**GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**FALL 2020**

**ENG 501 – INTRODUCTION TO SCHOLARLY METHODS**

**PROF. DAMIEN KEANE**

Tuesdays, 9:30 – 12:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 15531 (B) 17342

This course is a requirement for new students to the Master’s program in English, while it is also open to doctoral students who have obtained the prior permission of the instructor. The aim of the course is to assist students in making the transition to the kinds of practical work, methodological reflection, and critical thinking central to graduate study. To this end, the course will introduce students to some of the institutional relationships and social dynamics that have helped determine the present state of literary and cultural studies, with particular emphasis on the development of the discipline of English in the modern era. The syllabus will draw on both foundational works and more recent critical writing, as a way to sketch the history of antagonisms and continuities, over-loud controversies and unspoken alliances, that leads to our present moment.

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.

This course is divided into A and B sections, which have different formats: the A section is a seminar, whereas the B section is a three-credit-hour placeholder designed to provide full-time status to first-semester Master’s students. New students in the M.A. program students must enroll in the A section, and full-time students can also enroll in the B section. It is not mandatory, however, to enroll in the B section, as some students prefer to take an extensive seminar with those three credit-hours. If you have questions about enrollment options, please contact the Director of the Master’s Program.

**Please note that neither the A nor the B section of this course counts toward the four intensive seminars required for the Master’s degree.**

**ENG 502 – INTRODUCTION OF CRITICAL THEORY**

**PROF. WILLIAM SOLOMON**

Mondays, 9:00 – ll:40

Registration Number: 16300

English 502 is a survey class designed to introduce you to twentieth-century literary (and film) criticism and cultural theory. Proceeding chronologically, we will discuss several of the major schools of thought including Russian formalism, historical materialism, structuralism, psychoanalysis, feminism, gender and race theory, deconstruction, media theory, new historicism, and cultural studies. We will focus on foundational concepts, interpretive methodologies, and poetic analyses. Throughout the course we will utilize an array of primary materials—literary texts, motion pictures, and popular music—to illustrate and illuminate the theoretical approaches in question. By the end of the class, you should be ready to utilize these theoretical approaches selectively and effectively as you undertake advanced graduate level study.

**ENG 510 – TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION**

**PROF. NIKOLAUS WASMOEN**

Wednesdays, 12:30 – 3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 23772 (B) 23773

This course introduces fundamental concepts and practices of technical communications. Through a mix of readings, discussions, writing, and hands-on practice creating and refining digital communications, students will learn how to deliver technical information effectively and efficiently across a variety of professional contexts including scientific, medical, public policy, and business fields. Students will gain skills in communications design, research, writing, collaboration, and analysis. Close attention will be paid to identifying the audience(s) for given communications and crafting strategies that address their specific needs and expectations, while also translating technical or specialized information in ways that allow it to be more broadly understood by unfamiliar or nontechnical users. The course will explore best practices and tools for integrating multimedia (text, image, video, sound, animation) and user interactivity to enhance technical communications and make information accessible to contemporary digital audiences online and in the workplace.

Required Textbook:

Treadwell, Donald, and Andrea M. Davis. *Introducing Communication Research: Paths of Inquiry*, 4th ed. (SAGE Publications, 2019).

**ENG 515 – SHAKESPEARE AND DISASTER THEORY: 1590-2020**

**PROF. CARLA MAZZIO**

Tuesdays, 3:30 – 6:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 23850 (B) 23851

ENG 515 – SHAKESPEARE AND DISASTER THEORY: 1590-2020

How do we define and think about disaster? What affective, ethical, and cultural questions emerge in the wake of, in the midst of, or in anticipation of disaster?  This course will consider what constitutes disaster and, by the same token, how disaster constitutes “us,” how perceptions of disaster, that is, can lead to often dramatically altered conceptions of selfhood, community, and the spatial and temporal coordinates of existence. By exploring and connecting three nodes of thinking about disaster, critical and cultural theory, historiography, and tragic drama (mainly Shakespearean), this course will explore the often highly dramatic dimensions of speech, perception, action, and reaction under conditions of actual or imagined disaster and, accordingly, the work of tragic drama in contexts of environmental, medical, political and economic conditions of disaster.

It is now well known that Shakespeare composed poetry and plays during periods of devastating plague, where mortality rates soared, theaters were intermittently shuttered, and persons and communities quarantined. It is also the case that, although the plague or pestilence surfaces through allusion and metaphor throughout Shakespeare's plays (and in single dramatic episode in one of his plays), no one dies of the plague in Shakespearean tragedy. Our seminar will thus begin by considering a series of possible relationships between the aesthetics and material conditions of disaster.  In the process, we'll examine how disasters of various kinds could expose the limits of extant ways of framing experience and thus encourage radical and rapid forms of aesthetic, philosophical, and technological innovation on the one hand, and often conspicuous forms of nostalgia and conservatism on the other.  This seminar will be shaped and revised according to seminar participant interests, but topics of possible consideration may include theater and the plague; trauma and resilience; race and catastrophe; necropolitics; affect and genres of disaster;  rhetorical and philosophical histories of “disaster,” “catastrophe,” and “contamination” (as well as “tragedy," “apocalypse” and other keywords); climatological and astronomical/astrological histories of viral outbreak and the transmission of disease (“disaster” itself comes from the Latin for “ill starred” and the “flu” or “influenza,” from Medieval Latin influentia, indexes a period when viral infection was understood to be caused by lunar and/or astral influence), and structures of hyper-abstraction and rationalization that often accompany disaster. Theoretical readings, which may include selections from Ahmed, Aristotle, Arendt, Artaud, Agamben, Boethius, Badiou, Benjamin, Blanchot, Du Bois, Crenshaw (just to start with the early alphabet...), will be selected with attention to specific interests of seminar members.

**ENG 542 – 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN POETRY**

**PROF. STACY HUBBARD**

Mondays, 3:30 – 6:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22170 (B) 22171

This course will explore the ordinary--everyday language, common objects, and daily existence-- in the works of modernist and postmodernist American poets: Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, Gertrude Stein, Gwendolyn Brooks, A. R. Ammons, Lyn Hejinian, Harryette Mullen, and Ron Silliman. Carrying forward Emerson’s call for an American poetry of the “near, the low, and the common,” these poets explore what is unexalted in immediate and local experience; experiment with modes of representing presentness, repetition and flux; and expand the potentialities of vernacular language and found materials. They are interested in “daily life” (Stein), “ordinary evenings” (Stevens), “average moments” (Moore), and what it takes to be the “genius of [the] household” (Williams). In analyzing these projects, we’ll explore the characteristic modernist desire to deflate Romantic pretensions by rendering the particular in its full particularity and by embracing repetition, habit, anti-climax, and boredom; we’ll also consider other types of modernist time, such as clock time, mythic time, cyclical time, and epiphanic time, in relation to which the everyday positions itself. We’ll also consider the differences that gender, sexuality and race may make to a poet’s sense of the ordinary and the everyday. In addition to works by these poets, we will read theoretical and critical materials by William James, Henri Bergson, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, Rita Felski, Stanley Cavell, Jonathan Levin, Liesl Olsen, Stephen Kern, Randall Bryony, Bill Brown, Jonathan Crary, Douglas Mao, Siobhan Phillips, and others.

Requirements include active participation in discussions; several short informal pieces of writing and oral presentations; a conference-length essay and an accompanying critical review; and options for archival work using the resources of UB’s Poetry Collection and various digital collections.

**ENG 547 – CREATIVE WRITING FICTION COLLOQUIUM**

**PROF. CHRISTINA MILLETTI**

Wednesdays, 7:00 – 9:40

Registration Number: 1803

In this unique colloquium course, we will examine a broad array of aesthetic techniques deployed in poetry and fiction in order to explore and reassess questions of genre to which we’ve become anaesthetized. Specifically, we will think through what function the concept of genre performs, what kinds of writing activity genre allows us to pursue, and how mobilizing the question of genre itself may help writers foster innovative sites of practice.

Predominantly exploratory in nature, the Fall Writing Colloquium is designed to investigate the limits and boundaries of poetry and fiction by negotiating three interrelated spheres of activity: 1) sharing student projects in writing 2) reading a wide range of texts in order to become familiar not only with contemporary writing, but also critical and theoretical concepts that will augment writing practice 3) participating in several Colloquia sessions during which the two sections of the class will meet to prepare for and discuss visits by an exceptional roster of writers: poets, novelists, short story writers, and writers of cross-genre and inter-genre forms.

**ENG 549 – FALL CREATIVE WRITING POETRY COLLOQUIUM**

**PROF. MYUNG MI KIM**

Wednesdays, 7:00 – 9:40

Registration Number: 18039

In this unique Colloquium course, we consider (and engender) a wide array of possibilities for poetry, and for cultivating an intensive engagement with the practice of poetry writing. We will mobilize questions of genre, form, and politics of language to which we’ve become anaesthetized. Predominantly exploratory in nature, the Fall Writing Colloquium traverses three interrelated spheres of activity:

1. Students will be actively engaged with writing projects, from generative process exercises to immersive poetry writing that may become a chapbook or a fully realized manuscript. During the “studio” portion of the course, we will discuss each writer’s work closely.
2. The class will read a range of texts in order to reflect on the condition of contemporary and transhistoricalpoetry and poetics, and further, to attend to critical and theoretical concepts that augment/reframe poetry writing.
3. Students will participate in colloquia sessions to prepare for visits by poets, novelists, short story writers, and writers of cross-genre and inter-genre forms who will be part of Poetics Plus and Exhibit X during Fall, 2020.

**ENG 599 – PRACTICUM IN TEACHING**

**PROF. JASON MAXWELL**

Wednesdays, 3:30 – 6:10

Registration Number: 18978

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 futures of writing instruction.

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

**PROF. KENNETH DAUBER**

Mondays, 12:30 – 3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 20077 (B) 20078

Theory of American Literature.  This course is designed to give you a roadmap of the variety of ways of talking about classic American literature as they have been laid out since the field came into existence as a field and through to the current moment.  We will read major texts of the ante-bellum period in tandem with a variety of secondary books by influential critics.  The idea is to take a secondary text that constructs its canon and a primary text central to that construction and read them for attunements and gaps, for what gets established and disestablished, what gets opened up and what closed off.

We will read works of cultural criticism, ordinary language criticism, deconstruction, feminism, historicism—some oldies (like D.H. Lawrence’s *Studies in Classic American Literature* or Leslie Fiedler’s *Love and Death in the American Novel),* some relative newies (perhaps Donald Pease on cultural critique, Michelle Sizemore on radical democracy), some in between (Russ Castronovo reading against the liberal American subject, Stanley Cavell reading Thoreau and Emerson, Jane Tompkins reading sentimental literature, Skip Gates on African-American Literature), some as yet to be determined.  The list will be chosen on the basis of what seems current, what seems enduring, and what I haven’t read yet but meant to because it seems promising.

Primary texts will probably include Benjamin Franklin‘s *Autobiography* (you will be surprised), *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* along with some slave narratives (Douglass and Jacobs), some Hawthorne (*The House of the Seven Gable*, because nobody really likes it, and why nobody does is especially revealing), Melville (especially *Pierre,* which people generally like for the wrong reasons), a few of Emerson’s best, Thoreau’s *Walden* (not your post-modern eco-critic) and a couple of earlier American novels (like Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* and Cooper’s *The Prairie*).  Some of this may change, but there will be good substitutes, if so.

By the end of the course, if you are faithful, you will have an extraordinary sense of how the founding period in American literature lays itself out, what the debates about it are, what works and what doesn’t and to what extent.  I tend to have opinions about such matters.  The course is designed to enable you to form your own (hopefully different) opinions, as well, which you will be able to try out in postings and class discussion and, if you take the “A” section, a paper.

**ENG 651 – STUDIES IN MARXISM (1):**

**The Commodity form (Labor, Fetishism, Spectacle)**

**PROF. STEVEN MILLER**

Fridays, 12:30 – 3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 23774 (B) 23775

This course will offer the opportunity to study a number of pivotal texts within the tradition of Western Marxism. Our starting point will be several of Marx’s early works (“On the Jewish Question,” the 1844 manuscripts, *The German ideology,* etc.). We will consider in detail Marx’s early critique of religion and its relationship to the theory of ideology. But for the majority of the semester we will consider from various angles the genealogy and consequences of his analysis of commodity fetishism in the first volume of *Capital.* In addition to examining some of the newly translated works of the 18th century anthropologist Charles de Brosses, we will compare Marx and Freud on the unconscious logic of the fetish object. We will discuss how various twentieth-century thinkers (Lukacs, Benjamin, Adorno, Lefebvre, Debord, Tronti, Derrida, Nancy) make the analysis of the commodity into the basis for a broader critique of everyday life under capitalism.

**ENG 706 – PUBLICATION WORKSHOP**

**PROF. JOSEPH VALENTE**

Thursdays, 3:30 – 6:10

Registration Number: 21292

In this workshop, students will rework a paper (typically a seminar paper) for Publication. The workshop will help students to identify an appropriate journal for her or his work. It will then assist in the tailoring of the project for the format and focus of that publication. It will also offer guidance in the key characteristics of successful submission. The workshop will feature several group meetings at the beginning of the semester and then regular consultations with the instructor for the remainder of the semester.

**NOTE:** This workshop is open to 3rd-year students only.