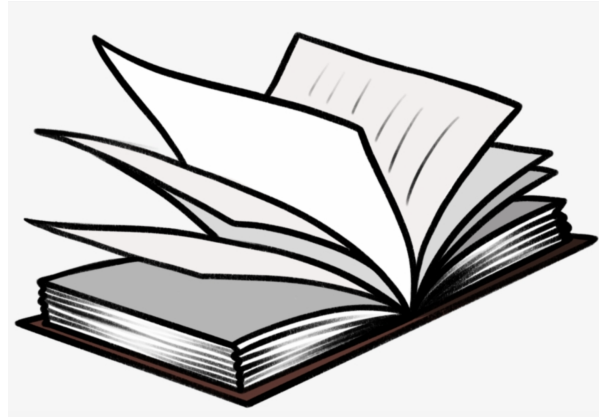


Literature Core Sections

Spring 2022



Monday, Wednesday, Friday Sections:

ENGL1080.08

Literature of Zen

MWF 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 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

ENGL1080.10

Literary Monsters

MWF 10

This course focuses on the figure of the monster in literature and film from early British literature to contemporary American and Korean cinema. We will begin by exploring classic literary monsters (*Beowulf*, *Frankenstein*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*), before moving on to short works of American science fiction (Ray Bradbury, Octavia Butler, Kurt Vonnegut). We will conclude the semester with two recent popular films (*Get Out*, *Train to Busan*) to reflect on the ways in which humans can become the monsters we fear.

Lauren Crockett-Girard

ENGL1080.11**Disaster Narratives****MWF 10**

What happens when a situation expands beyond human control? Does modernity present us with different kinds of disasters than those faced in other time periods? How can literature help people make meaning or sense of large-scale disastrous events? This class will consider these questions in the context of recent history, exploring representative poetry, fiction and film drawn from the World Wars, the aftermath of the atomic bomb, the idea and threat of terrorism, and the ongoing realities of climate change and pandemic. We may also turn to some historical, philosophical and religious texts as we consider peoples' artistic, ethical and psychological responses to disaster.

Catherine Enwright**ENGL1080.17****Literature, History, Politics****MWF 10**

This section of Literature Core aims to understand literature not merely as a set of historical documents, but as an inherently political way of making sense of and even changing history. Beginning with a consideration of how Shakespeare's fictionalized depiction of an ancient Scottish king amounts to a criticism of monarchy, we will move through literary history to cover, for example, how romantic poets such as Shelley and Dickinson contemplated time in terms of decay and renewal, how modernists such as Eliot and Woolf sought to find order in a century marked by chaos and crisis, and how the later novelists Morrison and Vonnegut used literature to work through major historical events that inflict both collective and personal trauma. We will also discuss a number of major philosophical and theoretical sources—Aristotle, Marx, and Freud among others—to guide our thinking in this course.

Matthew Gannon**ENGL1080.05****Self-Help, Self-Making****MWF 11**

To what extent can one change oneself? How much is built-in, how much is fungible? To what extent is change or development internal, and to what extent does it only count in the eyes of others? This section looks at the history of the idea of the 'self-made man' (or woman). We read some of the literature of 'self-help' (the term is a 19th-century invention) from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as novels, short stories, essays, and memoirs that both endorse and are skeptical of the notion that one can create oneself anew independent of upbringing or inheritance. Our texts include selections from a number of American autobiographies from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, a well-known narrative by a former African slave, a memoir of the First World War by a nurse who served at the front, one novel, and several essays, poems and short stories.

James Najarian

ENGL1080.13**Immortality and Legacy****MWF 11**

To wrestle with mortality is to be human. But what if it were possible to preternaturally extend one's own life? In this course, we will examine literary depictions of immortality and all its costs and consequences. In doing so, we will cover a number of literary periods and genres, from the ancient Mesopotamian epic Gilgamesh to modern science-fiction. Our collection of "immortality literature" will include authors like Christopher Marlowe, Oscar Wilde, and Octavia Butler, whose work we will investigate for what it means to leave a legacy.

Sharon Wofford**ENGL1080.25****Literatures of Plague and Pandemic****MWF 11**

Literature has long been used as both a means of escaping and understanding pandemics and their societal impact. In this course, we will read literature across place and time to see what insights we can apply to our own situation. We will begin with Boccaccio's 14th century *Decameron*, in which young people in quarantine told each other stories to pass the time, and end with stories from the *New York Times'* 2020 *Decameron Project*, in which contemporary writers were enlisted to do the same. In between, we will consider how literature about plagues and pandemics help us create order and meaning out of chaos and uncertainty, and how sickness and death help us understand what it means to be human. Texts include: *The Plague*, *The Last Man*, *Pale Horse*, *Pale Rider*, *Severance*, as well as short stories, poems and the 2020 scenes from *Angels in America*.

Treseanne Ainsworth**ENGL1080.14****Literature & Social Justice****MWF 12**

Students in this course will explore literature written by and/or about those persons in our society who are, in some sense, marginalized. Students will be asked to challenge their own conventions and personal viewpoints on human society, and to think about equality and social justice in their own lives. We will explore several categories of marginalization, including race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and body and ability, as well as intersectional identities, and consider how literature can contribute to social justice, humanization, and real societal change. Authors may include Toni Morrison, Roxane Gay, Alison Bechdel, John Okada, Claudia Rankine, Tommy Orange, and more.

Julia Woodward**ENGL1080.24****Literature Core****MWF 12****Bonnie Rudner****ENGL1080.06****The Wizard of Oz as American Myth****MWF 1**

There's no place like home—and there's no story like the Wizard of Oz. This course investigates L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, its nineteenth-century origins, and its many retellings over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We'll watch *The Wiz* with an all-Black cast in the 1970s—evaluate queer

readings of Judy Garland's Dorothy in the MGM film—and consider the story of unlikely friendship in *Wicked* on Broadway (and more!). Each of these texts offer important insights into contemporary understandings of gender, race, home, and magic in American culture.

Christy Pottroff

ENGL1080.12 Science (and) Fiction MWF 1

When we say something is “scientific,” we often mean that it is logical and objective—and when we say something is “literary,” we mean that it is emotional and open to interpretation. Though this is sometimes true, this section of Lit Core will challenge us to reverse those assumptions and see how scientific knowledge can also be flexible and exploratory, and literary study can also be methodical and observation-based. Our texts will be divided into three units—“brain and body,” “environmental science,” and “technology”—and will include both canonical texts, such as *Frankenstein* and H.G. Wells' *The Sleeper Awakes*, as well as non-canonical texts, such as *Black Panther* and *Star Trek*.

Grace Gerrish

ENGL1080.23 The Problem of Pleasure MWF 2

This section of Literature Core will focus on the concept of pleasure. The experience of pleasure—as literature, poetry, and psychoanalytic theory have shown—is never without its opposite: unpleasure. Taking this idea that there is no such thing as “pure” pleasure as our starting point, this course will focus on the various ways in which thinkers and writers have explored the problem of pleasure in their work. From the “Ancients” (Sappho, Plato, Ovid) to the “Moderns” (Freud, Proust, Gertrude Stein) and the “Contemporaries” (June Jordan, Ocean Vuong, Terrance Hayes) our exploration will inevitably lead us to questions of desire, love, and the erotic, as well as how these concepts shape issues of race, power, gender, and sexuality. We will end with a unit on film, which pairs Hitchcock's *Vertigo* with Céline Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*.

Nell Wasserstrom

ENGL1080.19 Love and Other Difficulties MWF 3

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 it, 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

Tuesday, Thursday Sections:

ENGL1080.21

Imagining the Future

T, Th 9

How did they once, and how do we now, imagine the future? It's hardly any wonder that some of the most weird, most frightening, most awe-inspiring writing emerges from our enduring fascination with that unanswerable question. This course's exploration in novels, graphic novels, film, and plays, begins with the science fiction of H.G. Wells and of Fritz Lang; it'll move on to the absurdity of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the utopias of Ursula K. Le Guin, and the dystopian horrors imagined by Kazuo Ishiguro and Margaret Atwood. But we'll also actively try to imagine our own futures: underlying and informing our fictional readings will be the startling predictions of historian, philosopher, and futurologist Yuval Harari in *Homo Deus*. Active participation is expected.

Joseph Nugent

ENGL1080.22

Egotism & Alienation

T, Th 9

George O'Har

ENGL1080.20

Imagining the Future

T, Th 10:30

How did they once, and how do we now, imagine the future? It's hardly any wonder that some of the most weird, most frightening, most awe-inspiring writing emerges from our enduring fascination with that unanswerable question. This course's exploration in novels, graphic novels, film, and plays, begins with the science fiction of H.G. Wells and of Fritz Lang; it'll move on to the absurdity of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the utopias of Ursula K. Le Guin, and the dystopian horrors imagined by Kazuo Ishiguro and Margaret Atwood. But we'll also actively try to imagine our own futures: underlying and informing our fictional readings will be the startling predictions of historian, philosopher, and futurologist Yuval Harari in *Homo Deus*. Active participation is expected.

Joseph Nugent

ENGL1080.02

Memory and Forgetting

T, Th 12

This literature core course will explore the theme of memory in fiction, poetry, and essays: 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. How is our personal identity tied to our memories? How is experience transformed in the remembering of it? How have writers tried to represent the experience of remembering? Authors include Virginia Woolf, Nicole Krauss, Toni Morrison, Lan Samantha Chang, James Joyce, Edwidge Danticat, and George Orwell.

Clare Dunsford

ENGL1080.03
Rhonda Frederick

Literature Core

T, Th 12

ENGL1080.15

The American Experiment

T, Th 12

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 older forms and with the work of their colleagues abroad. This course explores the American literary idiom as a conversation (and sometimes a debate) among passionate and informed artists, across cultures, eras, and genres. Authors include Primo Levi, Ross Gay, Nella Larsen, Brenda Peynado, Danez Smith, Kate Chopin, Cathy Park Hong, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, William Shakespeare, and more.

Allison Adair

ENGL1080.16

Literature of the Fantastic

T, Th 12

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.

Christopher Boucher

ENGL1080.18

Writing the Self in America

T, Th 1:30

How has writing been used as a tool of self-expression, exploration of group identity, and political protest? Focusing on the American context, this section of Literature Core will address first-person life writing from a range of time periods, author subject positions, and subgenres (including memoir, autobiography, the slave narrative, the personal essay, graphic memoir, and online writing.) We will consider such questions as the porous boundary between fiction and nonfiction, the subjective nature of memory, and the possibilities and limitations of life writing as a political tool. As an introductory literature course, our focus throughout will be on addressing the many things that literature can *do*—its capacity to move, challenge, and inspire us—and on our ability to communicate these effects in written work and discussion. Likely authors include Benjamin Franklin, Frederick Douglass, Maxine Hong Kingston, Susanna Kaysen, and Alison Bechdel.

Jean Franzino

ENGL1080.04 **Literature, Society, and the Margins** **T, Th 3**

What does it mean to be part of a community, a society, a nation? And what does it mean to be excluded, to be on the margins of such a collective in one way or another? This section of Literature Core will explore the dynamic between these interrelated questions. We will ask: how do literary works imagine society? And how do they figure individuals' relation to that society? As we pursue these themes, we will explore various literary genres—novels, short stories, drama, poetry, essays—and techniques of literary analysis. Texts to be studied include Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Patrick McCabe, *The Butcher Boy*, *The Narrative of Frederick Douglass*, Tara Westover, *Educated*, and Jamie O'Neill, *What I (Don't) Know About Autism*.

Marjorie Howes

ENGL1080.07 **Literature Core** **T, Th 3**

In this course, we will read and analyze a variety of modern and contemporary novels from various parts of the world. We will put them into conversation with works of contemporary theory. Writing formal papers will also be our focus.

Frances Restuccia

ENGL1080.09 **Education and its Discontents** **T, Th 3**

What does it mean to be educated—as opposed to merely knowledgeable? How do our educational institutions damage as well as develop us? Can re-educating ourselves save the planet? We will explore how writers use various literary forms to explore the promise and pitfalls of formal and experimental education. Our texts will include novels, graphic memoir, drama, and film. Course texts may include: *Klara and the Sun* (Kazuo Ishiguro); *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*; *Persepolis* (Marjane Satrapi); *The Wolves* (Sarah DeLappe); and *Bewilderment* (Richard Powers).

Andrew Sofer

ENGL1080.26 **Fictions of Self and Other** **T, Th 3**

Drawing from a variety of forms and traditions, this course investigates the self as a construction of culture; that is, of history, biology, language, and cosmos. Beginning with *Robinson Crusoe*, Daniel Defoe's epochal 1719 novel of shipwreck and salvation, we will then read two 20th century novels (Coetzee's *Foe* and Tournier's *Friday*) and two 20th century poems (Bishop's "Crusoe in England" and Walcott's "Crusoe's Island") that deconstruct it. Next we will explore self-representation in Dostoevsky's groundbreaking *Notes from Underground*, in Kerouac's beat novel *The Subterraneans*, and in Camus's *The Stranger*. We will end the semester with a play and short stories by the modern Russian master Anton Chekhov and with several volcanic short stories by Flannery O'Connor. The overall goals of the course include improving our ability to analyze and

write about literature as well as to think about and discuss the selves we are and are not.

Thomas Epstein

ENGL1080.01

Literature Core

T,Th 4:30

Allison Curseen

ENGL1080.27

Memory and Autobiography

T, Th 4:30

Building upon the origins of autobiography, we will focus on the power of imagination and memory to reveal life experiences, and consider the ways in which we choose to tell our own stories. As we examine and reflect upon the lives of others, recounted in prose, poetry, and film, we begin to create personal narratives, connecting with others in the retelling, and helping us make sense of our lived experiences. In these works of literature and films, some filled with heartache, some filled with joy, we will have opportunities to better understand and tell our own life stories. Texts, paired with film adaptations include: James Baldwin's *Remember this House (I am Not Your Negro)*, Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler (Stranger than Fiction)*, Vera Brittain's *Letters from a Lost Generation (Testament of Youth, Love, Marilyn)*, and Christopher Isherwoods' "Berlin Stories," (*Cabaret, Lives of Others*).

Susan Michalczyk

Satisfy the Cultural Diversity Core Requirement

ENGL1186.01

Working Class: Stories of Labor, Class, and Privilege T, Th 9

This course focuses on American literature about work, especially blue-collar work, service work, and "women's work." In reading working lives, we will also be reading national narratives about class, gender, race, and immigration. Our literary versions of labor will range from Herman Melville's 19th-century depiction of Ishmael and Queequeg's intercultural friendship born of common whaling work, to Ocean Vuong writing about his mother washing the feet of white ladies in a nail salon. We will arrive at no totalizing paradigms about American work and those who do it, but we will listen for the pressing questions and issues behind the narratives: How are power and privilege exercised in these stories? What are the underlying assumptions in them? How have contemporary class divides taken root from our history?

Suzanne Matson

ENGL1180.01

Narratives of Slavery, Incarceration and Freedom T, Th 10:30

We will focus on narratives that speak to questions of slavery, incarceration, and freedom—both literal and metaphorical. The current pandemic along with the mass

demonstrations against systemic racial injustices will provide a particular backdrop and context from which to consider these questions and issues. The course will start with historical and political writings about slavery from the 1800s and the social contexts in which these writings were produced and consumed. We will then move on to historical and contemporary fiction and film that informs and challenges our historical understanding of slavery and the relationship between slavery and our current system of incarceration. Course texts will include: *Homegoing* (Yaa Gyasi), *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*-Excerpts (Harriet Jacobs), *David Walker's Appeal*, *Beloved* (Toni Morrison), *Kindred* (Octavia Butler), *The Nickel Boys* (Colson Whitehead), and *Just Mercy* (Bryan Stevenson).

Marla DeRosa

ENGL1184.01

Literature, Testimony, Justice

T, Th 10:30

This section of Literature Core explores how literary texts bear witness to historical events and address social issues in order to engage with questions of difference and justice. Through the study of poetry, fiction, drama, and autobiography, we will examine how writers have used a variety of literary genres and forms to expose inequality and injustice; to call for justice, solidarity, and inclusion; and to transform experiences of trauma, displacement, difference, and oppression into art. Part of this course is devoted to considering how Black American writers, from Frederick Douglass to Toni Morrison, have used literature to testify to the history of slavery and its legacies in the United States. We will also read literary works that address Indigenous history, class and gender inequality, LGBTQ rights, illness and dis/ability, and religious persecution.

Lori Harrison-Kahan

Core Renewal: Enduring Questions

Open to first-year students only

Check the [Core Renewal page](#) for updated information

ENGL1715 Revolutionary Media: How Reading Changes Us

MWF 10

As digital media have become more prevalent, scholars have argued that they have changed the way we read and that various modes of reading shape our thinking, our feelings, and even our brains in varying ways. We read textbooks differently than we read poems, tweets differently than we read novels. This course centers on the cognitive and social contexts of reading, and will read a range of texts in different media, from 1450 to the present, that deal in some way with the nature of reading itself,

including pamphlets, poems, novels, film, and social media. We will also work on developing strategies for effective reading and writing.

[This Enduring Question course is paired with “Revolutionary Media: How Books Changed History,” HIST170501. Students must enroll in both courses.]

Mary Crane

ENGL1734.02 Boundaries of Belonging: Race & Anti-Essentialist Art MWF 10

This course explores how Black identity has been represented, understood, and expressed in different cities, states, and beyond. We will ask: How is Blackness represented in New Orleans? How does that differ from in New York? . . . And what about in Outer Space or in the Future? Our tour will include short stories, poetry, and plays by authors like W. E. B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, August Wilson, Octavia Butler, and N. K. Jemisin. Alongside works by these writers, we will also survey music videos by Beyoncé, installation art by Kara Walker, a film by jazz icon Sun Ra, and a concept album by the rap group clipping. A significant portion of this course will focus on Black Feminism and its local history—which begins right here in Boston!

[This Enduring Questions course is paired with “Boundaries of Belonging: Geographies of Race and Place in America,” ENVS1701. Students must enroll in both courses]

John Brooks

ENGL1725 Narrative and Myth in American Culture: Disney MWF 11

A funny thing happened with fairy tales in the last 30 years, coinciding with Disney studios’ Waking Sleeping Beauty, which expanded both its franchise and its economic hold on American culture. Students will examine the power that myths and stories exert on personal and societal identity, from the earliest tales around the hearth to the stories prevalent in today’s culture. Students will decode the meaning that Disney movies portray through an examination of their social, cultural, political, and economic impacts. The courses will review social expectations, socially accepted behaviors, and cultural norms of Disney’s reinvented fairy tales by surveying their impacts on society.

[This Enduring Questions course is paired with “Social Norms and Values: Disney,” COMM1701. Students must enroll in both courses]

Bonnie Rudner

ENGL1734.01 Boundaries of Belonging: Race & Anti-Essentialist Art MWF 2

This course explores how Black identity has been represented, understood, and expressed in different cities, states, and beyond. We will ask: How is Blackness represented in New Orleans? How does that differ from in New York? . . . And what about in Outer Space or in the Future? Our tour will include short stories, poetry, and plays by authors like W. E. B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, August Wilson, Octavia Butler,

and N. K. Jemisin. Alongside works by these writers, we will also survey music videos by Beyoncé, installation art by Kara Walker, a film by jazz icon Sun Ra, and a concept album by the rap group clipping. A significant portion of this course will focus on Black Feminism and its local history—which begins right here in Boston!

[This Enduring Questions course is paired with “Boundaries of Belonging: Geographies of Race and Place in America,” ENVS1701. Students must enroll in both courses]

John Brooks

**ENGL1732 Shifting Forms: Sexuality & Belonging in Modern Literature & Film
T,TH 12**

This course will examine the uses to which artists and audiences put inherited aesthetic forms as they negotiate their relation to both minority communities and the larger society in which they live. Writers do not write, as readers do not read, in a vacuum; they have complex, multivalent, often ambivalent relations to minority communities that give them succor, as to larger, mainstream societies that might seek to assimilate or to exclude them. Inherited forms both stand in for those larger social forms and represent possible modes of escape and protest. We will explore some of these multiple, contradictory relations through readings of queer literary texts and films. Along the way, we will develop tools for understanding modes of political and sexual affiliation, and for talking about the complex ways that literary texts and films shape the lives of those who read them.

[This Enduring Questions course is paired with “Shifting Forms: Political Belonging in Song and Film,” POLI1033. Students must enroll in both courses]

Kevin Ohi

ENGL 1710 Family Matters: Stories of Adoption and Kinship T,Th 1:30

What makes a family? Why does kinship matter? How can reading stories of adoption inform our response to such questions? In this course students will examine adoption as narrative event (exploring its relationship to the bildungsroman, the rags-to-riches story, memoir), as image (the orphan, the abandoned waif, the unmarried mother), and as metaphor (of dependence and independence, of separation and affiliation, of origins and fresh starts). And because adoption foregrounds fundamental issues of identity (constructed and inherited), we will investigate the role(s) of nation, empire and religion in regulating childhood and family life.

[This Enduring Questions course is paired with “Family Matters: Psychology and Adoption,” SOCY1715. Students must enroll in both courses]

Jim Smith