

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
WINTER 2011

ENGLISH 289: SEMINAR IN GENRES: HOLY WARS

English 289 is a rubric covering different genres. For Winter 2011, English 289 will focus on Medieval and Early Modern tracts relating to war and peace. Research may be carried out by students in other periods related to these earlier formulations, such as the literature of the American Civil War, World War I, and more recent conflicts. We will consider how the generic context of these arguments changes from genre to genre. We will examine the border zones of contact created by wars of religion between West and East, which generated transfers of culture and ideas, and consider the role of war in creating unbounded collective identities, geopolitical communities and premodern nationalities. Readings will be finalized when the period interests of enrolled students can be determined, but I would imagine that we would be drawing some of our discussions from such studies as Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*; Rene Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*; Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*; Simone Weil's *The Iliad, Or, The Poem of Force*; David Nirenberg's *Communities of Violence*.

Mr. Ganim. Tues. 3:10PM-6:00 PM

ENGLISH 262: SEMINAR IN RENAISSANCE LITERATURE: SHAKESPEARE AND GOD

In recent years, scholars have debated the matter of Shakespeare's religious convictions. Did he have any? Was he a closet recusant? Did he, like his father, harbor a longing for the "Old Religion"? Or was he comfortable with "free thinkers," like the Marlowe of Dr. Faustus? If we are to resolve this matter, what will count as evidence on one side or the other? Recently, some scholars have argued that Shakespeare takes sides in matters of religion in the "history plays," if perhaps less obviously than he does in his treatment of clerics in the "tragedies" and "problem comedies." Other critics hold that Shakespeare adheres to no religious creed whatsoever. They argue strenuously for his thorough-going skepticism in all matters of religion and philosophy. Using whatever evidence is available from Shakespeare's works and documentary sources, this seminar will examine the question of Shakespeare's attitude toward "divinity" and "divines." Participants will begin by examining what they would regard as relevant evidence in the discussion, and proceed to present an analysis of specific works to elucidate their understanding of Shakespeare's religious doubts and beliefs.

Stanley Stewart. Wed. 2:10PM-5:00 PM

ENGLISH 267: SEMINAR IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE: NINETEENTH CENTURY MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES AND THE NOVEL

This course introduces students to nineteenth-century technologized media such as telegraphy, photography, and the gramophone, theorizing and historicizing their relations to literature, culture, politics, and histories of the body and the senses. We will explore how media technologies helped consolidate and threatened to undermine the modern nation and the British Empire; how they changed conceptualizations of gender, sexuality, and race; and how visual, sound, and information media challenged literary genres. Throughout, we will disturb conventional accounts of technological determinism, for

example by exploring how discourses of clairvoyance and spirit photography functioned as alternative media networks; by foregrounding the materiality of media, such as human and other bodies; and by decentering realism in our consideration of genres such as detective, gothic, and science fiction. Course texts with recommended editions include Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities (Penguin); Wilkie Collins, The Moonstone (Broadview); Bram Stoker, Dracula (Penguin); Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray (Penguin); George DuMaurier, Trilby (Oxford World Classics); Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (Penguin); and H.G. Wells, The Invisible Man (Penguin); other reading can be found on the course website. Students are asked to read for the first class meeting on January 6. Formal course requirements include one facilitation of class discussion, one annotated bibliography, and one 20-page research paper. Students are encouraged to attend my special session panel on “Late Nineteenth-Century Media Consumption, Literature, and Modernity” at the MLA Convention on Saturday, January 8; and are asked to attend a talk by Richard Menke, author of Telegraphic Realism, at UCR on January 10.

Susan Zieger. Thurs. 10:10 AM-1:00 PM

ENGLISH 278: SEMINAR IN MINORITY DISCOURSE: VIOLENCE AS A CRITICAL DISCOURSE IN U.S. LATINA/O DRAMA AND PERFORMANCE

This seminar focuses on the ways Latina/o writers of drama and performance explore the role of violence in shaping Latina/o identity and community and their staging of violence as a means to generate critical discourse. Readings will focus on a representative body of writing by noted authors as well as single, lesser known but pivotal works. Some of the questions that inform our readings: What is the language of violence articulated within Latina/o drama and performance, and how do these authors employ it as a critical discourse? How do issues of gender, sexuality, class, and nation shape the ways Latino/a male and female writers approach the subject of violence? How are such issues historically bound to matters of violence? In what ways does a focus on violence necessarily expand, limit, or otherwise challenge critical readings of Latina/o identity and culture? How do writers script individual bodies in an effort to define (or redefine) a larger social body? For example, how do dramatists write the body as a visual illustration of cultural wounding, a symbol of the ways expectations for identity performance become so rigid and constricting they acquire the power to main and wound? How do these writers otherwise define, portray and articulate violence, both verbally and visually? Among the many issues we will explore: political and domestic violence, nationalism and intra-cultural violence, gender oppression, homophobia, racism, poverty, dysfunctional child-parent relationships, restrictive definitions of masculinity and femininity, body image, feminist consciousness, youth in crisis, the prison industrial complex, and theater as social action.

Requirements: Seminar participants will be required to produce the following work: A presentation with an accompanying handout; a paper abstract; a conference-length midterm paper; a co-written panel proposal for the imagined venue for delivering this work; and a revised seminar-length research paper with presentation of an excerpt from this work delivered as part of a panel presentation at a final seminar colloquium.

Tiffany López. Thurs. 2:10PM-5:00 PM

ENGLISH 270: SEMINAR IN AMERICAN LITERATURE SINCE 1900: FROM POSTMODERN TO POST NOW

We will read the following postmodern (and what I'm calling post-now) texts: Susan Howe's *The Midnight*, Frank Bidart's *In the Western Night*, Lorna Dee Cervantes' *Drive*, Lyn Hejinian's *My Life*, Rae Armantrout's *Veil*, Kathy Acker's *Empire of the Senseless* and "The Gift of Disease," Charles Bernstein's *All the Whiskey in Heaven*, Theresa Cha's *Dictée* and *Exilé/Temps Morts*, Joy Harjo's *How We Became Human*, Harryette Mullen's *Sleeping with the Dictionary*, and Christian Bok's *Eunoia*.

We will focus on avant-garde poetry (Bidart, Cervantes, Hejinian, Armantrout, Bernstein, Harjo, Mullen, Bok) but will also look at memoir (Hejinian, Acker, Cha), fiction (Acker, Bok), and the intersection of literary texts with sonic and visual arts (Howe, Cha, Harjo, Bok). We will be guided in our journey by critical and theoretical essays in Beach's *Anthology of New Poetics*, Rankine and Spahr's *American Women Poets in the 21st Century*, and Hinton and Hogue's *We Who Love to Be Astonished*.

The seminar will also consider whether Cathy Carruth's concept of a "turning back to literature" as a figure of disappearance and survival is productive, and if so, how the postmodern or "post-now" text might be read in that light (see *PMLA*, October 2010). The seminar will also ponder what Jean-Jacques Lecercle's advocacy of a "return to the political" would mean for our understanding of these texts (see again *PMLA*, October 2010). Stimulating reading and talk are on tap, along with an invitation for you to write a seminar paper that could eventually turn into something more. Light refreshments will be served.

Steven Gould Axelrod. Thurs. 5:10PM-8:00 PM

ENGLISH 276: SEMINAR IN COLONIALISM AND POST COLONIALITY: NATIONALISM, DIASPORA, GLOBALISM AND THE POST COLONIAL

This seminar explores the intersections between cultural theories of nationalism, diaspora, and globalism within the larger framework of postcolonial studies and literary criticism. While recent arguments about globalization and transnationalism emphasize de-territorialized diasporic, migrant, or cosmopolitan identities and cultural production against an apparently monolithic nation-state, we will examine the various ways in which anti- and postcolonial nationalism is critically engaged and imbricated with diasporas and globalization, together with the connections these three socio-cultural formations make with discourses of race, gender, and sexuality. We will primarily focus on late twentieth-century anglophone Caribbean and black British writing by George Lamming, Earl Lovelace, Jamaica Kincaid, Michelle Cliff, Samuel Selvon, Edwidge Danticat, and Andrea Levy. Assignments: in-class presentation, annotated bibliography, mini-conference presentation, and final research paper.

Weihsin Gui. Fri. 10:10AM – 1:00 PM

ENGLISH 268: SEMINAR IN 20TH CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE: THE 20TH CENTURY BRITISH NOVEL AND THEORIES OF VISUAL POSITIONALITY

One of the legacies of the Jamesian articulation of “point of view” is a discernible preoccupation, in several modernist 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; representations of voyeurism and exhibitionism; explorations of visual intersubjectivity; curiosity about visual curiosity; depictions of visual phobias, visual fixations, and the gaze. In this seminar, we will be reading seven modernist texts 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 early 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 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.

Requirements: Oral presentations, class participation, and a final essay.
Kimberly Devlin. Fri. 2:10PM-5:00 PM