Department of English

graduate course

descriptions

~ spring 2023~

**ENG 541 – 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN NOVEL**

**PROF. SUSAN WEEBER**

Thursdays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22986 (B) 22987

This seminar will investigate some of the major American novelists of the 20th century (as well as some lesser-known writers). We will read authors like F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Don DeLillo, etc. As we study works by these novelists, we will ask questions about literary forms and styles as well as about how these texts are shaped—and in turn reshape or respond to—broader questions about American history, social formations, and politics. We will also ask questions about American literary history and canon formation. How do our definitions of great American novels cohere and shift over time? What writers and texts are included, and which are left out? What is at stake in these conversations about American literary history? How have interpretations of these texts—and broader ideas about literature and interpretation—shifted over time, and why?

**ENG 577 – SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND THE GLOBAL PROLETARIAN NOVEL**

**LITERATURE & WOMEN**

**PROF. JIM HOLSTUN**

Mondays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22975 (B) 22976

Second Wave feminism had a considerable and brilliant left component which has never stopped developing. In the form of Social Reproduction Theory, it proposes not a feminist add-on to marxism, but a radical transformation of marxism as a whole, arguing that societies produce not only goods, but also the workers who produce the goods, and the social relations in which they live and move. In this course, we will consider some important works of social reproduction theory (some whole books, some excerpts):

* Crucial forerunners: Friedrich Engels’ *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884); Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949), and Claudia Jones’s *An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman* (1949).
* Nawal el Saadawi, *The Naked Face of the Arab Woman* (1977; trans. as *The Hidden Face of Eve*).
* Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* (1983).
* Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, & Class* (1983).
* Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986).
* Sylvia Federici: *Revolution at Point Zero* (2012) and *Patriarchy of the Wage* (2021).
* *Social Reproduction Theory* (2017): a wide-ranging anthology of essays (ed. Bhattacharya),
* Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (2017), and some of her more recent writings on housing.
* *Feminism for the 99%* (2019): a manifesto by Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser.

We will also be reading a selection of global feminist proletarian novels:

* Agnes Smedley’s *Daughter of Earth* (US, 1929): her realist semifictional political autobiography; and her *Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution* (China, 1928-1941; gathered in 1993): excerpts from Smedley’s extensive fiction and journalism, written while she was marching with the Eighth Route Army and pondering the feminist revolution emerging out of wartime and revolution.
* Tillie Olsen’s *Yonnondio: From the* *Thirties* (US, 1930s/1974), her modernist finished fragment on work in mine, farm, factory, and household, and on battering; and “As I Stand Here Ironing.”
* Kang Kyŏng-ae’s *From Wŏnso Pond* (Korea, 1934), and excerpts from *The Underground Village* (1930s): on the relations among men and women, peasants and factory girls, sex workers and new women, in Japan-occupied Korea; also, some Korean red feminist theory of the period.
* Ann Petry’s *The Street* (US, 1946), which revises Franklin’s *Autobiography* into an account of racism, capitalism, and violence in Forties Harlem. Rent, childcare, and class struggle.
* Alice Childress’s *Like One of the Family* (US, 1956), domestic labor and utopia in NYC: a series of vignettes by a black domestic worker that build into a brilliant under-appreciated
* novel. Also, *Gold Through the Trees* (1952); her dramatic review of all women’s history, Black women’s in particular, with a focus on physical and affective labor. Readings from Premilla Nadasen on the unionization of Black domestic workers.
* Nawal el Saadawi’s *God Dies by the Nile* (Egypt 1974), on peasant life, sexual violence, and mayor-killing in a Nile-side village.
* *Passage to the Plaza* (Occupied Palestine, 1990), by Sahar Khalifeh, one of the great historical novelists of the contemporary world: on gender and revolutionary resistance during the First Intifada.
* Leslie Feinberg’s *Stone Butch Blues* (US, 1993), the great Buffalo novel and a communist butch-femme classic, with some essays by Feinberg and others on queer and trans social reproduction.

My idea here is not simply to “apply” magisterial theory to mere literary stuff. Rather, since the novel is the greatest machine ever invented for examining the relation between “the public” (including commodity production) and “the private” (including the family, sexuality, and social reproduction), let’s talk about whether or not the proletarian feminist novel has been a theory of social reproduction all along—and if so, *what kind of* theory? I’d also like to consider how the proletarian novel pioneered the arxist analysis of alienation before the discovery and publication of Marx’s *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, which led to an explosion of global philosophical work on alienation and arxist humanism. In both cases, I reckon that novelists got there first.

Of course, that reading list is impossible, but I have to write it long before I can cut it short. The actual syllabus will be substantial but not punishing. Contact me after the solstice, when I will pare it down. I will also send you a page of links to help you order less expensive copies of our course books. Everyone will write weekly informal essays (an hour or so), and you will post one of yours for class reading and discussion. “Intensive” students will also research and write a seminar essay of 6000 words or more. See me if you want to email, talk, or Zoom about the class: [jholstun@buffalo.edu](mailto:jholstun@buffalo.edu).

P.S.: This course chimes with the UB Gender Institute’s year-long focus on social reproduction, which includes a series of talks and a graduate reading group. See <https://www.buffalo.edu/genderin/events/upcoming_events.html>

**ENG 589 – TEACHING PRACTICUM FOR CL2 COURSES IN ENGLISH**

**PROF. NICK HOFFMAN**

Thursdays, 12:30-2:10

Registration Number: 22977

This practicum provides support and community for instructors planning to teach CL2 courses (Eng 351 Writing About the Environment, Eng 352 Writing for Change, Eng 353 Technical Writing, 355 Writing About Literature, Eng 356 Professional Writing, and Eng 358 Writing in the Health Sciences). It is designed to support your pedagogy as you develop themes, assignments, activities, and syllabi for upper-level writing courses. The practicum provides time for discussions about lesson planning, managing peer review, mutual class observation, and individual syllabus development, among other issues related to the teaching of upper-level writing. Please note that 100 minutes of meeting time is allotted each week (a 2 credit-hour class), though the entirety of that allotment may not always be used.

**ENG 599 – INTRODUCTION TO WRITING & RHETORIC**

**PROF. JASON MAXWELL**

Thursdays, 9:30-12:10

Registration Number: 21514

This course is designed to support and develop Teaching Assistant pedagogy in the composition program at UB. The course will examine foundational and contemporary scholarship and research in rhetoric and composition that addresses first-year composition pedagogy. The course will serve as a form for the discussion of classroom practices and issues as they arise during the semester and situate those discussions within the context of composition theory. We will investigate the historical development of first-year composition, the current debates regarding such courses, and the potential future of writing instruction.

**ENG 609 – STUDIES IN 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE**

**PROF. KENNETH DAUBER**

Wednesdays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22978 (B) 22979

This course is designed to give you a map of the various ways in which the American literary tradition has been conceived via readings in the major modern theorists of American literature and the basic nineteenth-century texts that are particularly important to them. Each week we will read a major critical “take” on the history of American literature and one underlying primary text that is particularly important for the critic in establishing that take. The critical readings will range from the older to the newer, from “classic” readings to contemporary underminings, and the primary texts will encompass the major books of American literature to the Civil War. So, for example, to name some important and now well established readings, we might pair D.H. Lawrence’s *Studies in Classic American Literature* with Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography*, Leslie Fiedler’s *Love and Death in the American Novel* with Cooper, Jane Tompkins with *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Henry Louis Gates with Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, Stanley Cavell with Thoreau or Emerson, or others of similar, foundational importance. And we will go on from there to include contemporary trends, including various post-modernisms, social justice readings, and some books that I have not read but that have been recommended to me as must-reads, so that we can explore these together. By the end of the course, you should have a map of the terrain of American literary criticism and of the books on which that map and the variety of its own mappings are founded.

**ENG 613 – STUDIES IN 18TH CENTURY LITERATURE**

**PROF. RUTH MACK**

Fridays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22980 (B) 22981

The philosopher Gilbert Ryle distinguishes between “knowing that” and “knowing how.” Ryle’s distinction draws on Aristotle’s old separation between a theoretical and certain knowledge and a practical one, between a knowledge of the head and as knowledge of the hand. This course is concerned with “knowing how,” with an applied and bodily knowledge that is made through doing.

The Enlightenment is still sometimes called the “Age of Reason,” since it centered the intellectual faculties and the human ability to comprehend the world. It was also an “Age of Craft,” a period committed to the act of making, whether in the scientific laboratory, on the naval ship bound to the mission of imperial conquest, in the brewery or the textile factory., or in the poet’s garret.

We will read a wide variety of texts in the course from the canonical literature and philosophy of Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope, and John Locke to the practical writing found in Edward Bysshe’s handbook on how to write poetry and other practical manuals on topics ranging from ringing church bells, to pottery and navigation. We’ll read accounts of scientific experiments (Hooke, Boyle) alongside travel writing (Montague, Cook), which tries to take such experimentation on the road. At stake for us: How does embodied, process-oriented knowledge matter for an understanding of the world? How does it matter for an understanding of literature and writing, both what a text is and who might be allowed to write it? How does such embodied knowledge participate in—or stand to refute—the century’s commitment to capitalist enterprise, conquest, and slavery?

**ENG 623 – STUDIES IN RHETORIC: TOXIC RHETORIC**

**PROF. ELIZABETH MAZZOLINI**

Wednesdays, 3:30-6:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22982 (B) 22983

This course will focus on the idea of toxicity, with its range of literal and metaphorical meanings. Use of the term “toxic” has changed over recent decades and is situationally dependent, but it always refers to breached borders:  of the body, of communities, of manners, of ethics.  This seminar will help students build a toolbox for scholarly inquiries into the borders demarcating the toxic.  To build this toolbox, we will read widely, from a range of disciplines including anthropology, history, feminist science studies, and rhetoric.  Material will come from the foundational and theoretical canon of toxicity, and from scholarship on topics and case studies related to: environmental justice and activism; workplace culture; bodies understood medically and civically; institutional policies; and colonial practices. Students will be able to construct a working concept of “toxic rhetoric” that is useful to their own chosen field of study.

The course will work somewhat differently than the traditional grad seminar.  Rather than read every week and write an article-length paper at the end, students will develop sections of a research project proposal throughout the semester, with periodic work sessions of drafting and feedback taking place during our scheduled meeting time.  This format is meant to shed light on what can sometimes be an obscure process that nevertheless scholars are expected to know.  The format also is meant to call attention to the necessarily social and recursive aspects of academic writing.

**ENG 649 – BLACK WRITERS AND THE ARCHIVE**

**PROF NICOLE MORRIS JOHNSON**

Tuesdays, 3:30-6:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22984 (B) 22985

The relationship between Black writers and researchers and the archive has long been fraught. Participants in this graduate seminar will engage theoretical and literary approaches to this issue. Working closely with UB’s Poetry Collection and University Archives alongside past and contemporary criticism, we will interrogate biases embedded in the creation and structural architecture of the archive as well as examples of Black writers' negotiations with these realities.

Seminar participants will lead class discussion using artifacts from the Poetry Collection and assigned readings, contribute to the curation of an exhibit, and will write a reflective and argumentative 5000–8000-word curatorial essay.

**ENG 651 – LITERARY THEORY 1**

**PROF. TYRONE WILLIAMS**

Tuesdays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 29988 (B) 22989

This course constitutes a 15-week intensive overview of some of the major thinkers and texts of modern literary theory, generally understood as post-New Criticism. However, understanding modern literary theory entails a brief overview of some of the aesthetic, social, and cultural developments in 19th century American colleges and universities. As we will see, literary theory and literary criticism, in general, are incomprehensible if we do not link them to the aesthetic, social, economic and cultural contexts that inform them. To this end, it will also be necessary to distinguish between literary theory and literary criticism even as we demonstrate their inevitable entanglement with, and relationship to, one another.