

# English Department Course Descriptions Summer 2026

## Summer Session A

### Lower Division Courses:

ENGL 12S: Comics as Literature  
Prof. Maturo

This course is designed to survey sequential art from its origins in the late 19th century to present day. We will track the development of sequential art through cartoon strips, comic books, graphic novels, and briefly examine comics production outside the US. We will survey the history and development of the form and its subgenres, how shifts in the technology of book production and distribution usher in new creators and drive the direction of content. Beginning with cartoon strips in late 19th century and early twentieth, we will move into the golden age of comics production, move into the silver age of comics production, look at the underground comix movements of the 60s and 70s, examine how direct to market distribution of comics created opportunity for small press and indie comics to emerge in the 80s and 90s, and how the internet further opened publishing opportunities in the early 21st century. We will put pressure on definitions of "literature" and show how these definitions apply to comic books while recognizing and working through the tensions that arise from such disruptions. We will look at issues of visual style, narrative and narration, myth and genre, authorship, ideology, and audience, as well as investigate how layout and design convey meaning and contribute to the narrative. Lastly the course will explore the close connection between comics producers and fans, as the expectations of comic book readers continue to play an important role in comics production.

ENGL 20A: Literatures of the British Empire: "Knights, Chivalry, and Cultural Memory: A Survey of British Literature from the Middle Ages to the Present"

Prof. Valle

This course surveys British literature from the Middle Ages to the present through the changing figure of the knight and the cultural idea of chivalry. Reading across poetry, drama, romance, fantasy, and contemporary fiction, students will consider how literary works use chivalric forms to imagine, critique, revise, and remember ideals of honor, courage, gender, violence, power, and national or cultural identity. Course texts may include *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, J. R. R. Tolkien's *Farmer Giles of Ham*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant*. Assignments emphasize close reading, literary analysis, discussion, and creative engagement with course materials. No prior knowledge of medieval or British literature is required.

ENGL 20B: Introduction to American Literary and Cultural Studies: Braiding Knowledges & Reimagining Reality: Afro/Native American and Indigenous Futurisms

Dr. Nunley

Drawing on literary, rhetorical, Queer, mythic, and Afro/Native American and Indigenous cultural studies methodologies, this class examines how Afro/Native American and Indigenous imaginaries inform and are informed by literature and culture. Imaginaries that structure realities and activate liberatory knowledges and emergent possibilities. Realities and knowledges challenging Western Liberal humanist and European notions of time, progress, art & science, life, and the human. Utilizing art, film, music, news, social media, and videos, the class will illuminate how Afro/Native American and Indigenous folx do more than resist disappearance and erasure; they reimagine and transform their realities through acts of Native and indigenous survivance and the Black undercommons to thrive and create an "otherwise." An otherwise of possibilities borrowing from the past, pointed toward the future, and emerging through the now. Writers such as Octavia E. Butler, Louise Erdrich, Nnedi Okorafor, Rebecca Roanhorse, Sylvia Wynter, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and others illuminate social relations and culture that revitalize and "re-invent what the human might be." Class will touch upon concepts and issues such as Afro/Juju futurisms, Black unfreedom, settler colonialism, decolonization, social death, religion vs spirituality, Human/non-human as living entities, climate change, the trope of the savage, discomfort as growth, Indigenous sovereignty, anti-Blackness, storytelling, how words and concepts kill, hermeneutic circles ("We do not see things as they are. We see things as we are."), disrupt the masculine/feminine as identity categories, and other concerns we/you deem to be important. Prior experience with the literature, methodologies, and concepts is not required.

## ENGL 40:Introduction to the English Department Dr. Tobias

This course provides an online introduction to the Department of English faculty, course offerings, English major and minor, and more, via synchronous online video. We will learn about English Department faculty members' research agendas and teaching approaches; we will explore the renewed and expanded English Department course offerings; and we will introduce approaches to understanding literature, culture, history, and the world around us through narrative, poetry, autobiography, rhetorical, or other forms of expression. We focus on the meaning and value of criticism, and critical humanities research currently happening in literature, media, and the arts in English as an interdisciplinary subject. This course will also equip students with the skills you need to succeed in doing scholarship in English and in qualitative, interpretive research in upper division courses. Finally, we discuss areas of study offered by the department, department resources, and introduce students to different pathways to graduate available for English majors along with career possibilities these pathways may support. Students will gain a better understanding of how to relate personal interests to course offerings in the department, and to public life beyond the university.

### **Upper Division Courses**

#### ENGL 139T:Studies in Asian American Literature Prof. Duong

"Asian Americans have not only become exemplary neoliberal subjects defined by flexibility, high human capital, and opportunistic mobility, but the Asian American family has also come to be identified as an intimate form ideally equipped to reproduce human capital." — Susan Koshy from "Neoliberal Family Matters" (2013)

What does family mean when shaped by migration, racism, and the model minority myth? This course surveys short stories and novels that portray various Asian American families, using the family as a way to examine how immigration imperatives, generational trauma, the ongoing reverberations of U.S. wars in Asia, systemic and cultural racism, and other "outside" forces impinge upon what is commonly viewed as the private realm of the domestic space and interpersonal family dynamics. The Asian/American family narrative, the framework within which fantasies of model minority achievement and immigrant mobility, obscures how the family is not the "natural" set of relations it is often assumed to be. Rather, the family is a site that both constitutes and is constituted by economic, historical, and social forces that crucially shape what are too often thought of as purely interpersonal and private relations. We will investigate how these narratives challenge dominant expectations of Asian American success and belonging, while revealing the intimate costs and resilience of family life. By the end of the course, students will begin to understand that the notion of "generational conflict" is an oversimplification that masks the deeper nuances of the Asian/American family.

#### ENGL 179A: Histories of Speculative Fiction Dr. Vint

This course will examine the relationship between science fiction and the way we imagine interacting with artificial intelligence, exploring how ideas first articulated in fiction shape the ways we interact with systems labeled AI today. We will begin looking at foundational authors such as Arthur C. Clarke and his "three laws" of robotics and Philip K. Dick's androids, move on to cyberpunk's vision of the human mind fused with IT infrastructure, and conclude by examining more recent short fiction that revisits science fiction's AI tropes in the context of existing technologies of generative AI and predictive algorithms. Throughout we will be interested in asking questions about how the history of science fiction conditions us to understand AI in specific ways and what this framework means for our ways of using this technology. We will supplement our reading of fiction with work by scholars who situate the history of robotics and AI technology within larger sociopolitical and economic frameworks.

## Summer Session B

### **Lower Division Courses:**

#### ENGL 20C:Introduction to Alternatives to Critical Perspectives on Literature and Culture Prof. Persinger

More than entertainment, storytelling is a site of power which can be used to either perpetuate or resist oppression and oppressive systems. During times of political turmoil speculative fiction can be particularly relevant to how we understand what is happening and think critically about the path ahead. In this course, we will investigate how "power" and "resistance" are conceptualized and represented in speculative fiction across mediums. We will do this by looking at literature, film, music, zines, and more. Over the course of five weeks, we will learn about and engage with alternative critical perspectives on literature and culture. In doing so, students will be introduced to critical traditions such as: media studies, Marxist theory, queer theory, feminist theory, gender theory, and post/anti-colonial theory. This is a zero textbook cost course, and required texts will be available online through the campus library or Canvas.

## ENGL 033:Multimodal Literacies

Dr. Tobias

With recent breakthroughs in generative artificial intelligence, digital media expression is characterized as having gained "new powers": new abilities to tell stories, and to tell new kinds of stories; to create original images and voices - even to answer ancient questions to teach us something new about consciousness, creativity, and the meaning of life. And of course there are the predictable downsides: deepfakes, viral conspiracy narratives, drone drone warfare - all of these present profound challenges to ideas about what human agency and freedom can mean. But claims that "AI is creative" (etc.) are themselves narratives, and powerful fictions at that. So we need also to think about how narrative fiction uses AI or data to tell stories. And what is data, anyway, as opposed to fiction, or fact? How has data and its computation come to be so crucial in understanding what is true or fictive about us in contemporary culture: our profiles, our online personas? In this course, we will read a series of narratives about information and data that can provide lessons about the way information and data as cultural forms have "slid into" our private and public lives. We will use the theme of "allegories of information" to take a step back from the idea of thinking machines and AI gods replacing us, and to stop and consider the implications of a world where manipulating fragments of information may add up, or fail to add up, to what it means to be human, to be alive, to know who we are and what our life means. The narratives we will study in this course teach us how we use or abuse data in textual, visual, computational, or other modes of expression: they are allegories not simply of information, but of multimodal reading and writing, and as such, lessons about the ways we write self and world using information machines. Analyzing these texts, we will take away lessons about what counts as literacy, knowledge, desire, and meaning, in a moment in which data competes with fact to be valued as truth. Texts will include: *Luster, My Life in the Bush of Ghosts, Perfection, and Signs Preceding the End of the World*, along with additional keyword and historical essays about information, data, networks, and computational culture.

## Upper Division Courses

### ENGL 110:Non-Fiction

Dr. Lezra

Cultures are machines for producing conformity with political ideas, or resistance to them. Sometimes both at once. At times they reflect on just this ambivalence. In this class we study how cultures imagine armed resistance to political repression, and how they imagine their own complicity with that repression. We read historically-oriented graphic novels ("Watchman," "V for Vendetta"), journalism and short stories (Herr, *Dispatches*), plays (Jean-Paul Sartre, "Dirty Hands," Brecht, *The Three-Penny Opera*) and memoirs (Jackson, *Soledad Brother*; Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*). We read critical works (e.g., Arendt, *On Violence*; Angela Davis; Óscar del Barco; Malcolm X), manuals and manifestoes (e.g., Marighella's "Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla;" the CIA's "Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare;" the so-called "Unabomber Manifesto;" *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*; Extinction Rebellion's "*Declaration of Rebellion*;" Wark, "A Hacker's Manifesto"). And we watch films (*The Battle of Algiers, Fight Club, Night Raiders*); subject to change.

### ENGL 120T: Studes in Native American Literature

Dr. Raheja

This course enlists questions and concerns that lie in between literary and visual culture texts and the broader, unwritten (and therefore often invisible and unheard) discourses surrounding Indigenous self-representations. This course focuses on Indigenous self-representations in a range of visual culture contexts from the silent film era to the present. In particular, we will focus on how the Land Back/ land rematriation movement is expressed through the televisual, documentary film, music videos and new media (primarily TikTok and Instagram). We will do so to think about and with Indigenous media production, particularly through texts such as *North of North*, Tanya Tagaq's videos, *Never Alone*, and *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*.

## ENGL 121T: Special Topics in Post-Colonial Literature Dr. Gui

An introduction to postcolonial literatures in English. We will read short stories and novels and watch films from countries and communities that were affected by European colonialism and its aftermath. We will learn how to effectively analyze colonialist ideology and discuss postcolonial resistance through accessible critical readings. We will apply this critical knowledge to the primary fictional texts in short writing assignments and the final essay. No knowledge of postcolonial theory required. Assignments: regular attendance, short response papers, final essay. Fulfills requirements 2c or 2e for the English major.

## ENGL 128:Major Authors: Toni Morrison Prof. Pfirmann-Pugh

In this course we will examine Toni Morrison's body of work, including her fiction (short story, novel excerpts) and nonfiction (essays, speeches, and interviews). We will engage not only with written media, but also with image- and sound-based texts (visual art, film adaptations, documentaries) that probe the late writer and cultural critic's personhood, politics and artistry. Furthermore, we will consider Morrison's literary influences, which include authors such as Amiri Baraka, Alice Walker, Gayl Jones, Ralph Ellison, William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf, who belong to various literary canons. Each of the primary, artistic texts we examine will be accompanied by one to two theoretical readings that aid us in interpreting the material.

## ENGL 134:Twenty-first Century American Literature: Who Gets to Fall in Love? Representation in Romance Prof. Marquez

Contemporary literature is meant to be a reflection of the current world, and reflect experiences and ideologies that the contemporary reader can relate to. Yet, it is critical to question whose experiences and ideologies are represented in contemporary literature? With the Romance genre being one of the most popular genres of the 20th and 21st century, it is important to ask who gets to fall in love? This course will look at Romance texts (novels, short stories, and poems) specifically by authors of color to explore how they push against hegemonic notions of love and Romance. Additionally, we will be discussing the role that race, class, sex and sexuality, as well as gender, play in deciding who gets to fall in love in popular media. We will be reading texts by Natalie Caña, James Baldwin, Carmen Maria Machado, just to name a few. Guiding questions will be how do we see contemporary Romance texts challenge or reaffirm heterogeneous notions of love? How do reader responses impact the push for representation in contemporary literature? What role does creating "marketable" plots and characters play in determining who and what gets published?