

Fall 2020

English Graduate Seminar Descriptions



Course Number	Course Title	Instructor	Schedule	CRN
ENGL 200	Introduction to Graduate Study in English	Yamamoto	Tues. 2-4:50pm HMNSS 2212	14419
ENGL 269	Seminar in American Literature to 1900	Raheja	Thur. 11am-1:50pm HMNSS 2212	30359
ENGL 270	Seminar in American Literature Since 1900	Axelrod	Wed. 2:00 - 4:50pm HMNSS 2212	30360
ENGL 272	Seminar in Critical Theory	Baker	Tues. 10am-12:50pm HMNSS 2212	28517
ENGL 276	Seminar in Colonialism and Postcoloniality	Gui	Monday 11:00am 1:50pm (prime time) HMNSS 1407	27964
ENGL 281	Seminar in Comparative Studies	Ganim	Thu. 2-4:50pm HMSS 2212	30361

English 200: Introduction to Graduate Study in English
Tuesdays, 2:00-4:50PM
HMNSS 2212 (English Seminar Room)
Associate Professor Traise Yamamoto

This seminar is required for all incoming graduate students. It is designed to orient students to the department, focus on graduate-level writing in different genres (annotated bibliography, book review, abstract, research paper, etc.), and provide an overview of critical and theoretical methods. English department faculty will visit the seminar to discuss their fields, methodologies and writing practices. Ideally, you will discover a sense of camaraderie and shared excitement as you present your work and writing in a workshop-style environment.

I will be in contact with you all during the summer with details about texts and assignments – much of which are contingent upon campus conditions for the fall quarter.

English 269: Seminar in American Literature to 1900
Thursdays, 11:00AM-1:50PM
HMNSS 2212 (English Seminar Room)
Associate Professor Michelle Raheja

This seminar offers a provocation to conventional theoretical and historical approaches to early American literature by offering an analysis of what can be considered a transnational prehistory of the Anglophonic presence in the Americas and a critique of the centrality of Puritan and settler colonial textual production in early American literary scholarship. This seminar encourages you to re-imagine the linguistic, cultural, and geographical terrain of early American literature and to acquaint you with a range of discursive responses to contact with the “Other” from Indigenous oral narrative to the late 16th century in what is now known as “the Americas”: Canada, the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

We will question and think critically about the ways in which invasion and encounter between Native Americans and Europeans within the settler colonial regime is figured in literature and visual culture, focusing on how the trope of cannibalism, in particular, 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.” At the same time, we will examine how Indigenous artists and writers represent cannibalism as a pleasurable, humorous, powerful, and erotic practice. While sermons and spiritual narratives constitute the majority of 17th and 18th century Anglophonic literary production, non-fiction representations of cannibalism are central to the canon of early literature and culture of “the Americas” broadly speaking, particularly in the 15th and 16th centuries, 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—Indigenous theory, anthropology, history, literature, psychoanalysis, visual culture—in order to better understand how cannibalism has been represented from the early settler colonial period to the present and how it has informed the major texts and contexts of American literary history.

Some questions to consider over the course of the quarter: 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 kind of challenges does “critical cannibalism studies” pose to the field of early American studies?

English 270: Seminar in American Literature since 1900
Wednesdays, 2:00-4:50PM
HMNSS 2212 (English Seminar Room)
Distinguished Professor Steven Gould Axelrod

Queer Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance

In this seminar we will look at two of the countercurrents within the modernist era. Within and beyond the homophobia, racism, and tunnel vision of much of official modernist culture, we will find a vital cross-hatching of queer textuality and African American presence. Absorbing these cultural realities refigures the concepts of modernism and modernity as well as our conceptions of the present moment.

We will adopt the lenses provided by such theoreticians and historians as Nathan Huggins, Michael North, Houston Baker, José Esteban Muñoz, Penny Farfan, Kate Haffey, and Claudia Rankine. We will study the texts of such Harlem Renaissance modernists as Angelina Weld Grimke, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Nella Larsen, and Rudolph Fisher and such queer modernists as Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, H. D., Hart Crane, and maybe even T. S. Eliot himself.

This seminar will be shaped according to the interests of seminar members. Please contact me at steven.axelrod@ucr.edu if you have any questions or comments.

ENGL 272 - Seminar in Critical Theory
Tuesdays, 10:00AM-12:50PM
HMNSS 2212 (English Seminar Room)
Associate Professor Courtney Baker

Blackness and Aesthetics

While the concept of blackness and the figure of the Black subject can lead to an examination of important social phenomena such as colonization, enslavement, incarceration, and exploitation, the study of these formations also leads us to aesthetic inquiries about the meaning, expression, and articulation of Black being that have been voiced by Black scholars and artists. With an emphasis on twentieth-century and more recent work, this seminar will center aesthetic inquiries and expressions as well as theories and philosophies of Black representation. Its goal will be to identify and map the unique interventions and possible solutions that race-conscious aesthetic inquiry can produce that complement and sometimes challenge the presumptions and discoveries of social science inquiry. Our readings and objects will include literary and visual arts as well as critical texts on Black aesthetic culture by scholars engaged in Black studies. In the spirit of Black study and in acknowledgment of the historic exclusion of Black thought from the academy, we will encounter each object of our study with an appreciation of the philosophical instructions and radical poetics potentially embedded in each.

ENGL276: Seminar in Colonialism and Postcoloniality
Mondays 11:00AM-1:50 PM
HMNSS 1407
Associate Professor Weihsin Gui

Title: Postcolonial Theory and Anglophone South/Southeast Asian Fiction

Description: This seminar is an introduction to some key scholarly and literary writings that are often associated with the term postcolonial studies or postcolonialism. As this is an English seminar, our main focus will be on how intellectual and literary-cultural narratives map and critique colonialism and imperialism. In the first section, we will encounter readings by thinkers who interrogate the workings and persistent effects of European colonialism in various ways, sometimes without using the specific term “postcolonial.” In the second section, we will read some fictional texts by South and Southeast Asian writers that not only flesh out or dramatize the intellectual criticism but may also theorize their own responses to colonialism/imperialism. No previous coursework on postcolonial theory or postcolonial literature is expected or required. We will read selections from critical texts by Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Anne McClintock and other theorists; also novels by writers such as E M Forster, Kiran Desai, Aravind Adiga, Preeta Samarasan, Jessica Hagedorn, Sandi Tan and others. Assignments: presentation and discussion leading; weekly responses; annotated bibliography; final research project. Note: in the event that Fall 2020 courses are held online, please check with Prof. Gui at the end of August for updated information about seminar meetings, readings, and assignments.

ENGL281: Seminar in Comparative Studies
Thursdays 2:00-4:50PM
HMNSS 2212 (English Seminar Room)
Distinguished Professor John M Ganim

A comparative study of medieval drama and its legacies, across different times, places and performance modes. We will consider some traditional issues, such as theories of origin, textual editing, staging, the relation of the plays to other medieval literary forms, and the theological concerns of the plays (all of which are superbly summarized in our textbook, *Medieval Drama*, ed. Bevington), 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 race; confessional difference, including representations of Judaism and Islam. 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, as well as mapping traces of medieval drama in the New World from the sixteenth century onwards. We will conclude by considering the medieval strains in twentieth and twenty-first century theater (Brecht; the Theater of the Absurd; Expressionism; Theater of Cruelty; political troupes such as El Teatro Campesino or the Bread and Puppet Theater; performance and body art). We will discuss revivals of the cycle plays in York and Chester in the postwar period and after, and the experimental reworking by the National Theater (*The Mysteries*). When the Guerilla Girls broadened their critique of the art world to the theater world, they proposed an award to theater group that cancelled their performances of classical male authors and produced Hroswitha instead! So we will begin with some plays by Hroswitha of Gandesheim, a tenth century German Abbess.