



# Graduate Course Descriptions

Fall 2026

Department of English



**Department of English**  
**Graduate Course Descriptions**

ENG 501 Intro Scholarly Methods

Wednesday 9:30am-12:10pm

Instructor: Nicole Morris Johnson

Clemens Room: 1032

(A) Section 12793

(B) Section 14072

ENG 523 18th Century British Literature

Thursday 12:30pm-3:10pm

Instructor: Ruth Mack

Clemens Room: 1032

(A) Section 23654

(B) Section 23655

ENG 583 Poetics Seminar: Medium

Wednesday 12:30pm-3:10pm

Instructor: Judith Goldman

Clemens Room: 1032

(A) Section 23656

(B) Section 23657

ENG 588 Teaching Practicum for 1st Year Writing

Monday 12:30pm-2:10pm

Instructor: Kellie Sharp

Clemens Room: 1032

(A) Section 19051

ENG 625 Studies 19th Century American Literature

Tuesday 12:30pm-3:10pm

Instructor: Ken Dauber

Clemens Room: 1032

(A)Section 23658

(B)Section 23659

ENG 706 Publication Workshop

Friday 12:30pm-3:10pm

Instructor: Rachel Ablow

Clemens Room: 1032

(A) Section 16189



## ENG 501 Intro Scholarly Methods

Wednesday 9:30am-12:10pm

English 501 is designed to help you succeed in UB's MA program. We will work together to learn basic research techniques and argumentative principles. This course will also provide you with an overview of English's development as a discipline over the last century. How have critics conceptualized their work and how have those ideas changed over time? What is the status of 'literature' in literary studies today? How do people working in English draw upon material in other disciplines? How can you best situate your own research within contemporary scholarly conversations? The course will also help you grasp the conventions of various academic genres, including abstracts, conference papers, and seminar papers.

The course will offer some pointers on methods of researching and presenting a piece of academic writing; some instruction in techniques related to using libraries, special collections, archives, and electronic repositories for the purpose of discovering and accessing information; and some technical knowledge about the production, circulation, and storage of texts that bears strongly on how one might establish evidence, assess claims, and understand motivation in the transmission of information.

## ENG 523 18th Century British Literature

Thursday 12:30pm-3:10pm

### Tacit Enlightenment

British Enlightenment philosophy is devoted to experience through the senses, with the idea that we can all gain knowledge by going out and investigating the world for ourselves. This course looks at the way such experience-based knowledge must bend to account for forms of knowing that are not exactly in the light of *Enlightenment*, because they are never made explicit. Tacit knowledge might be embodied or enacted and might affect more than one sense. It might exceed the individual person (and their sensory apparatus) and be collective or habitual. Indeed, tacit knowledge might be learned through experience that requires onerous repetition and practice, and it is probably learned outside of books, as in the “street smarts” and “know-how” that make up its kind. More modern theory breaks tacit knowledge into the somatic, the relational, and the collective, and we will find early eighteenth-century attempts to carve up this shadowy domain in related terms, attempting to codify whole registers of experience beyond what the voluminous encyclopedias and travel narratives of the age are thought to offer.

The course begins with Thomas Hobbes and the concept of “tacit consent” in *Leviathan*. From there, we will look at other political theorists who consider this kind of silent agreement so important for sovereignty: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, David Hume, and (more recently) John Rawls.

Tacit knowledge, in politics and elsewhere, is thought to exist outside speech. To consider this aspect of the tacit, we'll examine *Cato's Letters*, sometimes understood as an early articulation of what later would be called "free speech." Does public, free speech require more silent forms of speech to accompany it? We'll examine how the early novel engages the question (through the works of Daniel Defoe, Frances Burney, John Cleland) and how poetry (Anne Finch, Alexander Pope, Mary Leapor) explores the possibility that the tacit works alongside (or even within) what's said.

Here are some of the major questions that will guide us: What makes knowledge silent (tacit from the Latin *tacere*, to be silent) in the first place? Is the tacit always opposed to speech/writing? And how do questions surrounding gender, sexuality, and politics enforce or encourage tacit forms of knowing?



## ENG 583 Poetics Seminar: Medium

Wednesday 12:30pm-3:10pm

In this course, we will consider the concept of “medium” as a provocative open question, especially as proposed and addressed by artists and poets who engage in medium discovery. Examining works peculiarly reflexive with regard to their material support in the many ways this may manifest, we will consider them in terms of medium specificity, medium envy, expanded medium; the work as distributed across media or as media assemblage; the work as entangled in a constantly changing media ecology (a medium always exists in relation to other media). After studying recent historical and ongoing debates around and redefinitions of medium and its significance in the visual arts, we will explore such issues as the instability or ambiguity of medium, the distinction and overlap of genre and medium, the use of a given technology as a medium and medium in tension with social practice, and the relation of medium to mediation – when and/or what and/or how a medium mediates – focusing particularly on how texts are affected by their medial realizations. We will then take up various proposed rubrics of medium in contemporary Anglophone poetry, such as the facsimile as medium; code poetry, digital literature deconstructing the interface, and platform poetics; translation as medium; archive as medium; information as medium; sound (specific sonic technologies) as medium; works in the media of new materials science; asemic mark as medium. We will also study non-codex artist “books” and books that challenge the codex form. Our inquiry into the poetics of medium discovery will refine the concept of medium, continually dissolve our working definitions towards new ones, or ultimately abandon the idea of medium altogether – most importantly, we will refuse to take materialist poetics as an end, pushing to understand, work by work, the larger, potentially critical social and cultural stakes of recent instantiations of the medial turn.

Students will post (500-750 words) every other week; in consultation with me, do a 15-20 min presentation on an assigned reading; and write a conference-length paper, preceded by a bibliographic essay consolidating research towards designing and supporting an interpretive claim.





ENG 588

Teaching Practicum for 1st Year Writing

Monday 12:30pm-2:10pm

This practicum provides weekly support for new instructors of ENG 105, UB's CL1 class. The goal of the course is to support and strengthen your teaching by providing pedagogical resources and developing a teaching community. The practicum involves regular meetings with instructors who are all teaching First Year Writing (ENG 105) at UB for the first time. It is structured to provide time for discussions about lesson planning, managing peer review, mutual class observation, and individual syllabus development, among other issues teachers of ENG 105 deal with.

# ENG 625 Studies 19th Century American Literature

Tuesday 12:30pm-3:10pm



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, we might pair D.H. Lawrence’s Studies in Classic American Literature with Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography, Jane Tompkins with Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Henry Louis Gates with Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, Stanley Cavell with Emerson, Lawrence Buell’s ecocriticism with Thoreau’s Walden, and so on. The criticisms are chestnuts that every Americanist should know; samples of some of the most contemporary trends, including various post-modernisms, historicisms, and odd, not quite placeable contributions like “ordinary language criticism”; 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 706 Publication Workshop

Friday 12:30pm-3:10pm



This workshop will help you revise a seminar paper into a publishable article. Through writing exercises, peer review sessions, conferences, and exemplary readings, you will learn how to identify appropriate scholarly venues for your work, develop critical arguments with supporting evidence, intervene in ongoing scholarly conversations, and revise academic prose for concision and clarity. By January, each of you should have an essay ready for submission and understand how the journal publication process works.

