

2006-07 Fall Intro Course Descriptions

Ron Harris

English 155, Myth and 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 - Lecture 1

English 162: Shakespeare and the Twenty-first Century

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.

Ortiz-Robles

English 167 - Lec. 1: The Novel in 19th-Century England

Through detailed critical readings of a representative set of nineteenth-century British novels, this course will introduce students to the major themes, techniques, and ideologies of realism in literature. As the dominant narrative form of the nineteenth century, the novel served as the privileged vehicle of bourgeois self-representation, giving an account of the texture of everyday life and animating many of the fictions still sustaining our modernity. Under the general rubric of "realism," we will explore the formal resources the novel employed to describe the increasingly complex society it inhabited and ask why and how it might have helped to shape it. Critical considerations and historical accounts will help contextualize some of the topics to be covered, which will include form and function; character and socialization; agency and ideology; politics and representation; style and attitude; ethics and conventions; rhetoric and performance; gender and genre. Novels by Austen, Dickens, Emily Brontë, Eliot, Hardy, James, Wilde.

Zimmerman

English 167 - Lec. 2: The Paranormal (a.k.a American and British Literature before 1900)

The texts and films in this course focus on ghosts, vampires, monsters, and other paranormal phenomena. We will study how American and British writers before 1900 use these strange and sometimes terrifying phenomena to examine various cultural, psychological, and philosophical problems. Course texts may include Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Stephen Crane's *The Monster*, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, stories by Edgar Allan Poe and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and poems by Emily Dickinson. Films may include *The Ring* and *Safe*. 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. Writing requirements include three short essays and a final exam. The course is rigorous, but it is also meant to be engaging and fun. Our hope is that you will enjoy reading the texts and seeing the movies as well as learning how to think critically and carefully about them and the questions they pose. Class meets twice a week in lecture and once a week in small discussion sections.

Professor Walkowitz

English 168: Violence and Creativity: An Introduction to the Contemporary British Novel

This course explores the relationship between violence and creativity in twentieth-century British fiction. Some writers argue that creativity is stifled by violence; some argue that creativity resists violence; some argue that violence spurs creativity, that creativity requires violence, or that violence is one of the forms that creativity can take. We will examine all of these positions and others as they are developed and asserted by twentieth-century writers from James Joyce to Salman Rushdie. Related themes we will consider are: the centrality of travel and transience in the twentieth-century novel; the critique of euphemism and conventional morality; memory, trauma, and psychoanalysis; nationalism and language; imperialism and immigration; the effects of film, television, and pop music on contemporary writing; postmodernism and the globalization of popular culture. In Fall 2006, this will be taught in a 4-credit Com-B format. More information can be found on the course web site: www.wisc.edu/english/walkowitz/168.

Prof. Rob Nixon

ENGLISH 171: Literature, Gender and Sexuality

Prescribed Texts (available at University Book Store)

Denise Duhamel, *Queen for a Day*
Pat Barker, *Regeneration*
Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*
Audre Lorde, *Zami*
Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*
Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy*

Two additional prescribed texts, Tom Bissell's essay, "War Wounds," and Annie Proulx's short story, "Brokeback Mountain," will be available through erserve.

Course Description

This course will explore the crucial, yet often vexed, issues of gender and sexuality. What pressures do we feel from society, from our families, from our peers' to be a certain kind of woman or man? Where do we find encouragement or inspiration for alternatives to the often stifling conventions of manliness and femininity that confront us? Where do we resist those conventions, where do we submit to them, where do we transform them (sometimes playfully) through fantasy?

In the course, we will focus on literature that reveals the roles that desire, body politics, and violence play in our sense of ourselves as women or men, as straight, lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Literature offers us a glorious window onto gender and sexuality in all their psychological, cultural, and political complexity. Through literature, we can achieve imaginative access to lives very different from our own; we can also achieve the reassuring, often exhilarating, pleasure of discovering lives that (in all their quirks) are surprisingly similar to ours.

With this in mind, I have put together a diverse collection of poems, short stories, novels, essays, and memoirs. Some writers whom we'll be reading come from America's African-American,

Latina, and white communities, others come from Britain and Sri Lanka. We'll be asking how the experience of gender and sexuality varies among these diverse communities. And in what ways is the experience similar?

ENGLISH 171 cont...

Gender and sexuality always interact with other social identities, including class, race, religion, ethnicity, and age. While foregrounding gender and sexuality, we'll be keeping these other social identities in mind in our lectures and discussions.

Teuton

English 172 - Lecture 1

Introduction to the Literature of Native America

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

English 172 - Lecture 1 cont...

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.

Castronovo

English 181-Lec.1:

With its focus on U.S. popular culture, this course is part of a three-course cluster put together as a First-Year Interest Group. The overall aim is to supply students with an understanding of popular and mass culture in global context. We are especially interested in how people's interaction with film and literature creates possibilities for cultural critique. And, as our courses variously explore, this critique often entails an interrogation of normative categories of gender, race, sexuality, and national belonging. United by the overarching theme of "Subjects and Citizens in Global Cultures," our courses seek to explore the ways in which people can be empowered as well as marginalized by their interactions with commodity culture and nation-states. Because this FIG is explicitly comparative, we hope to offer students a rich interpretative matrix for assessing how questions of cultural accessibility, production, and consumption are unevenly distributed across the globe.

Zimmerman

ENGLISH 181 - Lec. 3 - "Modern American Literature and the Scripting of Everyday Life"

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

ENGLISH 181 - Lec. 3 cont...

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