

Spring 2020 ECL Graduate Course Descriptions

ENGL 850: Twentieth-Century American Poetry and Poetics Beyond “The Lyric”

Eliza Richards

This course seeks to familiarize students with crucial aspects of lyric theory while drawing on the study of twentieth-century American poetry to push beyond these more familiar assumptions. Ideas about “the lyric” have dominated modes of poetic inquiry for the last century, playing an influential role in New Criticism, Russian Formalism, Poststructuralism, the Frankfurt School, and other major theoretical movements. Generally, lyric presumes a model of individual poetic transmission, in which an “I” closely related to the poet expresses itself to a listening or overhearing “you,” which both is and is not the reader. The poem, meanwhile, has often been imagined as a kind of discrete textual container that can hold and convey some version of individual utterance. Poetry arguably has always been messier, more dispersive and relational, more varied, and less distillable to a single essential (and essentialist) form. American poets have long recognized and strained against lyric preconceptions, finding ways to express multiple identities, emotions that spread beyond the poem into surrounding media, communal voices not centered in a single individual, utterances that have no “voice” at all. Posthumanism, Ecopoetics, Systems Theory, Neurocognitive Poetics, and other recent theoretical movements can help us to expand our ideas about poetic expression and communication.

Though we will situate our work together in relation to various critical and theoretical modalities, the course will be centered on the study of twentieth-century poetry itself. The assumption is that poetry can guide us to new understandings of expression that both supplement, disagree with, and move in different directions from theoretical poetics. Rather than attempting a survey, we will concentrate on a few important movements, chosen in concert with the students taking the course. We will start with the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, whose work has been profoundly influential in the twentieth century. We will then turn to the Harlem Renaissance and Modernism, Confessionalism, and the New York School. I plan to take up one or two more recent trends as well.

I am eager to hear from anyone interested in taking the course in order to discuss the composition of the syllabus, which will remain open and responsive to student interests as I finalize the course. Please email me at ecr@email.unc.edu

ENGL 861: Genre and Literary Theory -- Horror and Science Fiction

Tyler Curtain

What does it mean to take as our object of analysis, not a text as such but a genre? What does it mean to locate our literary critical practices around texts that are first and foremost

understood to be representative not simply of themselves, the work of “literary fiction,” but of a “type” of writing, which is to say, a genre? What is “genre”? Genre is a set of expectations, a way to categorize, a blueprint for writing, a strategy for the buying and selling of books, movies, and games, and at the very least a promise to deliver what one already knows and enjoys. What does an assumption of “genre” elucidate and what does it obscure? How does “genre” open up or curtail literary critical analysis? What do we know, or think that we know, when we categorize a work as belonging to a genre? We will read primary texts alongside theoretical accounts of genre. During the first half of our course, we will build our discussions around works of horror. During the second half, we will examine science fiction (or, more broadly, SF) as a critical category.

CMPL 473: Drama, Pageantry, and Spectacle in Medieval Europe

Helen Cushman

This course surveys early European drama and a selection of its theological-liturgical-dramatic precursors.

All non-English texts will be read in translation. All Middle English texts will be read in original spelling, but student-friendly editions.

CMPL 890: Navigating the Literature of Friendship

Marsha S. Collins

This graduate course will focus on a burgeoning field of literary research and scholarship—the intersection between literature and friendship studies. We will study literary works that focus on friendship, and friendship’s relationship to the collective—family, society, community. We will read representative works chosen from a wide range of time periods and cultures, from ancient epics and romance to Early Modern poetry, drama, and prose to modern novels, from authors as diverse as Homer, Heliodorus, and the unknown creator of Gilgamesh, to Cervantes, Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Marguerite de Navarre, from Dickens and Eliot, to Steinbeck, Morrison, Allende, Atwood, and Hosseini. Theoretical works about amity and amity studies will also be an integral part of the course, including selections from Aristotle, Cicero, Aquinas, Montaigne, Erasmus, Foucault, Derrida, Bray, and more.

English 843: Studies in American Literature to 1860

Philip F. Gura

Emerson, Thoreau, and Transcendentalism

In this course we will examine American Transcendentalism in detail, from its emergence as a protest against liberal Christianity in the 1830s through the Civil War, toward the end of understanding better the literature produced by such participants as Emerson and Thoreau. Toward this end, there will be readings in religious and intellectual history, philosophy, and

social reform, as well as attention to the European influences on the Transcendentalist group. In addition to Emerson and Thoreau, we will read the feminist Margaret Fuller, abolitionist Theodore Parker, social reformer Orestes Brownson, novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne (The Blithedale Romance), and free love advocate and novelist Mary Gove Nichols. This course should be of interest to students in comparative literature, religion, and intellectual and social history, as well as to those in American literature.

ENGL 695: Health and Humanities: Intensive Research Practice **Jane Thrailkill**

In this project-centered course, you will learn about health humanities as an interdisciplinary field and try out different qualitative research techniques. Our class theme is Aging: what the writer Robin Morgan described as “a place of merciless poetry,” “fierce discipline,” and “quiet beauty.” Accordingly, course texts will include literary, artistic, and expressive works that address such topics as longevity, frailty, resilience, disability, community, solitude, mortality, and spirituality. We will also read more medically oriented materials drawn from anthropology, occupational therapy, geriatrics and the health sciences. Because this is a skills-based course, the reading assignments for ENGL 695 are relatively short (roughly 50 pp per week). Over the semester, students will keep a lab notebook, write short response papers, complete CITI ethics training (authorizing you to participate in human subject research), write ethnographic reflections, engage in analysis of narrative data, develop a research project (individual or team-based), write a SURF grant application, and participate in a poster presentation.

Note: ENGL 695 counts for the Med/Lit/Culture Minor and MA, the (upcoming) Graduate Certificate in Health Humanities, and the Dept. of ECL Concentration in Science, Medicine, & Literature.

UNIT ONE (January-February): The first half of the semester will be devoted to developing skills in observation, reflection, and inquiry through hands-on experiences:

- 1) Involvement in an innovative IPE project (interprofessional education) that brings together nine health science units at UNC (Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Nutrition, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, and Social Work)
- 2) Visits to UNC libraries (Wilson Library Special Collections, Health Sciences Library) to acquaint students with some of the vast materials available on campus.
- 3) Attendance at selected Carolina Performing Arts and Ackland Museum events and participation in interdisciplinary conversations about art and aging.

UNIT TWO (March-April): The second half of the semester will provide space for development and deepening of student projects and further exploration of research methods and models. The final exam for the course will be a poster presentation in HHIVE Lab.

To learn more about ENGL 695, please email the professor: Jane Thrailkill, tskill@unc.edu.

CMPL 450: Major Works of 20th-Century Literary Theory

David Baker

In this course, we will encounter key texts by French thinkers who influenced literary critical theory in the 1970s and 1980s--Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, among others--as well as a by critics who later responded to, incorporated, and assimilated their work--Eve Sedgwick, Gayatri Spivak, and Stephen Greenblatt, among others. Our emphasis will be on tracing the lines of engagement among these thinkers, with special attention paid to the places where they intersect or diverge from one another. Around what debates was late twentieth-century criticism organized? What were the origins of those debates, and what the outcomes? Following these lines of engagement into the present, we will also consider the state of literary theory.

ENGL 838: 19th Century British Novel

Laurie Langbauer

This course is devoted to the study of narrative. It is a workshop, shaped by the interests and contributions of its members. Our focus is the long 19th century, which, in the past, has taken us from the early 18th century up into the 20th (reading British, American, and continental, or global prose fiction)--all based on participants' interests and needs. Together we will construct a canon that works for our group, and helps us see how others in the profession approach the genre. What has narrative theory been? Where is it headed? Past participants in our class have selected More, Goethe, Scott, Austen, the Brontes, Dickens, Gaskell, James, Woolf, and Conrad, among others, but the next group might choose entirely different writers instead, perhaps focusing on Imlay, Shelley, Stowe, Farrow, or Achebe, for instance.

Each member will choose a novel important to your work, as well as a key essay to supplement or contextualize it by placing it within a literary critical or narrative theory heritage (such as Aravamudan's critique of the category of the British novel "Fiction/Translation/Transnation"). Alternately, you may pair that novel with archival material discovered through your research, in UNC Special Collections or elsewhere. Once we have our working list of readings, the class will together choose several additional novels, in order to fill out our particular survey of narrative. In the past, other faculty have visited class when they had a particular interest in our readings, but that is always subject to our needs and their availability.

Your final project will build on the research in narrative you shared with the class, probably in the form of a paper (one that might lead to conference presentation or publication)—but participants working in digital humanities have suggested interest in exploring other formats. Our goal is to help you share research that will be important to your career with others engaged in the same work.

After participants register for the class, we will hold a planning meeting (near the end of Fall term) to set our readings. I encourage you to be thinking in advance about which novel you will choose for us to read: how will it shape our survey as well as your theoretical, critical, or

archival research in this class? How might it provide a springboard for work in your future career?

ENGL 690: Scottish Gaelic for Beginners

Tiber Falzett

NOTE: Both undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to enroll!

This course provides a fun and interactive introduction to the Scottish Gaelic language and its culture geared to complete beginners. By engaging in this modern, endangered and vibrant international minority language, students will develop and gain valuable skills in everyday conversation, reading, writing and listening. Students' learning will be enhanced by joining together in Gaelic song, storytelling and music from Scotland's Highlands to North Carolina's Sandhills and from Canada's Cape Breton Island to the Cape Fear.
