

GRADUATE COURSE OFFERINGS SPRING 2021

JANE THRAILKILL

ENGL 695: Research Seminar in Health Humanities

Th 2:00pm-4:45pm

Now more than ever, in the midst of a pandemic, we need to use tools from the humanities to understand illness, disability, healthcare, healing, and human mortality. In this small research seminar, students will put to use concepts and methods from the health humanities in a series of hands-on experiences. These include:

- exploring the themes of aging, elderhood, and longevity (crucial topics as Covid-19 disproportionately kills older adults) through a wide array of readings, arts experiences, lectures, and conversations with community members
- collaborating with peers in the health sciences on an interprofessional educational experience (two weeks of case discussions attended by trainees in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, social work, and more)
- keeping a laboratory notebook documenting their explorations
- researching and completing a capstone project (individually, or with partners) that addresses a key question related to the course theme of aging.

Students who have completed ENGL 268 or another health humanities/medical humanities course are welcome to enroll. Major assignments include: two short (<1,000 word) essays, an ethnographic field report, a lab notebook, a capstone project, and a presentation.

This course counts toward the following:

- 1) Honors minor in Literature, Medicine, and Culture
- 2) English concentration in Science, Medicine, and Literature
- 3) MA in Lit/Med/Culture
- 4) Graduate certificate in Lit/Med/Culture

If you have questions, please contact the professor: Dr. Jane F. Thrailkill, tkill@unc.edu.

TAYLOR COWDERY

ENGL 821: Feeling in Middle English Literature

Th 2:00pm-5:00pm

Long before the affective turn, medieval writers were preoccupied with the power that feeling held over patterns of thought and behavior. What did they think about ecstasy and abjection, boredom and fear—and, still more important, how did they write about different states of emotion? This course will examine the role that feeling plays in Middle English religious, philosophical, and literary texts. Theoretical readings will include work by, among others, Julia Kristeva, Michel Foucault, Sianne Ngai, Heather Love, and Lauren Berlant. Selections from medieval literature will certainly

include *The Book of Margery Kempe*, selections from sermons and devotional writing, excerpts from Gower's *Confessio amantis*, and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, and will likely consider works by Boethius, Augustine, Nicholas Love, and Richard Rolle as well. Students will be required to complete one review of a book, to be presented to the class; one short prospectus; and one 20-25 page seminar paper.

MARIA DE GUZMAN

English 864-001: Seminar on LatinX Environmentalisms

M 3:35pm-6:35pm

This graduate seminar introduces students to various poeses, practices, and implications of “LatinX environmentalisms.” We investigate the “LatinX” and the “environmentalisms” (plural) in relation to one another and together, exponentially. We consider how these LatinX environmentalisms engage histories of colonialism, lived experiences of neo-colonialism, and figure the intersection of nature and culture in terms of the effects of the “Anthropocene” and the struggle for environmental justice. We consider a variety of critical approaches, a range of literary genres (nonfiction, novels, short stories, drama, and poetry), visual productions (film, photography, installation art, mural art, and other public art), and some youth development, place-based environmental literacy projects. We consider the ways in which these LatinX environmentalisms intersect with, yet also—in their pronounced concern with environmental justice—differ from “mainstream” environmentalism with its focus on conservation, preservation, and wilderness. We strive to develop a nuanced understanding of the plurality of approaches within LatinX environmentalisms as indicated by our primary texts, visual productions, and critical readings.

FLORENCE DORE

ENGL 847: The Contemporary Novel and Formalism in the Twenty-First Century

W 11:15am-2:15pm

In the decades after the Agrarians drifted from Vanderbilt to points north and established New Criticism as the dominant interpretive method across the United States, formalism came to be understood as an irresponsible evasion of politics or worse: a means of safeguarding a reactionary social order. This view remained remarkably consistent across all variety of political methodologies—Marxist, feminist, New Historicist, queer, anti-racist, and post-colonial—during the final decades of the 20th century. The 1990s saw potent challenges to this orthodoxy: John Guillory's critique of the conflation of literary and political representation that underwrote the canon wars; Dorothy Hale's analysis of the covert attachment to formalism in “social” theories of the novel; and Elaine Scarry's defense of aesthetic cultivation as a means of encouraging just action. Still, literary form as such remained a disreputable subject of scholarly inquiry. Over the last decade or so, the taboo against formalism has actually lifted, as calls for “new formalist,” “post-critical,” “surface,” or “distant” reading have brought the question of what counts as the “literary” back into focus. At the same time, we see the novel form taking leave of its tendency towards transparent realism, exemplifying instead what has been codified as modernism's “opacity.” In this class, we will examine this turn in the novel in relation to the critical turn, grounding our study in earlier articulations of formalism. The recent turn to aesthetics, in work by Tim Aubry and Walter Benn Michaels, for example, will also be considered.

Critical Readings: Tim Aubry, Cleanth Brooks, Taylor Cowdery, Nan Da, Rita Felski, Jennifer Fleissner, Northrop Frye, Sigmund Freud, John Guillory, Dorothy Hale, Fredric Jameson, Immanuel Kant, Jonathan Kramnick, Carol Levine, Percy Lubbock, Karl Marx, Mark McGurl, Walter Benn Michaels, Franco Moretti, Anahid Nersessian, I.A. Richards, Raymond Williams

Novels: *On Beauty* (Zadie Smith), *A Gate at the Stairs* (Lorrie Moore), *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* (Aimee Bender), *Outline* (Rachel Cusk), *Milkman* (Anna Burns)

GREGG FLAXMAN

ENGL 681: Image and Frame

M 5:00pm-8:00pm

This course broadly represents an overview of the history of vision, though it's specifically organized around the history of the frame. We'll begin by dwelling on the origins of framing, defined in both art historical (e.g., Riegl) and philosophical terms (e.g., Heidegger, Bergson, possibly Husserl), before turning to the "modern" history of the frame. We'll with the consolidation of perspective (e.g., Alberti, Viator, Serlio), the growing autonomy of the image, and the increasing mobility of the frame as painting becomes an object of exchange. We'll use the transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque to shift focus from painting to the camera obscura (Alpers, Crary, Foucault), and, thence, photography. Thereafter, we'll turn to moving-image media to consider how the frame became a screen (Bergson, Bal, Deleuze, Kittler, Krauss, Virilio) and what this means for the future of the image. Naturally, we'll be looking at all kind of images, from paintings (including Courbet, Durer, Vermeer, Degas, Hammershoi, Basquiat, Cremonini) and photographs (Maier, Wall, Weems, Sugimoto), to films (Duras, Hitchcock, Antonioni) and what we now call data visualization (Tufte). Obviously, this list of authors is subject to change. Graduate students are required to do a half hour presentation, on a topic related to the syllabus, in addition to writing a short paper, a take-home midterm, and a final paper of 12-15 pages (alternately, students may choose to write a longer seminar paper if they wish the course to count for seminar credit). Undergraduates will do modified versions of same assignments, though they'll have the option of a final exam (essay based) as opposed to a final paper. Note: *Undergraduates should be advised to talk the instructor before enrolling.*

MARTIN JOHNSON

ENGL 494: Research Methods in Film Studies

TuTh 9:30am-10:45am

From the debut of Auguste and Louis Lumière's cinematograph in 1895 to the revival of drive-in movie theaters during the 2020 pandemic, cinema has had an enduring place in global culture. But until recently, film and media scholars have focused on the production and analysis of moving images, ignoring the experience of the cinema. In this class, we will explore the history of moviegoing and movie culture in a global context. In our journey, we will ask questions such as these: How did moviegoing emerge as a mass phenomenon, and what is its future? Why did the star system develop in the commercial cinema, and what does it have to teach us about our contemporary experience of mediated identities? Which social groups were the most enthusiastic patrons of movie theaters, and how can we use cinema to understand changes in global culture? How was cinema received in different national contexts, in large cities and rural areas, and in

different cultures? How have new moving image technologies affected our engagement with the cinema?

In answering these questions, we will interpret primary source materials, consider questions of methodology and evidence, and revisit classic debates about how film history is written. We will also develop and conduct original research projects on the historical experience of the cinema, including historical approaches to contemporary phenomena. In this course, you will learn how to research and write histories of film and media using an array of methodologies and primary source materials. Assignments include several “student-sourced” research projects, which will give you first-hand experience with using primary digital documents as evidence, and, in the second half of the semester, a research project of your choice, which we will develop in class. Graduate students are welcome.

META JONES
ENGL 472: African American Literature
TuTh 2:00pm-3:15pm

JEANNE MOSKAL
ENGL 861: Post-Secular Theory
Tu 2:00pm-5:00pm

In this introduction to post-secular theory, we’ll study selected recent critiques of twentieth-century academia’s key tenet—the secularization thesis. This tenet holds that societies progress to modernity by secularizing (that is, in the very act of weakening religion). By this logic, a society is modern when—and only when—it breaks from some religiously-described past. Twentieth-century literary studies followed this logic, defining literary movements and individual writers as “modern,” “like us,” and “important” insofar as they broke from religion. Post-secularists note that the secularization thesis is less stable, less universal, and more contingent than it appears—and more biased by North Atlantic cultural norms. Anthropologist Talal Asad crystalizes the post-secularist question: “Why are some features of religion—and not others—picked as definitive [in any given context]”? With scrutiny like Asad’s, post-secularism plays an important role in defining literary criticism for the twenty-first century.

In addition to studying post-secularist theory, seminar members will apply questions like Asad’s to received literary histories of their chosen areas of research, as well as to the longstanding feminist equation of religion with patriarchy. Thus, it is particularly suitable for students interested in feminism(s) and intersectionality, as well as for those desiring to theorize a dissertation, in any literary-historical period, about an issue on the religion/non-religion spectrum, e.g., magic, humanism, the Gothic, atheism, the afterlife, wars of religion, or the ideology of empire.

Interested students are encouraged to contact the instructor (moskal@unc.edu) with any questions or concerns.

Course Readings: Talal Asad, José Casanova, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and A. N. Wilson; as well as selections from *Post-Secular Feminisms*, ed. Nandini Deo; from *The Oxford Handbook of*

Secularism; and from *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. (The latter two are available online via UNC Libraries.) Students may assign brief readings from their own historical field in advance of presenting to the class.

Course Requirements: One-page weekly papers on the readings assigned for the upcoming meeting; and a seminar project, presented in stages: prospectus, short conference-style talk for the class, and final essay, 20-25 pages. In this project, students are encouraged to enlist course readings to theorize work-in-progress about their own historical field.

About the Instructor: By training I specialize in British Romanticism. I've published books on William Blake and Mary Shelley; for thirteen years I edited the Keats-Shelley Journal. My book-in-progress concerns twentieth-century adaptations of *Jane Eyre*. In 2016 I received UNC's University Mentor Award for Lifetime Achievement. My passion for musical theater led me to organize my sections of English 127 (Writing about Literature) around the musical *Hamilton*.

JESSICA WOLFE
ENGL 830: Renaissance Humanism
Tu 5:00pm-8:00pm

This course provides a broad overview of Renaissance humanism, as well as the critical history of humanism, for doctoral students in various literary and historical fields of early modern studies. We will study a wide variety of literary and philosophical works by Alberti, Bruni, Poggio, Poliziano, Erasmus, More, Colet, Rabelais, Montaigne, Cardano, and Scaliger, with a focus on key debates undertaken by Renaissance humanists across Europe. Requirements. Students will write one long (20-25pp.) research paper and will participate in class discussions.

JESSICA WOLFE
ENGL 430: Renaissance Literature - Contemporary Issues: Ovid and the Renaissance
TuTh 1:25pm-2:40pm

No work inspired Renaissance poets and artists quite like Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the Latin epic which recounts bodies changed to other forms. This advanced seminar for English & Comparative Literature majors will begin with an in-depth study of Ovid and his medieval and Renaissance reception, then moving to examine some original works of literature and art inspired by Ovid's poem, including poems and plays by Spenser, Shakespeare, and Marlowe, paintings by Titian, Bruegel, Caravaggio, and contemporary musical compositions that take up Ovidian motifs.

Students will undertake a long, original essay on some aspect of Ovid's reception or Renaissance Ovidianism; emphasis will be placed throughout the semester on methods for conducting original research in literary history and in the process of researching and writing a research essay in stages.

MATT TAYLOR AND PRISCILLA WALD
ENGL 886: Theories of Nature and the Human (co-taught with Priscilla Wald, Duke)
W 4:40pm-7:40

This class will explore changing theories of nature and the human by examining three conceptual clusters in their broad historical moments: state of nature and natural rights and law (colonial encounter and the Enlightenment); evolution and ecology (mid 19th century); and eugenics, biopolitics, and biotechnology (the long twentieth century). We will start by considering how changing ideas about “nature” informed such concepts as “natural law” and “natural rights” and how they evolved through the idea and settlement of “America.” Ranging across oceans, genres, and media, the class will then focus on key developments in the sciences and political philosophy and their relationship to innovations in the literary and visual arts. Broadly speaking, we will consider the centrality of theories of nature and the human to the co-emergence of scientific and humanistic thinking—of their similarities and antagonisms. Our working premise in this class is that these conceptions underpin the broad assumptions—we might call them “cosmologies”—that we make about the world and, more specifically for our purposes, that a sense of how theories of nature change and how they shape our thinking is crucial for understanding “theory” more generally.

The wide range of works considered in this class will allow us to investigate how ideas circulate across media, genres, historical periods, and cultures. Accordingly, the course will include discussions not only of the topics covered by the readings, but also of method and approach: how we understand categories such as “theory,” “literature,” “history,” “life,” and “popular culture,” and how we might approach them in scholarship and in the classroom. There will also be an emphasis on pedagogy throughout this class.