

Fall 2015 Seminar Offerings

as of 5/1/15

Monday:

English 262	S. Stewart	2:10 pm – 5:00 pm HMNSS 1407	Renaissance Literature
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Tuesday:

English 248	S.Vint	9:00 am – 12:00 pm HMNSS 2211	Science Fiction
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English 200	H. Brayman Hackel	2:10 pm – 5:00 pm HMNSS 1407	Intro to Grad Study
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Wednesday:

English 289	D. Lloyd	2:10 pm – 5:00 pm HMNSS 1407	Genres
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English 277	S. Sohn	6:10 pm – 9:00 pm HMNSS 1407	Sexualities & Genders
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Thursday:

English 269	E. Stapely	2:10 pm – 5:00 pm HMNSS 1407	Amer. Lit to 1900
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English 270	S. Axelrod	5:10 pm – 8:00 pm HMNSS 1407	Amer. Lit Since 1900
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Friday:

English 260	A. Denny-Brown	10:10 am – 1:00 pm HMNSS 2211	Medieval Literature
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Note:

In Fall 2013, graduate students from the Department of English asked the department to make sure that all course descriptions included answers to the following three questions: 1.) Is your seminar broad-ranging or more specialized? 2.) Is your seminar open to students with little background or is it meant for more advanced students? 3.) If non-English students want to take your seminar, should they get prior authorization from you before enrolling? You will find the answers at the end of each course description.

ENGL 262: The Later Renaissance – Shakespeare and Jonson’s *Sejanus* (S. Stewart)

We know from Jonson’s elegy to Shakespeare, printed in the 1623 Folio, that Jonson placed His fellow poet and playwright above Chaucer and Spenser, alone of modern poets in the company of Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles. We know, too, that Jonson sought to have his own dramas appear on the page in same way classical Greek and Roman plays were printed (with characters named at the beginning of scenes, but with no entrances or exits noted). So the compliment does more than place Shakespeare above Chaucer, Spenser, Beaumont, and (implicitly) Jonson; it also invites comparison between Shakespeare and the great Greek and Roman tragedians. Allowing that modesty is required by the occasion—posthumous publication of Shakespeare’s works—readers aware of Jonson’s publication history (the first folio of Jonson’s works was published in 1616) might imagine Jonson as well as Shakespeare worthy of comparison with the ancients. If so, attention to the intersection of the careers of Jonson and Shakespeare in 1603 should be of particular interest to literary historians. Elizabeth I died early in the year, and Jonson’s *Sejanus His Fall* was produced at Blackfriars. Notably, Shakespeare was a member of the cast.

We will assume that participants in this are familiar with Shakespeare’s four major tragedies, as well as with *Julius Caesar* and *Measure for Measure*, that is, one play written shortly before, the other shortly after, Shakespeare performed in *Sejanus His Fall*. We will read Jonson’s tragedy with one question in particular in mind: Does this play shed any light on Shakespeare’s final comedy (often called a “problem comedy”) and/or the later tragedies? What, if anything, does Shakespeare “learn” from acting in Jonson’s Roman tragedy? Does the tone of Shakespeare’s later tragedies more closely resemble that of *Sejanus* than that of *Julius Caesar* or *Hamlet*? In what way are the characters similar to or dissimilar from those of other Shakespearean tragedies? In connection with our interest here, the dating of *Othello* may be of particular interest. Is or is not Iago (as Shakespeare develops him from the earlier sketch of evil seen in Aaron) more closely akin to those represented in *Sejanus* than to those represented in *Julius Caesar* or *Hamlet*?

Seminar participants might ask, to what extent does Jonson, however tangentially, praise himself, as well as Shakespeare, when he compares modern with ancient tragic poets? They might address their inquiry by preparing professional conference papers or by

writing academic essays. In either case, participants will understand that time constraints sometimes require that we think of our research efforts as “works in progress.”

This is: **1)** a narrowly-focused seminar, **2)** intended for students with a solid background in Renaissance drama, and **3)** any student not enrolled as an English graduate student should consult the instructor before adding the course.

Texts:

Jonson, Ben. *Five Plays*. Ed. G.A. Wilkes. Oxford: OUP, 2009. ISBN 978-0-19-955577-2

The Riverside Shakespeare. 2nd ed, Ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998 (or any comparable edition). ISBN 0-395-75490.

ENGL 248: Science Fiction, Colonial Legacies, Global Perspectives (S. Vint)

This course is created to be in dialogue with the ongoing events in the Sawyer Seminar on Alternative Futurisms that will convene at UCR during the 2015-2016 year. Alternative Futurisms aims to extend our understanding of how diverse ethnic groups produce speculative cultures and to enable scholars, artists, and writers engage in dialogue across these perspectives. This course will seek to answer the question “why science fiction?” How can sf be a tool for thinking critically about the future and for fostering more inclusive futures? How are the genre’s typical icons, plots, and themes related to colonial histories and what are the legacies of these connections? What news kinds of sf emerge from diasporic and global perspective and what new futures does it anticipate? The course will consider examples of include critical as well as fictional readings, and will consider film as well as print sf. Authors include Aliette de Bodard, Amitav Ghosh, Stephen Graham Jones, Chang-rae Lee, Karen Lord and David Mitchell.

This seminar is specialized, but open to students with little background. I will be providing context and a wider background regarding the genre. Non-English students graduate students pursuing the SFTS DE are welcome to enroll in the course and do not require prior authorization.

ENGL 200: Introduction to Graduate Study (H. Brayman Hackel)

Required of all entering graduate students who do not already hold the M.A. and open to those who do, this intensive seminar aims to provide you with the skills and experiences (or at least alert you to your need to acquire them over time) necessary to flourish in our doctoral program and to succeed in the profession. The seminar will familiarize you with current methods and approaches central to literary, cultural, and media studies; visits from English department faculty to discuss their work will support this goal. The seminar will also provide an overview of research skills and resources, and we will work together on developing your graduate-level reading skills and writing practices. The seminar will be

small and hands-on; a lovely and productive outcome should be the emergence of a community for ongoing collaboration and support. Frequent writing and research exercises; a final 20-page research paper.

This seminar is 1) broad-ranging 2) open only to entering students (with or without the MA), and 3) closed to students outside of English.

ENGL 289: Genres: Poetry and Violence (D. Lloyd)

This course will perform double duty. On the one hand, it will be an exercise in the reading of modern lyric poetry, accompanied by a small number of essays on the topic that may help to focus and develop our reflections on the kind of reading such poetry demands. On the other, it will approach thematically and theoretically the question of poetry and violence. I do not understand this to mean primarily poetic representations of violence, though that will inevitably be part of our concern, but rather to address how poetry engages with violence, political, gendered, foundational, legal, as a matter of language and as intimately bound up with the uses of language. It is often assumed that poetry is in some intrinsic way opposed to violence (the idea of poetry as non-communicative or non-instrumental language use is one version of that). We will, however, complicate that assumption by considering a number of poets for whom the intimacy of language and violence appears primal and will do so in relation to a number of texts whose reflections on violence are peculiarly pertinent.

I have not decided on a final list of texts, but poets will include W.B. Yeats, César Vallejo, Aimé Césaire, and Paul Celan. We will read the poems together in their original languages and in English, supplementing each other's knowledge where necessary.

This course is specialized in so far as its focus will be on reading poetry closely. However, no prior familiarity with these poets, or even with critical reading of poetry, is required, just a willingness to engage fully. Students from departments other than English, such as Comparative Literature or Creative Writing, are welcome. Instructor's preauthorization is not required to enroll, but I will be happy to speak with any student interested in the course prior to registration.

ENGL 277: Seminar in Sexualities & Genders – Love is a Battlefield: Queer of Color Theory/ Queer of Color Fiction (with a Comparative Focus on Queer Latin@ and Queer Asian North American Literature) (S. Sohn)

This course will engage a strong queer of color fictional component (focusing on Latin@ and Asian American literatures) through investigating how writers depict the ways in which certain individuals face “multiple negations” that include potential expulsion from their own families and from various communities. This course is interested therefore in questions of survival, trauma, and coming-of-age which typify the fictions that concern queer minorities.

Students will be expected to consider fictional representations alongside discourses of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. All writers included in this course are openly LGBTQIA identified individuals who directly explore the complications of gender and queer sexuality within their cultural productions. Secondary readings will include literary criticism, feminist, race and queer theory. Primary textual readings may include: Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*, Nina Revoyr's *Southland*, Lawrence Chua's *Gold by the Inch*, Alexander Chee's *Edinburgh*, Benjamin Alire Saenz's *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, Carla Trujillo's *What Night Brings*, and Justin Torres's *We the Animals*, among others. A caveat: If you are uncomfortable with approaching sexually explicit material in an analytical and intellectual way, you should consider dropping the course. Please approach textual selections with an open mind. Questions? Concerns? E-mail me at ssohnucr@gmail.com.

This seminar will be specialized insofar as it selects for students interested in theories of gender and sexuality as well as those with research concentrations in contemporary American literatures involving thematics of race and ethnicity. Students should be open to depictions of explicit queer sexuality in literature, but do not necessarily need to be widely read in queer, feminist or race theories, nor will they be expected to have read widely within queer Latin@ or queer Asian North American literatures. Non-English students should get prior authorization just so that I am aware that I may need to pitch the course in a direction that takes into account different disciplinary training (e.g. for graduate students coming from Ethnic Studies or MCS).

ENGL 269: Seminar in American Literature to 1900 – The Politics of Failure in the Age of Revolutions (E. Stapely)

Touted as an era of progress and liberation, the so-called “Age of Revolutions” (1688-1815) was also an age of political insurgency that did not always terminate in the “successful” (re)establishment of state formations. This seminar examines the literary traces left by Revolution’s delegitimized others—revolt, rebellion, and civil war—in the long 18th-century Anglophone Atlantic world. In addition to covering a range of primary source materials across this period from Dryden to Wells, we will ponder the framework of success/failure for evaluating emancipatory politics by examining how the literatures of the “failed” or “unsuccessful” may open up modalities of time, personhood, and solidarity on terms other than those enshrined by Enlightened thought. To that end, each of our units will engage primary materials alongside theoretical texts (Agamben, Benjamin, Blanchot, de Certeau, Freud, Jameson) that consider some of the ethical and methodological problems we face as scholars of—and heirs to—history’s uncompensated losses.

This is a broad-ranging seminar with coverage in early American and 18th-century Anglophone literatures. No prior knowledge of either field is necessary to enroll. Non-English students do not need to obtain authorization from me before enrolling.

ENGL 270: American Literature Since 1900. Nuclear Gaze, Nuclear Family in Mid-Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture (S. Axelrod)

We will study inscriptions/depictions of private and public spaces and everyday life under the sign of the nuclear bomb.

Required literary texts: Elizabeth Bishop's *Poems, Prose, Letters*; Allen Ginsberg's *Collected Poems*; Bob Kaufman's *Solititudes Crowded with Loneliness*; Robert Lowell's *Selected Poems, Expanded Edition*; Lorine Niedecker's *Collected Works*; Sylvia Plath's *Collected Poems*; and Mitsuye Yamada's *Camp Notes and Other Writings*.

Suggested visual texts: Elizabeth Bishop's *Exchanging Hats*; Robert Frank's *The Americans*; Allen Ginsberg's *Beat Memories* or *Snapshot Poetics*; Sylvia Plath's *Drawings*; and Edward Steichen's *The Family of Man*.

Suggested theoretical, historical, and literary critical texts: Sally Bayley and Tracy Brain's *Representing Sylvia Plath*; Paul Boyer's *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*; Stephanie Coontz's *The Way We Never Were* and *American Families*; Michael Davidson's *Guys Like Us: Citing Masculinity in Cold War Poetics*; Douglas Field's *American Cold War Culture*; Robert J. Lifton's *Hiroshima in America*; Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*; Alan Nadel's *Containment Culture*; Frances Saunders' *The Cultural Cold War*; Tyler Schmidt's *Desegregating Desire: Race and Sexuality in Cold War American Literature*; and Arlene Skolnick's *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty*.

"I've spent my life in nothing." –Lorine Niedecker

"A father's no shield / for his child." –Robert Lowell

"the art of losing's not too hard to master" –Elizabeth Bishop

This seminar is wide-ranging. It is open both to advanced students and to students with little background in the field. Students from other departments should email me for authorization before enrolling (steven.axelrod@ucr.edu); I will respond promptly.

ENGL 260: Medieval Literature – Multimodal Manuscripts: Techniques and Theories (A. Denny-Brown)

This seminar will be an introduction to contemporary medieval manuscript studies. Its structure will be both technical and theoretical: on the one hand, the course will establish the key skillset necessary for advanced study of premodern, hand-written English manuscripts, comprised of book-making (codicology, bindings, pricking, ruling, parchment-making and ink-making), scribal activities (paleography, or how to read scribal handwriting), and illumination (the artistic decoration of the manuscript page). At the same time, the course will also examine the medieval manuscript as a multimodal phenomenon that brings

together multiple overlapping material, visual, and literary modes of meaning: for example, how does one explore the hapticity of the manuscript object—a reader’s physical and sensory experience of it—when it is simultaneously a literary text, an ornamentalized art object, and a refined piece of animal skin? How do a manuscript’s intertwined texts, images, marginalia, grotesques, and blank spaces work together to create meaning? How do scribal practices and circumstances complicate, correct, erase, or enhance authorial meaning? Critical readings are likely to include work by Daniel Wakelin, Alexander Gillespie, Andrew Taylor, Michelle Brown, Michael Camille, Elaine Treharne, Jessica Brantley, and Arthur Bahr.

The course will actively engage with the manuscript holdings at the Huntington Library, using a digital archive of high-res manuscripts from the collection that showcases the rise of the English poetry anthology from 1350 and 1500, with a focus on English poets such as Chaucer, Hoccleve, and Lydgate. Students will also have an initiatory meeting with the curator of medieval and British manuscripts and engage with top manuscript scholars taking part in a conference I will be organizing at the Huntington Library on “The Provocative Fifteenth Century.” Because object-oriented digital reproduction is the hallmark of new manuscript study, this course will also address the relationships and tensions between material and digital objects and will include tutorials on online manuscript editing and curation applications such as Mirador and Omeka.

This specialized seminar is part of the Book, Archive, and Manuscript Studies Designated Emphasis (although students do not have to be enrolled in this program to take the course). No prior knowledge in the field is necessary to enroll, and non-English students do not need to obtain authorization from me before enrolling.