; and committing violence against the gendered and racialized Indigenous “Other.” Representations of cannibalism are central to the canon of American literature and culture, particularly in early

periods, and continue to play a primary role in genres such as science fiction as filmmakers and writers seek to understand future possible encounters with the “Other” through earlier representations such as those we will be reading this quarter. We will approach the topic of anthropophagy from several different disciplinary perspectives—anthropology, history, literature, psychoanalysis, visual culture, etc.—in order to better understand how cannibalism has been represented from the early colonial period to the present and how it has informed the major texts and contexts of American literary history.

Questions to consider: Is cannibalism, as William Arens has intimated, a European colonial fantasy designed to institute Indigenous alterity and inaugurate various forms of attendant violence? How is cannibalism represented in the colonial texts under consideration vis-à-vis the European practice of the Eucharist and debates about transubstantiation? What constitutes the ‘proof’ of cannibalism and how do various disciplines, from archaeology to psychology, offer competing arguments for the meaning and existence of cannibalism? What challenges do “critical cannibalism studies” pose to the fields of early American studies, critical race studies, and American literary studies?

Raheja. 0210PM-0500PM

English 289: Genre – Sovereignty and Romance

During this quarter we focus on medieval romance in terms of a number of categories just being articulated now: national identity, gender, sovereignty, otherness, colonialism, origin myths, space and place. We will devote part of our syllabus to Malory and seek to link these concerns with the traditional (and complicated) worries of Malory scholarship. But I would like us to pay attention to “romance” as it develops over the long Middle Ages, including Anglo-Norman (written in the French of England) and Latin narratives, and the connections between non-Arthurian romances and other forms, such as saints’ lives and chronicles and drama, including Early Modern drama. Our primary theme will be that of sovereignty, and the changing definition of sovereignty as it moves towards absolutism and Hobbes and the Treaty of Westphalia, and how it haunts modern political thought, most familiar in the contribution of Kantorowicz’ *The King’s Two Bodies* and the debate of Giorgio Agamben and others with the terrible rigor of Carl Schmitt.

Ganim. 0210PM-0500PM

English 268: 20th Century British Literature – A Survey of Novels and Theories of Visuality

One of the legacies of the Jamesian articulation of “point of view” is a discernible preoccupation, in several British and Irish novels, with visuality and positionality. This preoccupation takes many forms: an interest in spectatorship, sightseeing, and visual explorations of “otherness”; the emergence of the genre of “portraiture” novels; the tension between self-spectacle and interiority; representations of voyeurism and exhibitionism; explorations of visual intersubjectivity; curiosity about visual curiosity; depictions of visual phobias and visual fixations; and, perhaps most centrally, Lacan’s conceptualization of the split between the eye and the gaze. In this seminar we will be reading a survey of primary texts--from “early” to “high” modernist--that provide particularly good examples of these visual and positional concerns:

James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and its remnant earlier draft, Stephen Hero, Joyce's "Nausicaa," Lawrence's *St. Mawr*, and Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. We will try to examine some of the following questions: What are the implications of "taking up" a particular position? Why is positionality sometimes psychically unstable? Why do some subjectivities find point of view difficult to establish? What makes some visual positions politically problematic, dishonest, or imperiling? To help us explore these questions, we will be reading simultaneously a survey of interrelated theoretical texts (psychoanalytic, feminist, queer, and sociological) that make various claims about visuality and/or positionality (texts by Freud, Caillois, Lacan, Silverman, Mulvey, Neale, Alloula, Doane, Newman, and Bhabha). One of the aims of the course is to demonstrate how theoretical arguments can open up one's understanding of novelistic discourse; another is to explore the ways novelistic discourse can strengthen and/or call into question various theoretical claims.

Devlin. 0210PM-0500PM