

Winter 2012 English department Seminars
as of 10/14/11

TUESDAY

English 246 (G. Haggerty) 2:10-5:00 pm in HMNSS 1407

(Seminar in Restoration and 18thC. Literature) The English Elegy

This seminar will address the literature of desire and loss from Milton's *Lycidas* to Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and beyond. After looking at the classical sources of the pastoral elegy tradition, we will consider the early modern examples that culminate in Milton's poem. Then we will trace examples of the tradition through eighteenth-century and Romantic examples, particularly Gray and Shelley, and then spend considerable time on Tennyson's poem. After that I will invite students to pursue interests in areas such as, but not limited to: War Poetry, novels of Virginia Woolf, AIDS Literature, and contemporary accounts of love and loss. Using an essay of mine as a theoretical starting point, we will also consider critical and theoretical material by Leo Bersani; Jonathan Dollimore; David Eng, David Kazantjian, and Judith Butler; Michael Moon; Peter Sacks; and Patricia Uppal.

English 270 (S. Axelrod) 5:10-8:00 pm in HMNSS 1407

(Seminar in American Lit. Since 1900)

This seminar will focus on the poetry and prose of the Cold War, circa 1945-1989. We will meditate on the relationships among poetry, fiction, politics, and other cultural manifestations of the time. We will consider the discourses of containment, deterrance, domesticity, race, atomic weapons, liberalism, drug culture, Orientalism, McCarthyism, queerness, masculinity, and femininity. We will read poetry and autobiographical prose by George Oppen, Elizabeth Bishop, Gwendolyn Brooks, Robert Lowell, Allen Ginsberg, Bob Kaufman, Mitsue Yamada, and Sylvia Plath. We will read two novels: Gwendolyn Brooks's *Maud Martha* (1953) and William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* (1959). We will look for guidance and inspiration in such cultural and literary studies as Alan Nadel's *Containment Culture*, Michael Davidson's *Guys Like Us*, and Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound*. Class responsibilities will include engaged participation, two oral reports, and a term paper.

Our end drifts nearer,
the moon lifts,
radiant with terror. —Robert Lowell, "Fall 1961"

WEDNESDAY

English 289 (J. Ganim) 9:00 am–12:00 noon in HMNSS 2212

(Seminar in Genres)

This will be seminar on medieval drama and performance. We will begin with the mystery cycles. We will consider some traditional issues, such as theories of origin, staging, the relation of the plays to other medieval literary forms, and the theological concerns of the plays, but our emphasis will be on some of the major recent questions surrounding this literature: performance and spectatorship, civic and communal consciousness, the body and its representations; issues of gender, heresy and antisemitism. In addition to the mystery plays, we will also survey the breadth of medieval theatricality, including festive forms not normally thought of as dramatic. To do so, we will be paying attention to materials from the low countries, Spain and France. We will also devote some attention to what might be considered modern versions of the mystery plays, such as Pasolini's *Gospel According to St. Matthew*; Gibson's *Passion of the Christ*; and Scorsese's *Last Temptation of Christ*, as well as mapping traces of medieval drama in the New World from the sixteenth century onwards.

English 278 (R. Murillo) 2:10-5:00 pm in HMNSS 1407

(Sem. in Minority Discourse) – **Space & Memory in U.S. Latino/a Chicana/o Literature**

Space and memory have been important themes that have marked the U.S. Latina/o narrative aesthetic from one of its very first novels, *The Squatter & The Don* (1885) to *Their Dogs Came With Them* to the recent *Their Dogs Came With Them*. This course examines thematizations and aesthetics of space in U.S. Latina/o Literature. Mary Pat Brady in her seminal book on the narrativization of space in Chicana literature writes: "Chicana literature offers an important theoretic of space, one that, like many critical space studies, implicates the production of space in the everyday, in the social, but that unlike many space theories suggests the relevance of aesthetics, of "the literary mode of knowing" for understanding the intermeshing of the spatial and the social. And Chicana literature argues for and examines the relevance of race, gender, and sexuality-- as well as class-- to the making of space." (Brady, 6) We will read texts from key thinkers of space in literature, Homero-Villa, Pat Brady, Bruce-Novoa, Soja, Blanchot, Bachelard, Deleuze, & Lefebvre while examining key Chicana/o Latina/o narratives that thematize space & memory (*The Squatter & The Don* by Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *Heroes & Saints* by Cherrie Moraga, *Rain of Gold* by Victor Villaseñor, *Their Dogs Came With Them* by Maria Helena Viramontes, *Borderlands* by Gloria Anzaldúa, *the Brief & Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Díaz and others.

WEDNESDAY

English 275 (C.A. Tyler) 5:10-8:00 pm in HMNSS 1407

(Seminar in Film and Visual Culture)

The course focuses on feminist film studies: how film scholars have theorized gender and sexuality in film and in film theory, criticism, and history from a feminist perspective. We will consider some of the following questions:

- * What are the meanings and effects of Hollywood representations of gender and sexuality?
- * Are gender and sexuality different in films made outside Hollywood?
- * What are the relationships between genre and gender, genre and sexuality?
- * How do race, ethnicity, class, and other differences in social identities impact the meanings and effects of gender and sexuality in mainstream and alternative cinemas?
- * Are there specifically feminine or feminist forms of “authorship” or expressivity?
- * Why have feminists insisted that film form, not just film content, matters?

Though the course will cover some of the elements of close reading or formal analysis of film and media, especially at the start of the quarter, it is not a substitute for a more thorough introduction to film studies. The course emphasizes careful engagement with feminist film theory and criticism, rather than film history, sociology, or close readings of the films screened, and there will be some attention to visual culture more broadly speaking. Readings are mostly draw from film journals and books and are available on the course web site; students are expected to print them out and bring them to class when they are to be discussed. Films screened are mostly from the Media Library collection, though students should plan to attend the weekly scheduled screening whenever possible. Films for the course may not be checked out. Other required work includes a close reading of a shot or short shot sequence, a research paper, a presentation, and occasional in-class group exercises.

THURSDAY

English 262 (D. Willis) 2:10-5:00 pm in HMNSS 1407

(Seminar in Renaissance Literature) – Carnival and the Carnavalesque in Early Modern Culture
This course takes Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of carnival as the starting point for an exploration of the interplay between medieval/Renaissance carnival traditions and early modern literature, especially the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. For Bakhtin, medieval/Renaissance carnival customs gave rise to what he variously calls a carnivalesque “style of expression,” a “rich and original idiom of . . . forms and symbols,” a “system of images” that made their way into literature, art, and other cultural forms.

What are some of these styles or idioms? What is their function or significance in some key literary works and periods? Can the “carnival spirit” that Bakhtin celebrates truly survive once it takes literary form? What are the proper limits of carnival, and to what extent is it transgressive or transformative? Assigned readings will include Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, *Henry IV, Part I* and *Part II*, and *King Lear*; Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*; Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Faire* and several of his masques; Milton’s *Comus*; selections from Rabelais and from the German “literature of fools”; and Brueghel’s great painting, *The Battle of Carnival and Lent*. Possible topics for discussion and further study include fools and the forms of folly; hierarchy, inversion, and lords of misrule; carnival customs, shaming rituals, and social control; cross-dressing, disguise, and interrogations of identity; carnival and the marketplace; feasts and consumption; the grotesque body. As time permits, we will also consider the persistence of carnival in some present day contexts (Mardis Gras in New Orleans and elsewhere; the 1959 film *Black Orpheus*; Renaissance Faires).

While a majority of the readings for the course will focus on the early modern period, student projects may incorporate material from other periods in their exploration of concepts of carnival and the carnivalesque. Theoretical readings will include selections from Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World* (1968) and from the long line of critics, historians, and theorists who have engaged with Bakhtin’s concept of carnival since the 1960s.

English 281 (J. Doyle) 5:10-8:00 pm in HMNSS 1407

(Seminar in Comparative Studies)

Nineteenth-Century Present: Contemporary African American Art & Its Histories

A seminar on the relationship between contemporary African American art and history. We will work equally with 19th century materials (slave narratives, abolitionist and post-reconstruction literature), contemporary material about slavery, escape and the fugitive, radical histories and historical novels, and contemporary African American art history.

Students will be expected to present and write about visual art: The aim of this class is to explore the role of literature, history and critical theory in our work with contemporary visual art directly engaged with the past. This seminar is open to students in English, Art History, History, and Ethnic Studies. Artists will include Carrie Mae Weems, Kara Walker, David Hammons, Kara Walker, Julie Dash, Betye Saar, Lezley Saar and more.

FRIDAY

English 268 (K. Devlin) 2:10-5:00 pm in HMNSS 1407

(Seminar in British Literature since 1900): James Joyce's *Ulysses*

Joyce's controversial modernist masterpiece, *Ulysses*, will be examined in this course as a psychological epic of human drives, desires, and sexualities; as a historical epic of a city and its complex cultural/historical heritage; as a stylistic epic of relentless formal experimentation; and as a revisionary Homeric epic of wandering and return. The emphasis will be on close readings of *Ulysses* itself, Joyce's use of mythic substructures, and the larger question of the modernist epic's relationship to the classical one, *The Odyssey*. What attracted Joyce to "revise" this ancient yet perduring story? How are the two texts similar and yet very different? What ideological structures reflected in the epics have remained intact over the centuries? Which have disappeared, changed, or been superseded by others? Required texts are *Ulysses* (preferably the 1986 corrected edition) and *The Odyssey*. Optional texts are Harry Blamires' *The New Bloomsday Book* and Don Gifford's "*Ulysses*" *Annotated*. This course is designed for any graduate student who (when it comes to reading) shares Odysseus's perseverance, patience, and sense of adventure.