

ENGL1080 - Literature Core

Fall 2018

ENGL1080.01 **Pleasure Reading**

M W F 10

This section of Literature Core will explore the concept of "pleasure reading" by thinking critically about what makes reading enjoyable. We will consider qualities of the text (genre, suspense, scandal) and qualities of the reading experience (reading communities, publication practices, cognition). One aim of the course is to theorize the enjoyment available in "mastery" of a text. In addition to using class readings as a way to examine literary form, we will consider questions of gender, race, history, and culture. Texts may include works by Daniel Defoe, Zadie Smith, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Vladimir Nabokov, television episodes and films, as well as essays and literary criticism.

Lauren Wilwerding

ENGL1080.02 **Literature of Service**

M W F 11

Through a close examination of literary works that take service as a topic, this course explores the ethical and political considerations that service implies. Some questions we will consider include: What is the relationship of art to service? How does service shape the self? How do gender, class, race, and religion shape the experience of service? How does service mediate the relationship of individuals to communities? We will look at texts that explore service in relation to religion, work, war, and society. Authors may include John Milton, George Bernard Shaw, Charlotte Brontë, Jamaica Kincaid, Tracy Kidder, Phil Klay, and Ben Fountain.

Aeron Hunt

ENGL1080.03 **Crossing Borders**

M W F 1

"Crossing Borders" is a college-level introductory course in literature. We will study literary texts and films that deal with experiences of border crossing. In this course, we will take "borders" to mean not only spatial or geopolitical boundaries (e.g. between towns, states, countries, continents), but also boundaries based on social and cultural categories (gender, social class, race, ethnicity, etc.). We will be interested in the ways texts represent these borders and the people who inhabit these spaces and transgress these borders. How do literary texts and films creatively depict borders and border crossing? How do these texts imagine the way these borders shape peoples' understanding of themselves, others, and the world? How do these texts imaginatively represent how people negotiate, transgress, and transform these borders?

Alex Puente

ENGL1080.05 **What is a Novel?**

T TH 1:30

This course examines highlights from the 300-year history of the novel in English. Our focus will be on experimental novels, from the earliest novels in English, including Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1749), to classics of the nineteenth century, like Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and Robert Louis Stevenson's adventure story, *Treasure Island* (1883), as well as recent experiments in the novel form, including a graphic novel, a novel-in-verse, and a novel-in-twitter. Along the way, we will ask how genres define themselves over time, responding to the past and mapping out possible artistic futures.

Maia McLeavey

ENGL1080.06 Words and the Real World

M W F 11

This section of the Literature Core will focus primarily on pressing social and cultural issues and their representation in fictional and nonfictional storytelling. The course will be divided into three or four parts, and our method in each section will be to begin by focusing on keywords of analysis, such as “slavery,” “poverty,” “totalitarianism,” “emigrant,” “refugee” and so on. Then, we will look at how these keywords or issues are represented in both classical and modern literary genres, such as the slave narrative (e.g. by Harriet Jacobs), the dystopian novel (George Orwell), or the “orphan” narrative (Tillie Olsen, Mark Twain or Charles Dickens). And then, at the end of each segment we will examine journalistic books that represent these issues in the contemporary moment: for example, we might read a book on sex trafficking, or poverty, or immigration. All of these discussions will also be directed at improving your analytical writing.

Christopher Wilson

ENGL1080.07 Prisoners and Visionaries

T TH 10:30

While the United States makes up 4% of the world's population, it imprisons 22% of the world's prisoners. This course takes the prison system as a starting point for investigating literary imagination. Many celebrated writers (Margery Kempe; Queen Elizabeth I; Ezra Pound; Martin Luther King, Jr.) were both prisoners and visionaries. Others (Shakespeare, Octavia Butler) envision the world differently through visions of imprisonment. We will be guided by Michel Foucault's foundational analysis of the modern prison in *Discipline and Punish*.

Eric Weiskott

ENGL1080.08 What is Nature?

T TH 1:30

What stories do we tell about nature? How are the stories we are *able* to tell about nature informed by race? And how do these nature stories ultimately shape our understanding of what it means to be human? Nature has largely been imagined in the West as a category separate from and in antagonistic relation to the human. This course, however, explores the vision of nature emerging from the black experiences of those who—once considered no more than livestock— *were* the nature over which their masters ruled, and thus, could not so easily imagine their humanity apart from it.

Jonathan Howard

ENGL1080.09 Love and Other Difficulties

M W F 12

In the classical era and up to the Renaissance, love was considered an appropriate topic for study, even academic study. The assumption was that just because we all have feelings, that does not mean we know how to love, or to love well, and that therefore we need to study it, discuss it, practice, in order to become better at it. This class will study various theories and practices of love via readings in Plato, Goethe, Eugene O'Neill and others, in order to learn how it's done.

Thomas Kaplan-Maxfield

ENGL1080.10 American Experiments

M W F 10

American literature is defined by its commitment to experimentation. Walt Whitman turned his paper sideways, to capture the breadth of American experience. Henry James and Edgar Allan Poe revolutionized what we think of as “ghost stories.” James Weldon Johnson questioned the line between poetry and music. And Emily Dickinson made mischief with rhymes that matched, but only on a slant. Although these authors in many ways found tradition insufficient, their work reflects intimate knowledge of and experience with the writers who came before them. This course explores the development of the American literary idiom as a conversation (and sometimes a debate) among passionate and informed artists. Authors include Mark Twain, Phillis Wheatley, Allen Ginsberg, William Faulkner, among others.
Allison Adair

ENGL1080.11 Relationship of philosophy and art T TH 3

This section of Literary Themes will focus on the relationship of philosophy and art. In the first week, we will discuss the question “What is art?” and spend some time on writing about it. Looking at the philosophy/art intersection from the vantage point of philosophy, we will take up Martin Heidegger. As a follow-up activity to this phase of the course, students will visit the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (in October), to think about painting in Heideggerian philosophical terms. Students will be asked to locate a particular painting that can be interpreted philosophically, and a one-page informal essay will grow out of that experience. For the rest of the semester, we will concentrate on at least one short story (by Henry James), modern novels, and a contemporary film (or two), bringing in more philosophy as well as some psychoanalytic theory to enrich our interpretations. Several formal, thesis-driven essays will be required; writing well will be one of our primary concerns.
Frances Restuccia

ENGL1080.12 Literary as Testimony

T TH 12

This section of Literature Core will explore how literary texts bear witness to historical events and address social issues. Through the study of poetry, fiction, drama, and memoir, we will examine how writers have used a variety of literary genres and forms to transform traumatic memories and the experiences of displacement and oppression into art. Topics include slavery, the Vietnam War, the Holocaust, and 9/11. Texts may include Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno*, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*.
Lori Harrison-Kahan

ENGL1080.13 What Is Human?

T TH 10:30

This course explores how ideas about the human have evolved in the West, from antiquity to the present. It will pay special attention to the expansion of the West into the New World, and how the ensuing age of conquest continues to shape how we understand what it means to be human, especially in relationship to race and gender. We will also consider how environmental problems in particular are forcing a rethinking of the human as a category separate from nature.
Min Song

ENGL1080.15 Alienation as Literary Motif

T TH 4:30

This is a close-reading of literature course. Certain themes, alienation, for instance, or the role of women in society will be stressed, and examined. Narrative strategies, points of view, characterization, are discussed as well, as will the connection between literature and society as a whole; matters of aesthetics are also emphasized. Readings may include *Madame Bovary*, *All the King's Men*, *Where I'm Calling From* (Raymond Carver). There are quizzes, hourly exams and three 7 page essays.

George O'Har

ENGL1080.16 Zen and Literary Writing

M W F 10

This course provides an introduction to literary study by looking at how Zen (Chan) Buddhism has been represented, understood, and expressed through various forms of literature over the past 1400 years. We will read works translated from Chinese and Japanese as well as works originally written in English. Literary genres will include haiku and other poetic forms, travel memoirs, short stories, and at least one novel. We will also consider the Zen koan as a literary form. No previous knowledge of Buddhism is required or expected.

Alan Richardson

ENGL1080.17 Love and Other Difficulties

M W F 1

In the classical era and up to the Renaissance, love was considered an appropriate topic for study, even academic study. The assumption was that just because we all have feelings, that does not mean we know how to love, or to love well, and that therefore we need to study it, discuss it, practice, in order to become better at it. This class will study various theories and practices of love via readings in Plato, Goethe, Eugene O'Neill and others, in order to learn how it's done.

Thomas Kaplan-Maxfield

ENGL1080.18 Memory and Forgetting

T TH 12

This literature core course will explore the theme of memory in fiction, poetry, essays and film: the manipulation of time in stream of consciousness and in flashbacks, the way that trauma or deep emotion can "freeze" moments in our minds to which we recur again and again, the exquisite pleasure of nostalgia as well as the liberating numbness of amnesia. We will read works from a range of historical periods with attention to neuroscientific theories of memory, Freudian notions of repressed memory, and the role of photography in the creation of memory. Authors may include Wordsworth, W. B. Yeats, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Toni Morrison, and Julian Barnes, among others.

Clare Dunsford

ENGL1080.19 Alienation as Literary Motif

T TH 1:30

This is a close-reading of literature course. Certain themes, alienation, for instance, or the role of women in society will be stressed, and examined. Narrative strategies, points of view, characterization, are discussed as well, as will the connection between literature and society as a whole; matters of aesthetics are also emphasized. Readings may include *Madame Bovary*, *All the King's Men*, *Where I'm Calling From* (Raymond Carver). There are quizzes, hourly exams and three 7 page essays.

George O'Har

ENGL1080.20 The Political Labor of Literature T TH 1:30

The pages of literature are filled with instances of work. This course will weave together literature, politics, economics, and philosophy to see how labor is a political act. We will not only examine works of literature about labor, but we will also consider how literature itself does political work, and imagines social and political alternatives to the system we live in. Writers may include Marx, Melville, Eliot, Hawthorne, and Benjamin.

Alex Moskowitz

ENGL1080.21 Imagining “America” in Narrative T TH 3

This course explores the concept of “America” in literary narratives that have been central to defining New World identities from modernity to the contemporary period. The class will explore key themes from the past – such as American exceptionalism, “the American dream,” and the search for equality – and examine how these ideas have both changed and persisted as part of a national culture and identity.

Sample texts include *The Tempest*, Shakespeare; *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman; *Daisy Miller*, James; *A Raisin in the Sun*, Hansberry; *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lee; *Drown*, Diaz; and *Americanah*, Adichie.

Angela Ards

ENGL1080.22 Literature of the Fantastic T TH 3

This course will examine literature that explores themes of “the fantastic.” We’ll consider that term rather generally, and use it to frame our discussions of William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* and other novels, plays, poems and short stories. Ultimately, this exploration will lead us to questions about why writers use invented or skewed realities to explore political, social, cultural or theological issues, and whether these texts’ fantastic nature might even allow writers to reach “truths” that are otherwise unattainable.

Chris Boucher