

2007-08 Fall Intro Course Descriptions

Ron Harris

English 155: Classical Myth and Modern Literature

Course description

The course will investigate how modern literature adopts, adapts, and appropriates myth in order to address contemporary social, aesthetic, and political concerns. The first part of the course will focus on modern uses of Greek and Roman culture, and the second part of the course will focus on modern uses of African, African American, and Native American culture. Enrollment limited to students in Freshman Interest Group on Classical Myth and Modern American Culture.

Overview of readings

I. Introduction: myth, folk culture, and high art in music, literature, and the visual arts

Selections from Plato, Roland Barthes, Charles Ives, Aaron Copland, church hymns, Hart Crane, Pablo Picasso, Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, Adrienne Rich, and Gloria Anzaldua.

II. The transmission of Greek and Roman cultures

1. Transmission, text, and translation of the classical world

Sappho, Oxyrhynchus, and Helen of Troy

2. Study of Sappho's fragment 58 (along with recently discovered papyri) and fragment 16.

Other readings will include Tony Harrison's play, *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus*, and selections from Homer, Herodotus, Euripides, Steisichorus, H.D., Christopher Marlowe, and Edgar Allan Poe

3. Cretans and High Art

The minotaur Selections from Ovid, Bacchylides, Catullus, W.H. Auden, William Carlos Williams, Pieter Brueghel, and Pablo Picasso.

4. Ovid and the transformations of art

Translations of Ovid by various hands and selections of Ovidian poetry by Petrarch, Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare, as well as Ovid's significance for the visual and performing arts.

III. The transmission of African, African American, and Native American cultures

1. Dialects, Creoles, and Styles: The Case of Brer Rabbit

Brer Rabbit stories from coastal Georgia, French Louisiana, and Joel Chandler Harris.

2. Sherman Alexie and the blues

Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues*, and blues music and poetry from the Mississippi Delta, including selections from Robert Johnson's work.

Dubrow**English 162: Shakespeare and the Twenty-first Century****Discussion sections will meet after first lecture**

We will read about half a dozen of Shakespeare's most exciting texts (tentative list: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *Tempest*, *Sonnets*). Although, the course focuses on Shakespeare, in a few instances, we will study his work in conjunction with related modern texts; we will, for example, look at some twentieth-century sonnets and will probably read Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz And Guildenstern Are Dead*, together with *Hamlet*. Emphasizing theatrical performance, the course includes screenings and analyses of several films of Shakespeare plays, as well as a class theater party to see the production of *Hamlet* on campus. The class is designed both for students with a serious interest and background in English and for those without much prior experience with literature; one of its principal aims will be to help everyone to read all texts, not just Shakespeare's, more perceptively.

Staff**English 168, Lec. 2: Introduction to Modern Literature since 1900****Discussion sections will meet after first lecture**

Catalog Description: A thematic introduction to literary works from a variety of genres written since 1900 in English. Emphasis may vary between writers of Britain, the U.S., Ireland, and former British Empire.

Staff**English 168, Lec. 3: Introduction to Modern Literature since 1900**

Catalog Description: A thematic introduction to literary works from a variety of genres written since 1900 in English. Emphasis may vary between writers of Britain, the U.S., Ireland, and former British Empire.

Keller**English 169, Lec. 1: Introduction to Modern American Literature: Violence and the American Psyche****Discussion sections will meet after first lecture****Fulfills General Education Communications Part B Requirement**

We would like to think of events like the recent torture of Iraqi prisoners by Americans in Abu Ghraib as aberrations, uncharacteristic of a people who are fair minded, peaceable, and committed to the principles of human rights. In fact, however, American history is riven with violence, much of which violates the stated principles with which the nation identifies. In this introductory course on American literature since World War I, we will examine works in varied genres that attempt to confront violence in U.S. history and violence in the American psyche. These novels, poems, and plays do more than expose that violence; they offer implicit analyses of its causes, suggestions for healing its wounds, and models for more peaceful and harmonious ways of living. We begin the course with twentieth-century representations of the violence of

English 169, Lec. 1 cont...

American slavery and of its legacies. We then consider literature that addresses forms of violence associated with the movement of white settlers west, especially their relations with Native Americans, and the violence linked with national myths of the wild west. The course closes with works that highlight forms of violence associated with the American dream of material prosperity and technological advancement, as well as violence based in intolerance of difference not in race, ethnicity, or religion but in sexuality. This will be a 4 credit Comm-B courses, with two lectures and two section meetings per week. Students will gain extensive practice in writing about literature and in written argumentation. Probable texts include some poems in a course packet along with the following:

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Richard Wright, *Native Son*

Walter Van Tilburg Clark, *The Ox-Bow Incident*

Louise Erdrich, *Tracks*

Sam Shepard, *True West*

Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust*

Don DeLillo, *White Noise*

Moises Kaufman, *The Laramie Project*

Yandell

English 169, Lec. 2: Intro to Modern Lit since 1900

Discussion sections will meet after first lecture

Catalog Description: An introduction to selected fiction, prose, drama, and poetry written by Americans since about 1914.

Zimmerman

English 169, Lec. 3: Intro to Modern Lit since 1900

Discussion sections will meet after first lecture

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The books, plays, poems, and films in this course focus on various ways individuals resist and embrace the values of the communities they inhabit or join. The texts ask: what causes some people to defy cultural norms? Is rebellion always a symptom of enlightenment? Do individuals gain or lose power by assimilating? What is the relation between personal identity and fitting in? How do we distinguish healthy from pathological forms of conformity (or dissent)? Do individuals gain or lose autonomy by embracing mass culture? This course is designed to help prepare you for the rigors of university writing and reading by developing your analytical writing skills and your critical reading skills. To that end, we will study and discuss a variety of texts as well as films. You will have frequent opportunities to practice your writing skills and share your ideas and work with your classmates. The course is also meant to be engaging and fun. Our hope is that you will not only enjoy reading the texts and seeing the movies but also enjoy learning how to think critically and carefully about them and the problems they pose.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Eric Bogosian, Talk Radio (in The Essential Bogosian)

Gloria Naylor, Women of Brewster Place

Ron Wallace, Long for This World

Suzan-Lori Parks, Topdog/Underdog

Thomas Pynchon, The Crying of Lot 49

Deborah Schupack, The Boy on the Bus

Required Films: Fight Club, Bamboozled

Teuton

English 172: Introduction to the Literature of Native America

Discussion sections will meet after first lecture

American Indian literature is both an expression and a source of indigenous cultural knowledge for the peoples of Native America today. You are invited to celebrate the ongoing vitality of North American tribal peoples through an intellectual investment in learning about and being enriched by Native literary and cultural traditions. Beginning with early tribal oral narratives, we will examine the adaptation and development of literary forms such as oratory, sermon, testimony, autobiography, and contemporary poetry and novels. During our engagement with texts across historical periods, tribal groups, and regions, we will discuss central cultural issues facing American Indian communities today: migrations and homelands; histories; oral philosophy; orality and literacy; aesthetics; colonialism and cultural change; nationhood; world views; moral development; and identity politics.

Hill

English 173: Introduction to Ethnic and Multicultural Literature

Catalog Description: Introduction to literature that reflects the writing and experience of minority and ethnic groups. Texts will focus on a theme or problem.

Zimmerman

English 181 - "Modern American Literature and the Scripting of Everyday Life"

Prereq: Open only to 1st semester Freshmen in L&S Honors. Students may not receive credit for both 181 & 182

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The novels, plays, poems, and films in this course focus on the ways individuals and cultural groups resist and embrace the storylines according to which their lives are expected to unfold. These story lines often take the form of stereotypes and scripts promulgated by the mass media and popular culture. Spotting these storylines and their production and effects, the texts we study ask: What role does mass culture, including television, movies, advertising, and literature, play in shaping our sense of who we are and how we live our lives? What are the hazards and satisfactions of conforming our lives to the images and narratives generated by others, including mass culture? How do we distinguish healthy from pathological forms of conformity (or dissent)? If our lives are in some way already scripted for us, how do we achieve originality and autonomy? What possibilities exist for rewriting the stereotypes and scripts by which others--and we, too--understand our lives? How do gender, race, nation, and sexuality shape these possibilities? In addition to familiarizing you with a number of cultural and philosophical questions preoccupying modern (and "postmodern") writers, this course is designed to help prepare you for the rigors of university writing and reading by developing your analytical writing skills and your critical reading skills. To that end, we will study and discuss a variety of texts, including films. You will have frequent opportunities to practice your writing skills and share your ideas and work with your classmates. The course is also meant to be engaging and fun. My hope is that you will not only enjoy reading the texts and seeing the movies but also enjoy learning how to think critically and carefully about them and the problems they explore.

REQUIRED TEXTS (at the University Book Store):

Don DeLillo, *White Noise*

Marsh Norman, *Night Mother*

Denise Duhamel, *Kinky*

Suzan-Lori Parks, *Topdog/Underdog*

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

Sam Shepard, *True West*

Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*

Required Films: *Ethnic Notions*, *Bamboozled*