

Literature Core

Spring 2019

ENGL1080.26 Meaning and the Criminal Mastermind MWF 9

Students in this course will deeply examine works from the sixteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries in which the creators consider the dark side of artistic creation. These works are like funhouse mirrors, portraits of the artist as conman, conspirator, shady deity, mad king, perpetrator of the perfect crime. Shakespeare's "Richard III," Suzan-Lori Parks's "Topdog/Underdog," Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo," Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno," and the poetry of Emily Dickinson are among the classic works that take this strange turn. The class is discussion based, but students will write short responses to the literature. There is a final exam.

John Anderson

ENGL1080.02 American Crime Stories MWF 10

How do we make sense of violent crimes? The true crime genre is going through a renaissance right now, as writers reexamine cases from the O.J. Simpson trial to Jeffrey Dahmer's serial murders to the Tonya Harding scandal, and seek to understand the social conditions that gave rise to these notorious crimes. In this class, we will examine how authors use narrative devices, stock characters, and other literary strategies as explanatory mechanisms for making sense of crime, and we will consider the far-reaching impact that the stories they tell have on the lives of real people. Course material will cover a range of genres, including prose fiction, graphic novels, poetry, essays, and film, so that students can learn to critically read and write about these varied forms. Throughout our discussions, we will keep as a central question the ways that the works we discuss use the crimes they investigate to attempt to uncover and diagnose problems lying at the heart of U.S. society.

Andrea Crow

ENGL1080.10 Genius and Madness MWF 10

In this Literature Core course, we'll be reading literary texts that explore how madness has been viewed, conceptualized, and represented throughout history. As a course designed for students from all schools of the university representing a variety of majors, "Madness in Literature" seeks to introduce key thinkers of madness and reflect upon questions such as: What is the connection between genius and madness? What pushes genius or madness beyond the pale of normalcy—and how do we define "normal"? What do these texts tell us about mental life, identity and difference, disruption and social order? Readings will include novels, poems, essays, and drama written by classic and contemporary authors, from Shakespeare and Charlotte Brontë, Flaubert and Sylvia Plath to the contemporary playwright Jiehae Park. The class will occasionally consult clinical and cultural hypotheses which seek to account for the behaviors enacted in certain literary texts.

Alicia Oh

ENGL1080.14 Soul Struggles MWF 10

Moral dilemma. Spiritual crisis. When faced with internal conflict, how do we decide which direction to take? This section of Literature Core will examine poems, novels, and short stories focusing on characters navigating conflicts of passion, reason, faith, doubt, truth, deception, forgiveness, and revenge. We will think specifically about how personal convictions and religious belief, as well as indifference and uncertainty, shape characters' choices, action, inaction, and identity formation. We will also examine how language, genre, and form work to shape readers' experience and expectations of these texts. Authors may include John Milton, Charlotte Brontë, Robert Louis Stevenson, C.S. Lewis, James Baldwin, Marilynne Robinson, and David Foster Wallace.

Megan Lease

ENGL1080.20 Literature, History, Politics

MWF 10

This section of Literature Core investigates the political implications of literature's relationship to history. This course seeks to understand literature not merely as a historical document that records the cultural conventions, linguistic habits, and aesthetic preferences of the past. Instead, we will uncover how literature itself practices a form of reading and writing of history and theorizes the past's relationship to the present and the future. Moreover, by interrogating the connection between aesthetic revolutions and political struggles, we will also examine literature's capacity to intervene in society and consider whether literature can constitute the sort of event that might make history itself. Philosophical and literary texts may include those by Plato, Aristotle, Benjamin, Shakespeare, Eliot, and Vonnegut.

Matthew Gannon

ENGL1080.032 Literature of the Apocalypse and the End of the World MWF 10

In contemporary tv, film, and literature, we are fascinated by stories of the apocalypse. From *The Walking Dead* to *The Last Man on Earth*, *Oryx and Crake* to *Zone One*, these stories of disaster, social collapse, and survival seem to enthrall us. Yet such stories are not new. In this course, we will be investigating texts from a variety of historical periods and in a variety of forms that share an interest in imagining the apocalypse and its aftermath. We will wrestle with questions concerning how and why we tell these stories and how historical, cultural, and artistic context impact representations of the apocalypse. Potential authors include: W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, J.G. Ballard, Katherine Anne Porter, and Octavia Butler.

Kristin Imre

ENGL1725 Narrative and Myth in American Culture: The Case of Disney

MWF 10 and Tuesday 6-7:50

Satisfies Literature Core Requirement Must be enrolled in *Corequisite:* COMM1701.

Core Renewal: Enduring Questions - For Freshmen Only

Storytelling and narrative have been central elements of communication since humans began to live in social structures. For hundreds of years, folk tales were adapted in order to influence social beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors. This literature Core course will explore the history of folk tales and their movement around the world. After reading source material from Grimm, Perrault, Anderson, and others, we will focus on the ways tales have been altered by the Disney Corporation, in order to assess the impact of the movies on audiences.

Bonnie Rudner

ENGL1080.06 Justice and Mercy

MWF 11

Are justice and mercy at odds with one another, or can they be harmonized? How can injustice and lack of mercy be ameliorated? And what is the relationship between divine justice and mercy on the one hand, and human justice and mercy on the other? In this course we will reflect on how literary texts depict the relationship between justice and mercy, as well as issues of injustice and lack of mercy, in areas such as race, gender, and religion. We will explore how these issues are brought to life through characters, conflicts, and different points of view. Authors may include Flannery O'Connor, Fyodor Dostoevsky, William Shakespeare, Denise Levertov, Alan Paton, and Bryan Stevenson.

Laura Sterrett

ENGL1080.40 Pretty Little Liars: Silence, Secrets, and Deception MWF 11

We most often associate the word fiction with literary works—novels, short stories, and plays—or with other forms of entertainment that engage in imaginative storytelling—movies, television shows, and live performances. Works of fiction are dependent on imagination, invention, and deception. In other words, fiction is a lie, and works of fiction deploy lies and liars in various ways and to various ends. For example, a writer must use fabrications in order to create a believable and engaging world for the reader to enter, but secrets and lies can also work to build tension between characters or to create mystery and heighten suspense within a narrative. In this course, we will be looking at some of literature's "pretty little liars": from Roseanne Clear in Sebastian Barry's *The Secret Scripture* to just about everyone in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. We will analyze and discuss the various lies on the page—from big lies to lies of omission—and assess the role of truth and falsehood in the stories we tell.

Megan Crotty

ENGL1080.50 Utopia/Dystopia

MWF 11

How do we describe or imagine our world at its best and at its worst? From Thomas More's *Utopia* to the genetically-modified wasteland of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, this class will examine literary re-imaginings of human society and the ideas that inform them.

Rachel Ernst

ENGL1726 Reading the Impossible Universe

MWF 12

and Tues 6-7:50

Must be Enrolled in Corequisite: PHYS1701.

Satisfies Literature Core Requirement

Core Renewal: Enduring Questions - For Freshmen Only

The mind-bending mysteries of the universe astound you, me, and the world's greatest writers and scientists. No wonder that some of the funniest, weirdest, most awe-inspiring writing (think sci-fi, space-fiction, fantasy, utopias, dystopias...) emerges from our enduring fascination with unanswerable questions. Writing the impossible into existence, our authors will guide us on voyages of exploration from the unthinkable tininess of the singularity to the unimaginable vastness of space-time. And it's all powered by the energy of imagination. Knowledge is limited; wrote Einstein, imagination encircles the world. This semester, let's encircle the universe of science on waves of literary imagination.

Joseph Nugent

ENGL1080.16 Utopia/Dystopia

MWF 12

How do we describe or imagine our world at its best and at its worst? From Thomas More's *Utopia* to the genetically-modified wasteland of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, this class will examine literary re-imaginings of human society and the ideas that inform them.

Rachel Ernst

ENGL1080.22 The Problem of Describing Nature MWF 1

How do we describe the world around us? What do we privilege in our literary depictions of the natural world? What do we exclude? How do our experiences with race, gender, nationality, or socioeconomic background inform our understanding of nature and our relationship to it? And are the ways we describe nature equal to the task of comprehending the environmental crises that the world faces today? In this course we will be investigating texts belonging to a variety of genres and time periods, from renaissance pastoral poems to twenty-first century sci-fi novels, in an effort to understand the ways in which cultural and historical context as well as literary form impact the way we see nature. Potential authors include: William Shakespeare, Margaret Cavendish, Amitav Ghosh, Natasha Tretheway, Octavia Butler.

Margaret Summerfield

ENGL1080.44 Literature and Politics from Julius Caesar to Game of Thrones MWF 1

In this course, we will explore the fundamentals of textual interpretation and literary analysis by reading a diverse array of texts—from novels, poems, and dramas to works of philosophy, science fiction, and film—dealing with the issues and problems that reside at the heart of collective existence. We will read works spanning across various time periods and genres, some highly “literary” and others considered more “popular,” in an effort to develop a critical awareness of how textual elements such as language, imagery, character, plot, and genre are used to construct meaning. But we will also learn to draw connections between specific works of literature and their historical contexts and to consider the perspectives that each text offers on larger questions about political life that have long concerned writers (and readers!) of literature, including: what makes political life necessary? How are political ideas informed by conceptions of humankind, and vice versa? How are these conceptions conveyed in written texts? What do literary texts allow us to understand about political life that works of history or philosophy might not? Readings are likely to include works by Shakespeare, Machiavelli, Frederick Douglass, Herman Melville, George Orwell, and Ursula K. Le Guin (among others) as well as graphic novels and films/visual media such as Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Night* and HBO's *Game of Thrones*.

Scott Reznick

ENGL1080.28 Coming of Age

MWF 2

In this section of Lit Core, we will study "bildungsroman", or literature that concerns "coming of age", the passage from childhood to adulthood. We will consider works across time and place that reveal insights into their specific contexts, as well as our own. Texts include *Othello*, *Great Expectations*, the short stories of Flannery O'Connor, *Drown* and *Salvage the Bones*. We will use small and large group discussion, as well as formal (two longer papers) and informal writing assignments as a way to share responses to texts and to generate our own ideas. There is a midterm, final exam, and an informal student presentation. I value your thoughts and encourage you to bring them to class each meeting.

Treseanne Ainsworth

ENGL1080.30 Rule Breakers

MWF 2

This section of the Lit Core will examine the issue of "Rule Breakers"

We will be looking at literature that deals with the act of breaking the rules and the social and moral consequences that result from rule breaking. And we will be looking at the way this is done in various literary forms.

We have to begin with some key questions:

Why and how, do societies create rules?

Who enforces the rules and how are they enforced?

Why do people decide to break rules?

What are the social consequences of breaking rules?

What are the individual consequences for the rule breaker?

Do men and women deal with rules and rule breaking differently?

Bonnie Rudner

ENGL1716 Metamorphosis: Story-Telling as an Attempt to Manage Change

MWF 2 and Thurs. 6-7:50

Must be concurrently enrolled in *Corequisite*: BIOL1704

Satisfies Literature Core Requirement Course Open to Freshman Only

Core Renewal Course: Enduring Questions

Taking its cue from the literary explorations of human bodily change composed from antiquity to modern times, this course explores a range of writings created in vastly different places and cultures. It aims to promote reflection on change and variety as basic features of reality and therefore of human experience. While not a writing course per se, it gives substantial attention to the technology of writing as a means of transforming our private mental experience into forms that can readily be shared with others.

Dayton Haskin

ENGL1080.24 Modern Literature and its Refuse

T TH 9

Literature has always held an unsteady balance between the beautiful and the refused. Our purpose in class will be to approach the literary (and cinematic) text as an object perfectly suited to exploring this relation. Much of what we read will represent a turn in late 19th and 20th century literature towards what had previously been considered too vulgar to depict in art—the carcasses of Baudelaire, Gregor Samsa's "monstrous vermin". But we won't only take their word for it. We will ourselves embark on a project of close reading in order to examine the tension between the surface meaning and all that "other stuff" buried in a work. We will interrogate each text in order to see what falls out, and to ask—what other kinds of things, objects and even people are excluded, "refused" from appearing within the work of literature?

Matthew Mersky

ENGL1709 Living in the Material World

T TH 9 and Tues. 6-7:50

Satisfies Literature Core Requirement Must also register for CoRequisite CHEM 170101

Core Renewal Course: Enduring Questions - For Freshmen Only

What are the humanistic principles that ground our understanding of the relationship of the human to the material world? Three units —human-matter, human-animal, human-machine—will introduce students to “New Materialisms,” that is, a range of disciplinary attempts to understand human embodiment in a world of matter. Students might read excerpts from philosophy, as well selections from the history of science. Literary texts will include novels like *Robinson Crusoe* and excerpts from poetry. Less familiar genres like the “It narrative” may also be included to help students think about the objects they use daily. We may also watch recent movies like *Wall-e* and *Her*.

Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace

ENGL1080.04 Literature as Imaginative Activism T TH 10:30

This section of literature core will explore how language and literature help to define and change social norms, especially those related to slavery, racism, poverty, gender, and sexuality. We will explore the power of language and imaginative stories to shape and complicate societal ideas of right and wrong, while considering how can literature help readers confront, understand, and empathetically relate to ideas and people previously perceived as foreign or dangerous. We will consider how the work of literature is similar to and different than direct rhetorical appeals for social change, while reading and writing in a range of genres. Authors may include Charles Dickens, Harriet Jacobs, Kazuo Ishiguro, Tony Morrison.

Paula Mathieu

ENGL1080.12 Twisted Tales

T TH 10:30

Exploring "Twisted" Structures, Behaviors, Themes

In this course we will explore "twists" in literature (fiction, primarily)—twists of plot (that surprise us), themes (that challenge us), and structures (orderly structures and those that are unexpectedly ordered). Sometimes, the "twists" are multiple, and we will take special care to note thematic and moral implications as well as the structural designs of "twisted tales." The course aims to help you: enhance your understanding of literature's meanings and structures; amplify your skills of analysis; expand your role in discussion; increase your skill and fluidity as a writer.

Eileen Donovan-Kranz

ENGL1080.36 Marginal in America

T TH 10:30

In this course we will examine a range of texts for their depiction of life on the margins or the peripheries of American society. One emphasis in our reading will be to distinguish between the many stages and states of marginality, i.e., between visible and invisible marginality, permanent and transitory, voluntary and involuntary. Therefore, the marginal experiences we will encounter include that of the Native American, the urban working-class, the African American, the first generation European immigrant, the regionalist voice, the “New” woman, the social anarchist, the refugee, among others. Marginality, in other words, will be encountered in terms of class, race, gender, ethnicity and geography, and, in many cases, these conditions will overlap. Writers will include: Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Frederick Douglas, Willa Cather, Kate Chopin, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Colm Tóibín, and Barbara Kingsolver.

James Smith

ENGL1080.46 What Can Money Buy?

T TH 12

What is the influence of the economy and market values on human personality and relationships? How does our economic system affect our environment, and the health of the planet? Focusing largely on contemporary life conditioned by consumerism and the global economy, we'll read novels, philosophy, and essays that deal with our relentless pursuit of "growth" or wealth on the one hand, and its impact on the planet on the other. We shall also look at the role played by literature, and the other arts in order to renew our understanding of the word “value” in other than purely quantifiable terms.

Kalpana Seshadri

ENGL1080.48 The American Idea

T TH 12

In this course, we will examine definitions of America as mediated through several genres: poetry, fiction, essay, and film. From wide open spaces to a cold-water flat, the notion of individual exceptionalism to the obligation to serve a collective good, we will interrogate the many ways literature has grappled with the ongoing struggle to define this place that is, in many ways, still an ideal. Texts will include poems by Whitman, Dickinson, Hughes, and Ginsberg; fiction by Millhauser, Morrison, Danticat, Alexie and Lahiri, non-fiction by David Foster Wallace, and films directed by Orson Welles, Robert Altman, and Paul Thomas Anderson.

Sue Roberts

ENGL1724 Nature and Power: Reading the American Place T TH 12

and Thurs. 6-7:50

Satisfies Literature Core Requirement Must also Register for Corequisite: HIST1710.

Core Renewal: Enduring Questions - For Freshmen Only

Writers since Meriwether Lewis have tried to know the great diversity of American landscape through acts of language. In this course we'll ask how poems, essays, and fiction depict American encounters with nature: As the unknown other to be conquered? As access to a spiritual dimension? As a site of contested claims for use and power? And how have these many meanings we've assigned our landscapes shifted in the face of environmental degradation? Our readings, discussion, and writing will focus on how the American psyche has been influenced by both a fear of, and a love of, what is wild.

Suzanne Matson

ENGL1708 Narrating Black Intimacies T TH 12 and Thurs 6-7:50

Satisfies Literature Core Requirement/ Must also register for Corequisite SOCY 170401

Core Renewal Course: Enduring Questions - For Freshmen Only

This course examines "black intimacies" not only in terms of the content of different creative narratives, but also in the forms that they take. Students will read/view intimate representations – of sex/sexuality, of race, of public and private relations, of interior and exterior narratives – in fiction, film, and visual art to examine how black intimate experiences are distinct from/integral to US realities. We will also explore what specific creative genres contribute to analyses of intimate relations. Ultimately, students will investigate how diverse narratives about black intimacies convey "imaginable truths" that inform how they can understand and relate to an American experience.

Rhonda Frederick

ENGL1080.08 Difficult Texts

T TH 1:30

This class will focus on the analysis of literary texts that are difficult to read because of their form and/or their content. Stylistic and rhetorical complexity in novels by Faulkner, Woolf and Morrison make these great books tough going for the reader. Other literary works challenge us through their subject matter: they address difficult topics including death and dying, domestic abuse, sexuality, and grief. This course, which is not for the faint of heart, will focus on developing the skills necessary to become adept at reading unusually challenging literary texts. Texts may include *As I Lay Dying*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Beloved*, *Three Lives*, *Shadow Tag*, and *Housekeeping*, as well as poetry by Emily Dickinson, Louise Bogan, and Wallace Stevens. Students should expect to write 3 - 4 literary critical essays, give an oral presentation, and reflect on the readings in several in-class assessments and on the final exam. Because classroom dialogue will be an important part of the class, energetic, committed, and passionate students are especially welcome.

Laura Tanner

ENGL1080.18 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

ENGL1080.34 Memory and Forgetting**T TH 3**

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, and Julian Barnes, among others.

Clare Dunsford

ENGL1080.42 Queer Literature**T TH 3**

An introduction to the reading of literature focusing on gay, lesbian, and transgender novels, stories, poetry, and plays. Aiming to foster forms of attention to the elusive details of literary texts, we will explore questions of sexuality and gender identification—and complexities of desire and eroticism difficult to classify according to the usual general categories. Because some describe experiences of marginalization or discrimination and because many evoke (often explicitly) forms of desire that some, inevitably, will not share and may even find repellent, these can be challenging texts that show us how discomfiting, how permanently unsettling, literature can be.

Kevin Ohi