

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
SPRING 2024**

ENG 511 - MEDIEVAL LITERATURE, NON-CHAUCER

PROF. RANDY SCHIFF

Tuesdays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22726 (B) 22727

ENG 541 - 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN NOVEL

PROF. STACY HUBBARD

Thursdays, 3:30-6:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 21328 (B) 21329

ENG 587 - SPECIAL TOPICS: ON VIOLENCE

PROF. DAVID SCHMID

Mondays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22773 (B) 22774

ENG 589 - CL2 PRACTICUM

PROF. NICK HOFFMAN

Thursdays, 9:30-11:10

Registration Number: 21322

ENG 599 - INTRODUCTION TO WRITING & RHETORIC

PROF. JASON MAXWELL

Wednesdays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Number: 20265

ENG 653 - CRITICAL THEORY

PROF. STEVEN MILLER

Fridays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22769 (B) 22770

ENG 699 - ETHNOPOETICS

PROF. TYRONE WILLIAMS

Thursdays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22771 (B) 22772

ENG 511 – MEDIEVAL LITERATURE, NON-CHAUCER

PROF. RANDY SCHIFF

Tuesdays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22726 (B) 22727

This course will interweave exploration of medieval romance with critical study of adaptation, translation, and tradition. While our own age of authorship is dominated by concepts of copyright and intellectual property, the medieval era was overwhelmingly driven by conventionality and tradition. We will investigate the spectrum of approaches ranging from direct translation to loose adaptation, while considering theories of medieval and modern authorship and textuality. Our course will focus on key figures from Arthurian romance, including Chrétien de Troyes, Thomas Malory, and the *Morte-Poet*. Our readings of romances will be paired with a survey of critical engagement with questions of adaptation, translation, and textuality. Our course will also consider adaptation across media—not only in the transition between manuscript and print or the more fundamental transition from orality to writing, but also from written stories to film. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, insofar as it has no surviving direct source, will help us study filmic adaptation (we will compare *Sword of the Valiant* and *The Green Knight*), while *Sword of Lancelot* (1963) and *Excalibur* (1981) will allow us to discuss approaches to adapting Malory—and the tradition he himself adapted—into film. All seminar members will do one formal presentation; seminar members taking the course for a grade will write a seminar paper of 17-25 pages.

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ENG 541 – TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN NOVEL

PROF. STACY HUBBARD

Thursdays, 3:30-6:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 21328 (B) 21329

This course is intended as a survey of American fiction between 1895 and 1940 for BA/MA students, particularly those in the UB Teach program. We will, of necessity, go broader than we go deep, although we'll drill down in various spots to get into particular aspects of political, material, and literary culture in the period. Issues to be discussed include race, passing and primitivism; urbanism; regionalism; realism and naturalism; feminism and the New Woman; industrial culture; workers and strikes; immigrant experiences; the Western frontier; and the fiction of consciousness. Attention will be paid to literary movements, techniques, innovations, and influences as well as cultural contexts. The purpose of the course is to give students "the lay of the land" for early twentieth century American fiction.

Readings will include novels and short story cycles and some critical and/or historical materials that will help us to situate the fiction. We'll be using the *Cambridge History of the American Novel* as a general guide. Requirements include occasional brief presentations; several short writing assignments that will allow students to exercise different kinds of research and analysis skills; and one end-of-term project, which may include pedagogically-oriented materials and lesson plans.

Texts: Henry James, *The Spoils of Poynton*; Charles Chesnutt, *Conjure Tales & Stories of the Color Line*; Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*; Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*; Sui Sin Far, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance & Other Stories*; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*; Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio*; Willa Cather, *The Professor's House*; Nella Larsen, *Quicksand*; John Steinbeck, *In Dubious Battle*; Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

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## ENG 587 – ON VIOLENCE

**PROF. DAVID SCHMID**

Mondays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers: (A) 22773 (B) 22774

In this seminar, we will attempt to answer a deceptively simple question, “What is violence?” Although most people will have automatic responses of various kinds when asked to define violence, we will go beyond the ‘common sense’ familiarity of such responses by exploring a wide range of texts from different historical periods and geographical contexts, and from a range of disciplines including history, philosophy, feminist theory, literary criticism, psychoanalysis, political science, and cultural studies. Along the way, we will also discuss a number of related questions, such as “What is the relationship between representational violence and physical acts of violence?”, “Is the use of violence ever justified? If so, on what grounds?”, “What are the different temporal scales of violence, and how do these scales interact with other?”, “Is violence always visible?”, “What is the relationship between interpersonal and interstate forms of violence such as revolution and war?”, “What is the relationship between gender and violence?” Hopefully, by exploring these questions and others, together we will develop a more nuanced and complex understanding of an extremely overdetermined concept. At a future point, I will also be offering a graduate seminar on literary representations of violence. Although both seminars are stand-alone, taking this seminar will undoubtedly help prepare you for the other seminar.

### Reading List:

Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* (1908)

Sigmund Freud, “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death” (1915)

Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence” (1921)

Mao Tse-Tung, “Problems of War and Strategy” (1938)

Che Guevara, *On Guerilla Warfare* (1960)

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961)  
 Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" (1964)  
 Huey P. Newton, "In Defense of Self Defense" (1967)  
 Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas" (1967)  
 Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (1970)  
 Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (1972)  
 Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (1973)  
 Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (eds). *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence* (selections), 1989  
 Jeffery A. Clymer, *America's Culture of Terrorism: Violence, Capitalism, and the Written Word* (2003)  
 William T. Vollmann, *Rising Up, Rising Down: Some Thoughts on Violence, Freedom and Urgent Means* (2003)  
 Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (2007)  
 Adriana Cavarero, *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence* (2008)  
 Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (eds). *Violence Today: Actually Existing Barbarism* (2009)  
 Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011)  
 Robert Muchembled, *A History of Violence: From the End of the Middle Ages to the Present* (selections), (2012)  
 Judith Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (2021)  
 Jacqueline Rose, *On Violence and On Violence Against Women* (2021)  
 Caroline Elkins, *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire* (2022)  
 Elsa Dorlin, *Self-Defense: A Philosophy of Violence* (2022)

Requirements: Short weekly response papers, participation in class discussion, final research paper or creative project.

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ENG 589 – TEACHING PRACTICUM FOR CL2 COURSES IN ENGLISH

PROF. NICK HOFFMAN
 Thursdays, 9:30-11:10
 Registration Number: 21322

This practicum provides weekly support for instructors of Communication Literacy 2 (CL2) courses as well as preparation for instructors planning to teach CL2 courses in the future. The practicum consists of weekly meetings, course observation, and some readings on the practice of teaching upper-level writing in the disciplines. It is structured to provide practical strategies for building syllabi, creating engaging lesson plans, managing peer review, and developing discipline-specific assignments that are rooted in developing rhetorical awareness and capacity.

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

**PROF. JASON MAXWELL**  
Wednesdays, 12:30-3:10  
Registration Number: 20265

I look forward to orienting you to my field of rhetoric and composition before you teach for UB’s Academic and Professional Writing Program. In the course, you will gain familiarity with selected research and theory that informs contemporary approaches to teaching writing. You will also be able to apply the theories to your own experiences as a writer and learner. We will examine writing (and the teaching of it) as a complex, imperfectible, and highly variable social practice that shapes and is shaped by culture. Current scholarship on genre theory, linguistic justice, and relationships between reading and writing will be among the topics introduced. I aim for us to develop a shared disciplinary vocabulary while you begin identifying principles from the field of writing and studies that you want to enact during your future teaching.

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ENG 653 – CRITICAL THEORY

PROF. STEVEN MILLER
Fridays, 12:30-3:10
Registration Numbers: (A) 22769 (B) 22770

Aesthetic Theory: An Introduction

There is a basic incompatibility between the primary concerns of psychoanalysis and the study of aesthetics—so Freud explicitly states in the opening paragraph of the “The Uncanny,” probably his essay most often included in anthologies of literary theory and criticism. “It is only rarely that a psychoanalyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics,” he writes. He works in “other strata of mental life,” remote from the “subdued emotional impulses” that are traditionally the province of aesthetic experience. On the occasions when the psychoanalyst takes up questions of aesthetics, the guiding thread is usually an object that is “rather remote,” “neglected in the specialist literature of aesthetics.” In other words, psychoanalysis—purposefully or not—must ignore the specialists in order to privilege objects that can only be misconstrued within the traditional parameters of aesthetics, specifically because they provoke “unsubdued” feelings. The feeling of the uncanny is exemplary, in this respect, because it is characterized not by sense experience (sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell) but rather by the return of the repressed; it refers to the prehistory of individual subjects and of human civilization.

In this course, then, following Freud’s lead, our conversations will revolve around a series of objects—*textiles, fashion, quilting, miniatures, caricatures, animation, marionettes, jokes, circus arts, bullfighting, cartoons, fireworks, junk, and cuisine among others*—which, by virtue of their association with childhood experience, rarely occupy the center of discourses on art and aesthetics. As an oblique introduction to aesthetic theory, we will consider the role that such objects play in classical treatises on aesthetics and the system of the arts (e.g.

Lessing, Kant, Schiller, Ruskin, Pater), in 20th century aesthetic theory (e.g. Freud, Winnicott, Breton, Eisenstein, Leiris, Lévi-Strauss, Worringer, Bachelard, Heidegger, Benjamin, Adorno, Lyotard and Nancy), and in texts that explicitly seek to expand what counts as aesthetic experience (e.g. Annie Albers, Bernard Rudofsky, Suzanne Langer, Sylvia Wynter, Clyde Taylor, bell hooks, Sianne Ngai, and Cecelia Vicuña). The goal is to determine how these theoretical discourses construct the relationship between the traditional forms of art labor (painting, sculpture, music, poetry, architecture) and objects or practices that are usually relegated to the status of gadgets, curiosities, sideshows, stunts or distractions. Which single forms or objects are granted the privilege of standing for the question of art in general? And what about literature? Is literature an object that belongs to the system of the arts or does it belong among the relics of childhood that litter the field of aesthetic experience?

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ENG 699 – ETHNOPOETICS: Experimental and Innovative Black Women Poetries

PROF. TYRONE WILLIAMS

Thursdays, 12:30-3:10

Registration Numbers:(A) 22771 (B) 22772

Email: tyronewi@buffalo.edu

Focus: This course concerns the poetry and poetics, the creative work and critical positions implied by the work, of several contemporary African American women poets. The list is hardly exhaustive, but it does represent aesthetic and cultural tendencies within the larger field of experimental and innovative black women’s poetry. Although I distinguish between experimental work—that by, for example, Julie Ezelle Patton, La Tasha Nevada Diggs and Renee Gladman—and innovative work—that by Harmony Holiday, Simone White and Dawn Lundy Martin—these terms should be understood as moments or points on a spectrum that vaguely represents degrees of recuperation (by the publishing industry, major and small, academia, etc.). In short, these are not evaluative terms and there is—and will be—plenty of room for discussion and debate about which poet belongs where, especially since one can imagine different books by the same poet falling into different categories (e.g., one book might appear innovative, another, experimental).

Required Texts: Simone White, *Dear Angel of Death*, Harmony Holiday, *Maafa*, La Tasha Nevada Diggs, *Village*, Duriel Harris, *No Living Tongue*, Dawn Lundy Martin, *Good Stock*, Julie Ezelle Patton, mp3s, Renee Gladman, *Plans for Sentences*, Tracie Morris, *Handholding*.
