First-Year Writing Seminars Recommended for Prospective Majors

Descriptions of all First-Year Writing Seminars may be found in the John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines Brochure, which is available at the following website: http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/fws/fws.htm.

*English 1270 cannot be counted towards the 40 credits required for completion of the English major.*

Each seminar is limited to 18 students.

Students who have already taken a First-Year Writing Seminar, or who score 4 or 5 on the Princeton AP exam, or 700 or better on the English Composition or CEEB tests, may enroll, space permitting, in any section of Engl 1270: Writing About Literature.

1270 Seminar 101 Writing About Literature: Doubling, Disguise, and Desire in Drama

TR 10:10 - 11:25

Davis, Stuart

Theatre is never more theatrical than when it doubles itself—in strategically paired characters, in plays about playing, in tales of vindictive intrigue, in parallel plotlines, in confusions of gender and identity, in reflections on its own dark or joyous origins. Beginning with Euripides' *The Bacchae*, this course will explore such doublings and the frenzies they entail, reading comedies and tragedies by such playwrights as Shakespeare, Thomas Middleton, Oscar Wilde, Bertolt Brecht, Tom Stoppard, Jean Genet, and Suzan-Lori Parks, and viewing them, when possible, in live or filmed performance. And we'll write a lot.

1270 Seminar 102 Writing About Literature: All Our Favorite Books

TR 10:10 - 11:25

Ngugi, Mukoma Wa

In this course you will suggest and select the books we shall read with the idea of analyzing the category of like, love or favorite. We shall be interested in aesthetics and taste in literature. What is your favorite book and why? Why are some books called guilty pleasures and others literary reads? To truly love a book, understanding it through analysis is the best expression of that love. In this course we shall move forward with the understanding that critical analysis does not kill one's love for a book, it enhances it.

1270 Seminar 103 Writing About Literature: Banned Books

TR 1:25 - 2:40

Hutchinson, George

In this writing seminar we will read and respond to literary works that have been banned at various points in history and in different cultures. We will read them for sheer enjoyment and interpretation, but we'll also talk about the reasons, sometimes quite surprising, for their suppression and look for common threads between them in the way they challenge political or social authority. Readings will include Aristophanes’ play *Lysistrata*, Lillian Hellman’s play *The Children’s Hour*, Voltaire’s *Candide*, Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*, Anne Frank’s *The Diary of a Young Girl*, and poems by Walt Whitman, Charles Baudelaire, Anna Akhmatova, and Allen Ginsberg.

1270 Seminar 104 Writing About Literature: The Question of Tragedy

TR 2:55 - 4:10

Lorenz, Philip

The word “tragedy” is used almost daily by the media to describe devastating or catastrophic events. But what does the term actually mean? Does it refer to the particular form of drama Aristotle thought was designed to produce pity and fear? Is there still a connection between our “modern” use of the term “tragedy” and classical theater theory? What exactly is “tragic” drama? (Why, for example, did Shakespeare not call *Hamlet* a tragedy but a “tragicall historie”?) What is the relationship between tragedy and history? The course explores these and other questions of tragedy through careful, close readings, discussions, and, above all, critical writings about paradigmatic tragedies of the Western tradition, including plays by Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Lorca, and Miller.

Critical Writing and Creative Nonfiction

English 2880-2890 offers guidance and an audience for students who wish to gain skill in expository writing—a common term for critical, reflective, investigative, and creative nonfiction. Each section provides a context for writing defined by a form of exposition, a disciplinary area, a practice, or a topic intimately related to the written medium. Course members will read relevant published material and write and revise their own work regularly, while reviewing and responding to one another’s. Since these seminar-sized courses depend on members’ full participation, regular attendance and submission of written work are required. Students and instructors will confer individually throughout the term. *English 2880-2890 does not satisfy requirements for the English major.*

http://courses.cit.cornell.edu/engl2880-2890

Each seminar limited to 18 students. Students must have completed their colleges’ first-year writing requirements or have the permission of the instructor.
2880 Seminar 101 Expository Writing: Creative Nonfiction: True Storytelling  
MWF 11:15 - 12:05  Schenkman, Lauren  
4 credits.

In this course, we’ll explore the possibilities of creative nonfiction, using personal experience as a starting point for telling compelling stories that make sense of the world. The course will use writing as a way of investigating and illuminating subjects both familiar and unfamiliar. Reading will include memoirs, travel narratives, and reflective and analytic essays by such writers as Audre Lorde, Virginia Woolf, James Baldwin, and David Sedaris. As readers and storytellers, we’ll consider narrative craft (characters, dialogue, scene, and setting) as well as issues of voice, perspective, and purpose. Along the way, we’ll discover how careful, intentional writing can make the seemingly incoherent coherent. Through frequent workshopping, students will gain skill at being one another’s reviewers and advisors.

2880 Seminar 102 Expository Writing: T.V. Nation: Television and Identity in America  
MWF 12:20 - 1:10  Faulkner, David  
4 credits.

Television mediates our national and domestic life more than we may realize. From its origins, TV—even for those who consume little of it—has represented, even regulated, our experiences of childhood and adolescence, production and consumption, politics and citizenship. It seeks to define us as people, workers, and citizens. In this course, we will develop ways to read and to write about the small screen as a cultural text. In doing so, we will explore how the genres, institutions and ideologies of contemporary television both reflect and refract our national and domestic life.

2880 Seminar 103 Expository Writing: Teen Dream/Teen Wasteland  
MW 2:55 - 4:10  Stahl, Lynne  
4 credits.

“Ever since my twelfth,” muses Molly Ringwald in Sixteen Candles, “I’ve been looking forward to my sweet sixteen.” The long-awaited day turns out to offer both deep disappointment and unexpected delight; being a “teenager” has presented hope but also terrible anxiety for children and parents ever since teendom emerged as a social category in the mid-1900s. This course will explore adolescence in such films as Rebel Without a Cause, Beach Party, and Carrie, considering historical events and trends in popular culture. What possibilities and limitations follow from a genre’s organization around a specific age group? What constitutes “teen issues” from decade to decade? How do individuals of various social demographics experience adolescence differently? Students will write reviews, formal analyses, and their own film proposals.

2880 Seminar 105 Expository Writing: Tools for Time Travel  
TR 2:55 - 4:10  Feldman, Ezra  
4 credits.

Time travel isn’t just possible; it happens all the time in stories set in the past, present and future. Such films as Terminator, Memento, Mulholland Drive, and Inception—and fictions and novels by such writers as Jorge Luis Borges, Isaac Asimov, Octavia Butler, and Ursula le Guin—give us lives out of order and effects that precede their causes. How do time travel narratives talk back to philosophy, cultural history, and the way we imagine the flow of time? What are the stakes of time travel’s invention and intervention? This course challenges students to think and write carefully about the gap between linear experience and fictional narratives that loop, fold, and oscillate in time. Assignments will include critical essays and a final independent project.

2880 Seminar 106 Expository Writing: Terrorism, National Security, and the Law  
TR 1:25 - 2:40  Phulwani, Vijay  
4 credits.

How has “terrorism” been defined and imagined, and what role has it played in the growth of the American national security state? In this course, we will examine how terrorism has transformed the American government from the late 19th century up through today. We will look at the motivations and objectives of those called terrorists as well as the legal and political strategies that have been used to combat them. We will engage with contemporary questions of how to balance competing claims to privacy, free speech, political secrecy, national security, and the rule of law. Students will read legal opinions, primary and secondary historical texts, trial transcripts, and the writings of terrorists themselves.

3810 Uncanny Reading, Canny Critical Writing  
TR 1:25 - 2:40  Davis, Stuart  
4 credits.

Reading and writing are uncanny practices: the ghosts of earlier fictions return in later ones, which “read” their precursors hauntedly. And canny critical writing repeats the process explicitly and clearly. In this course we’ll read Vladimir Nabokov’s Pale Fire; Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre with Jean Rhys’s Wide Sargasso Sea and Henry James’s Turn of the Screw; a tale by E.T.A. Hoffmann and a treatise by Sigmund Freud; Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness and its postcolonial revision, Tayeb Salih’s Season of Migration to the North; and Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway with Michael Cunningham’s The Hours. We’ll write frequently and read one another’s works as collaborators and critics, producing portfolios of finished prose by the semester’s end. See http://courses.cit.cornell.edu/sad4449/3810/.

A writing sample will be required.
The function of the theatre critic is well understood, but the role of the dramaturg remains mysterious in the American theatre. Yet theatre critics and dramaturgs use many of the same research, analytic, and writing skills, and need the same knowledge of history, literature, and culture to perform their duties effectively. This practicum, designed for advanced undergraduates and graduate students, allows participants to develop skills central to these complementary professions. The course includes units on writing effective performance reviews, working with student playwrights on script development, preparing materials for directors, designers and actors, writing program essays for audiences, and selecting/preparing translations for production. While our focus will be on the theatre, students with interest in applying these skills to film/television/media or dance contexts are welcome.

Creative Writing

Students usually begin their work in Creative Writing with English 2800 or 2810, and only after completion of the First-Year Writing Seminar requirement. Please note that either English 2800 or English 2810 is the recommended prerequisite for 3000-level Creative Writing courses. English 2800 and 2810 may satisfy a distribution requirement in your college (please check with your college advisor). English 3820-3830, 3840-3850, and 4800-4810, 4801-4811 are approved for the English major. In addition, one course at each level of Creative Writing is required for the Creative Writing minor: one 2800 or 2810, one 3820, 3830, 3840 or 3850, and one 4800, 4801, 4810 or 4811.

**MAJORS AND PROSPECTIVE MAJORS, PLEASE NOTE:** Although recommended for prospective English majors, *English 2800-2810 cannot be counted towards the 40 credits required for completion of the English major.* English 2800 or English 2810 is a prerequisite for 3000-level Creative Writing courses, which count towards the major. English 2800 is not a prerequisite for English 2810.

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Prerequisite: ENGL 2800 or ENGL 2810 and permission of instructor based on submission of a manuscript (bring manuscript to first day of class, or submit via email, depending upon instructor's preference). ENGL 3820 or 3830 counts toward the English major, and either it or ENGL 3840 or 3850 (Intermediate Poetry Workshop) is required for the Creative Writing minor. ENGL 3820 and 3830 are the same course, the former offered in fall, the latter in spring. Limited to 15 students.

This course focuses upon the writing of fiction or related narrative forms. May include significant reading and discussion of readings, explorations of form and technique, completion of writing assignments and prompts, and peer review of student work. Many students will choose to write short stories, but excerpts from longer works will also be accepted. Students may take 3820 or 3830 more than once.

Prerequisite: ENGL 2800 or ENGL 2810 and permission of instructor based on submission of a manuscript (bring manuscript to first day of class, or submit via email, depending upon instructor's preference). ENGL 3840 or 3850 counts toward the English major, and either it or ENGL 3820 or 3830 (Intermediate Fiction Workshop) is required for the Creative Writing minor. ENGL 3840 and 3850 are the same course, the former offered in fall, the latter in spring. Limited to 15 students.

This course focuses upon the writing of poetry. May include significant reading and discussion of readings, explorations of form and technique, completion of writing assignments and prompts, and peer review of student work. Students may take 3840 or 3850 more than once.

Prerequisite: permission of instructor based on submission of a manuscript (bring manuscript to first day of class, or submit via email, depending upon instructor's preference). Prior completion of a section of ENGL 3840 or 3850 is strongly recommended. ENGL 4800 and 4810 count toward the English major, and fulfill the 4000-level writing seminar requirement of the Creative Writing minor. Limited to 15 students.

This course is intended for verse writing students who have completed ENGL 3840 or 3850 and wish to refine their writing. It may include significant reading and discussion of readings, advanced explorations of form and technique, completion of writing assignments and prompts, and peer review of student work. In addition to the instructor's assigned writing requirements, students may work on longer-form verse projects. Students may take 4800 or 4810 more than once.
4801 Advanced Narrative Writing
4 credits.
Prerequisite: permission of instructor based on submission of a manuscript (bring manuscript to first day of class, or submit via email, depending upon instructor’s preference). Prior completion of a section of ENGL 3820 or 3830 is strongly recommended. ENGL 4801 and 4811 count toward the English major, and fill the 4000-level writing seminar requirement of the Creative Writing minor. Limited to 15 students.

This course is intended for narrative writing students who have completed ENGL 3820 or 3830 and wish to refine their writing. It may include significant reading and discussion of readings, advanced explorations of form and technique, completion of writing assignments and prompts, and peer review of student work. In addition to the instructor’s assigned writing requirements, students may work on longer-form narrative writing projects. Students may take 4801 or 4811 more than once.

2000-Level Courses

Courses at the 2000 level include foundational surveys designed to introduce English majors and minors to important areas of the curriculum, courses on major themes and topics that span historical periods, and courses intended for non-majors as well as majors and minors. No previous college-level study in English is assumed.

2010 The English Literary Tradition I
4 credits. (Also AMST 2030)
This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 courses required of English majors.

This course will introduce literature from the earliest written English poetry to the works of the Renaissance, through a long span of what we now call “England.” We’ll thus follow the origins and development of one of the world’s great literatures, while bumping over multiple invasions, collisions and transformations of languages and peoples, flowering of cultural “renaissances” before and then including the Renaissance, devastating plagues, religious renewals and purges, and extraordinary innovations in the technologies of spreading knowledge. Sampling epic, romance, allegory, lyric, drama, prose and their combinations, we will focus on writings from Beowulf to the works of John Milton. No prerequisites. Critical essays, informal writings, possibly a dramatic production, and a final exam.

2030 Introduction to American Literatures: Beginnings to the Civil War
4 credits. (Also AMST 2030)
This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 courses required of English majors.

This course begins with a look at the philosophies of the first Americans, Native Americans, using the example of the Navajo creation narratives, and then proceeds to read European, African American, and other Native texts in order to understand what forces shaped the formation of the United States and pulled it apart by the time of the Civil War. We will be particularly interested in the forces of colonialism, capitalism, and democracy, through the readings of such documents as the journals of Christopher Columbus; the Indian captivity narratives of Mary Rowlandson and Mary Jemison; the political writings of Tom Paine, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and Henry David Thoreau; narratives of African American resistance by David Walker, Harriet Jacobs, and Frederick Douglass; the Pequot William Apess’s writings for the rights of American Indians; and the fiction of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Herman Melville.

2270 Shakespeare
4 credits. (Also PMA 2670)
This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 courses required of English majors.

This class aims to give students a good historical and critical grounding in Shakespeare’s drama and its central place in Renaissance culture. We read ten plays covering the length of Shakespeare’s career: comedies, history plays, tragedies, and romances, including The Merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night, The Tempest, Othello, King Lear, Richard II, Henry IV Part One, and Henry V. Our study will include attention to dramatic forms, Shakespeare’s themes, and social and historical contexts, including early modern English theater history. The course combines lectures and hands-on work in weekly discussions focused on performance, close reading, and questions raised by the plays. We will also view some film adaptations of Shakespeare.

2350 Literature and Medicine
4 credits. (Also BSOC 2350, FGSS 2350, LGBT 2350)
How does literary language depict the experience of physical suffering? Can a poem or a novel palliate pain, illness, even the possibility of death? From darkly comic narratives of black plague and accounts of early modern melancholy to twentieth century critiques of the mental institution and depictions of the AIDS crisis, this course examines literature centered on medical practices from the early modern period through the twentieth century. Why have medical practices changed, and how do writers address their political, social, and ideological implications? Readings will include a broad range of genres, including poetry (Coleridge, Whitman), fiction (McEwan, Chekhov, Gilman, Kafka), theater (Kushner), nonfiction prose (Defoe, Woolf), and critical theory (Scarry, Canguilhem, Sontag).

August 21, 2014
How do poems travel in the world? How does the world travel in poems? In this class, we will read poetry written in English from around the world, studying the way poems can speak beyond national borders. English language verse, from early 20th-century modernism to the present day, has sought new forms to face unprecedented global migrations, states of exile, technological interconnections, and ecological changes. From sonnets to epics, World Wars to Google Earth, we will study poems that ask how race, class, and gender inflect the relationship between local life and cosmopolitan ambition. We will read poets such as T.S. Eliot, Rabindranath Tagore, W.B. Yeats, Lorna Goodison, Langston Hughes, W.H. Auden, Elizabeth Bishop, Derek Walcott, Daphne Marlatt, Christopher Okigbo, Louise Bennett, and Seamus Heaney.

2650 Introduction to African American Literature
4 credits. (Also AMST 2650, ASRC 2650)
This course will introduce students to the African American literary tradition. Through aesthetic and contextual approaches, we will consider how African American life and culture has defined and constituted the United States of America. From slave narratives to Hip-Hop music, we will trace the range of artistic conventions and cultural movements while paying close attention to broader historical shifts in American life over the past three centuries. We will ask: How do authors create and define a tradition? What are some of the recurring themes and motifs within this tradition? Authors will include: Phillis Wheatley, David Walker, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, W.E.B. DuBois, Zora Neale Hurston, Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, and Paul Beatty.

2675 Cultures of the Cold War
MWF 10:10 - 11:00
This class aims to approach the literature and culture of the Cold War as the birth of the present “Age of Information,” as well as the origin of modern notions of privacy that are now being superseded. We will begin with Hiroshima and the several forms of American anti-communism, and proceed from “containment culture” to the beginning of the counterculture, and from atomic weapons to the start of the environmental movement. Units of study will include intelligence (espionage), advertising (publicity), civil rights, and the public questioning of gender roles. We will also view a few films and discuss music and painting of the period. Authors include James Baldwin, Sylvia Plath, Marshall McLuhan, John Okada, Jack Kerouac, Frank O'Hara, Patricia Highsmith, and Rachel Carson.

2740 Scottish Literature
MWF 11:15 - 12:05
The course may be taken for 3 or 4 credits; those choosing 4 credits will complete an additional writing project.

This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 courses required of English majors.

Although Scotland, which was long a separate nation, is now politically united with England, it preserves its distinctiveness. This course provides an introduction to Scottish literature, with special emphasis on the medieval period and the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. The course should appeal to those who wish to learn about their Scottish heritage, and also those who simply wish to encounter a remarkable national culture and the literature it has produced. Some of the texts will be read in Scots, but no familiarity with Scots or earlier English is presumed. We welcome readers of literature who are not English majors.

2780 Body as Text: Pleasure and Danger
TR 11:40 - 12:55
We experience our bodies as so much a part of who we are that we take them for granted. Yet the way we think about the body has a history of its own. This class looks at how the idea of “the body” gets constructed over time. How has the body come to have attributes called “gender,” “sexuality,” and “race”? Why have some bodies been seen as monstrous, perverted, and unholy, others as gorgeous, normal, and divine? What makes bodies pleasurable and dangerous? We'll find out by examining a broad range of evidence from the ancient era to the present day, including literature (Ovid, Kafka, Octavia Butler), philosophy (Plato, Descartes, Judith Butler), film, and the history of science.

2790 Lit! Literature & Intoxication
4 credits.
This course explores ways that literature is a form of intoxication. Poetry and fiction have long been condemned for luring readers into decadence. Consider the Republic: Socrates bans poetry from his state. “Under the excitement of poetry,” Socrates argues, citizens “neglect justice and virtue.” Yet proponents celebrate imaginative writing for its mind-altering properties. A good novel is said to change one’s thinking and even impart transcendence. In a letter, Emily Dickinson describes a potent buzz: “If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.” We’ll read widely and closely to sample diverse literary highs and methods. We’ll also consider humanity’s complex relationship with intoxication and recent trends on college campuses.
Courses Originating in Other Departments

2006 Punk Culture 4 credits. (Also COML 2006, MUSIC 2006, AMST 2006)
TR 3:35 - 4:25 McEnaney, Thomas; Peraino, J.

Punk Culture—comprised of music, fashion, literature, and visual arts—represents a complex critical stance of resistance and refusal that coalesced at a particular historical moment in the mid-1970s, and continues to be invoked, revived, and revised. In this course we will explore punk’s origins in New York and London, U.S. punk’s regional differences (the New York scene’s connection to the art and literary worlds, Southern California’s skate and surf culture, etc.), its key movements (hardcore, straight edge, riot grrrl, crust, queercore), its race, class and gender relations, and its ongoing influence on global youth culture. We will read, listen, and examine a variety of visual media to analyze how punk draws from and alters previous aesthetic and political movements.

2035 Science Fiction 4 credits. (Also COML 2035, STS 2131)
MWF 11:15 - 12:05 Banerjee, Anindita

Science fiction, as Fredric Jameson put it, is “the only kind of literature that can reach back and colonize reality.” Today more than ever, when science and technology have penetrated everyday life in ways that would have seemed impossible only a few decades ago, it has become apparent that science fiction is not merely a literary genre but a whole way of being, thinking, and acting in the modern world. The course explores classic and contemporary science fiction from Frankenstein to The Hunger Games alongside a rich array of fiction and films from Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

2170 History of the English Language to 1300 4 credits. (Also LING 2217, MEDVL 2217)
MWF 10:10 - 11:00 Harbert, Wayne

This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 courses required of English majors.

This course explores the development of the English language from its Indo-European beginnings through the period of Early Middle English. Topics covered include linguistic reconstruction, changes in sounds, vocabulary and grammatical structure, external influences, Old and Early Middle English language and literature. This course forms a sequence with LING 2180/ENGL 2180, but the two may be taken independently.

2960 Linguistic Theory and Poetic Structure 4 credits. (Also LING 2285/6285, ENGL 6785)
TR 1:25 - 2:40 Bowers, John

Poems are among the most highly structured linguistic objects that human beings produce. While some of the devices used in poetry are arbitrary and purely conventional, most are natural extensions of structural properties inherent in natural language itself. The aim of this course is to reveal the ways in which poetry is structured at every level, from rhyme to metaphor, and to show how certain results of modern linguistics can usefully be applied to the analysis and interpretation of poetry. After introducing some of the basic concepts of modern phonology, syntax and semantics, it will be shown how literary notions such as rhyme, meter, enjambment and metaphor can be formally defined in linguistic terms. These results will then be applied to the analysis of particular poems and shown to yield novel and interesting insights into both their structure and interpretation.

3000-Level Courses

Courses at the 3000 level cover major literary periods, authors, traditions, and genres, as well as literary theory, cultural studies, and creative and expository writing. These courses are designed primarily for English majors and minors, though non-majors are welcome to take them. Some previous college-level study in English is assumed.

3021 Literary Theory on the Edge 4 credits. (Also COML 3021)
MWF 1:25 - 2:15 Caruth, Cathy; Culler, Jonathan

This course introduces the most exciting and cutting-edge theoretical advances of the 20th and 21st centuries. Taught by two Cornell professors active in the field, along with occasional invited guests, lectures will cover such movements as structuralism, deconstruction, trauma theory, biopolitics, human-animal studies and post-human studies. The specificity of the literary and the enigma of language in all its forms will remain a central focus in the course. Students will have the unique opportunity to develop a theory symposium. Course open to all levels; no previous knowledge of theory required.

3080 Icelandic Family Sagas 4 credits. (Also MEDVL 3080)
MW 2:55 - 4:10 Hill, Thomas

This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 courses required of English majors.

An introduction to Old Norse-Icelandic mythology and the Icelandic family saga—the “native” heroic literary genre of Icelandic tradition. Texts will vary but will normally include the Prose Edda, the Poetic Edda, Hrafnkel’s Saga, Njals Saga, Laxdæla Saga, and Grettirs Saga. All readings will be in translation.
This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 required of English majors.

In this course, we will read and discuss some of the earliest surviving English poetry and prose. Attention will be paid to (1) learning to read the language in which this literature is written, (2) evaluating the poetry as poetry: its form, structure, style, and varieties of meaning, and (3) seeing what can be learned about the culture of Anglo-Saxon England and about the early Germanic world in general, from an examination of the Old English literary records. We will begin by reading some easy prose and will go on to consider some more challenging heroic, elegiac, and devotional poetry, including an excerpt from the masterpiece *Beowulf*. The course may also be used as preparation for the sequence ENGL 3120/ENGL 6120.

**3300 Satire, Sensibility, and Sexuality in 18th Century Literature**

This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 courses required of English majors.

Close reading of texts in a variety of genres (poetry, fiction, drama, philosophy, autobiography, essay) will be guided by such topics as: the nature of satire, irony, and mock-forms; the politics of gender and sexuality; the authority and fallibility of human knowledge; the rhetoric of eighteenth-century verse forms; the aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful; the Enlightenment as an intellectual movement. Works by such writers as Rochester, Behn, Dryden, Wycherley, Swift, Pope, Cleland, Johnson, Boswell, Sterne, Kant, and Cowper.

**3390 Jane Austen**

4 credits.

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a student who has read Jane Austen must be in want of excuses to continue that delicious experience. This course explores Austen’s characters, culture, and narrative art against the backdrop of films, novels, and poems which resonate with her fiction. We will investigate Austen’s alluring mystique, her importance in literary history, and her continuing attraction in the twenty-first century. By immersing ourselves in her fictional worlds, we will enrich our experience of her novels and sharpen our awareness of the pleasures of reading.

**3500 The High Modernist Tradition**

Critical study of major works by Joyce, Woolf, Conrad, Forster, Lawrence, Eliot, Yeats, Wilde, Hardy, Hopkins, and others, all of whom are indispensable for understanding subsequent literature. The emphasis will be on close reading of individual texts. We shall place the authors and works within the context of literary, political, cultural, and intellectual history. The course will seek to define the development of literary modernism (mostly but not exclusively in England), and relate literary modernism in England to that in Europe and America as well as to other intellectual developments. We shall be especially interested in the relationship between modern literature and modern painting and sculpture; on occasion, we shall look at slides. Within the course material, students will be able to select the topics on which they write essays.

**3550 Decadence**

4 credits. (Also COML 3550, FGSS 3550, LGBT 3550)

“My existence is a scandal,” Oscar Wilde once wrote, summing up in an epigram the effect of his carefully cultivated style of perversity and paradox. Through their celebration of “art for art’s sake” and all that was considered artificial, unnatural, or obscene, the Decadent writers of the late-nineteenth century sought to free the pleasures of beauty, spirituality, and sexual desire from their more conventional ethical moorings. We will focus on the literature of the period, including works by Charles Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe, A. C. Swinburne, and especially Oscar Wilde, and we will also consider related developments in aesthetic philosophy, painting, music, theater, architecture, and design.

**3672 Visualizing el Barrio: Interpreting & Documenting East Harlem’s Mural Tradition**

Visualizing El Barrio immerses students in a semester-long contemplation and class project that integrates artistic praxis with art history and literary studies to document the historical murals of East Harlem, otherwise known as Spanish Harlem or "El Barrio." These murals tell stories about people, places, and events that resonate with El Barrio’s predominantly Latino/a community and American culture more broadly. The murals in East Harlem emerge out of a rich Latin American artistic tradition that migrated with the people who comprise the U.S. Latino/a diaspora. Through student research and documentation, “Visualizing El Barrio” will participate in the preservation of East Harlem’s historical murals, culminating in a celebration of the artwork with a student-curated exhibit of photographs and presentations. The course includes a Saturday field trip to East Harlem.
Jane Austen and zombies, *A Christmas Carol* in 3D, PBS miniseries: why is nineteenth-century fiction so un-dead? The plot of the Victorian novel—sexual betrayal, pathological greed, the sadistic damage wrought on helpless children—reflects wrenching social, scientific, and technological transformations whose global sweep rivals that of our own era’s conflicts. Intertwining domestic and imperial spaces, realistic fiction embodied the most innovative attempt to grasp and contain such seismic shifts in an entertaining idiom for a rising mass readership. These works refract the cultural debates of the age and suggest sources of redemption. We can take pleasure in them even as we critically analyze how the Victorians live now. Likely authors include: Dickens, Gaskell, Brontë, Eliot, Collins and Hardy.

**Courses Originating in Other Departments**

**3475 Global Shakespeare**
4 credits. (Also COML 3475, PMA 3775)

From Goethe to Aimé Césaire, Orson Welles to Akira Kurosawa, Agha Hashar Kashmiri to Ariane Mnouchkine, writers, artists, actors, and directors around the world have drawn from Shakespeare’s works in order to fashion their own. We will take a global journey from the Renaissance to the present day to discover both Shakespeare’s creations and those he inspired. This course may feature guest speakers, performances, and/or screenings, and specific works may vary from year to year.

**3790 Reading Nabokov**
TR 1:25 - 2:40
Shapiro, Gavriel

This course offers an exciting trip to the intricate world of Nabokov’s fiction. After establishing himself in Europe as a distinguished Russian writer, Nabokov, at the outbreak of World War II, came to the United States where he reestablished himself, this time as an American writer of world renown. In our analysis of Nabokov’s fictional universe, we shall focus on his Russian corpus of works, from *Mary* (1926) to *The Enchanter* (writ. 1939), all in English translation, and then shall examine the two widely read novels which he wrote in English in Ithaca while teaching literature at Cornell: *Lolita* (1955) and *Pnin* (1957).

**3801 Poetry and Poetics of the Americas**
TR 2:55 - 4:10
Monroe, Jonathan

As globalization draws the Americas ever closer together, reshaping our sense of a common (uncommon) American culture, what claims might be made for a distinctive, diverse “poetry of the Americas”? How might we characterize its dominant forms and alternative practices? What shared influences, affiliations, concerns and approaches might we find and what differences emerge? Ranging across North and South America, Central America and the Caribbean, this course will place in conversation such figures as Whitman, Martí, Dickinson, Dario, Poe, Borges, Stein, Mistral, Williams, Neruda, Césaire, Rich, Walcott, Glissant, Brathwaite, Ashbery, Zurita, Fanny Howe, Parra, Susan Howe, Harjo, Cisneros, Bracho, and Vicuna. All texts not written in English will be available in both translation and the original.

**4000-Level Courses**

Courses at the 4000 level are advanced seminars intended primarily for English majors and minors who have already taken courses at the 2000 and/or 3000 level. Other students may enroll in these courses, but are encouraged to consult with the instructor.

**4180 The Imaginary Jew: Roots of Antisemitism in Medieval England**
TR 2:55 - 4:10
Zacher, Samantha

This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 courses required of English majors.

When did anti-Semitism begin? The medieval period invented shocking fictions about Jews—that they killed and ate Christian babies; that they desecrated the Host; that they were the murderers of Christ. In manuscripts Jews were visually compared to beasts, devils, and perverts. By law, Jews were forced to live in ghettos, wear distinctive dress, abstain from certain professions, and suffer exile. Beginning with Shakespeare’s Shylock, we will work our way back through visual and literary treatments of Jews in the Middle Ages, reading texts by Chaucer, chronicles, miracle stories, crusader romances, and mystery plays. Drawing on recent theories of the other we will also consider how medieval representations of Jews and other minorities were used to construct medieval communal, religious, and political identities.
4270 Advanced Seminar in Shakespeare  
W 2:30 - 4:25  Correll, Barbara  
4 credits. (Also ENGL 6270) 
This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 courses required of English majors.

Some of Shakespeare's most important dramas are about ancient figures and events: *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Troilus and Cressida*, among others. While Shakespeare transmits a classical cultural heritage to his early modern audience, he critically adapts it in thought-provoking and innovative ways. Many of Shakespeare's major characters in these plays act as representatives of classical authority and yet are profoundly in conflict with it. While remaining attentive to complexities and indeterminacies in these texts, what responses—resistance, identification, affirmation, accommodation—are available to an author? What is the political charge of Roman (Republican) plays in the context of English monarchy? What can we say about the politics of Shakespeare's adaptive practices? What political and cultural questions, past and present, do they raise? (Details: bc21@cornell.edu)

4600 Melville  
W 2:30 - 4:25  Maxwell, Barry  
4 credits. (Also AMST 4600) 
An American whose life and writing ranged over the globe, Herman Melville (in the estimation of C.L.R. James) "saw the tendency of things." Our study of the fiction and poetry will turn on some of those "things" of modernity that most obsessively engaged Melville's representational and critical capacities: slavery; illegitimate authority; exterminationist policy directed against American Indians; capitalism; orphanhood and homelessness; imperialism; the attempted occultation of women; the shifting terrain of male comradeship; and the ambivalent resort to religion. We will be interested in testing the premise that Melville charted the fault lines of his world with an "unenrolled" critical acuity unparalleled in United States literature.

4745 The Turning Point: American Literature and Culture in the 1940s  
R 10:10 - 12:05  Hutchinson, George  
4 credits. (Also AMST 4745) 
The War. The Bomb. Planetary Consciousness. Film Noir. In one of the most pivotal decades in history, the United States emerged as a superpower and its literature achieved a prestige unmatched before or since. We will examine literary and other responses to the tumultuous events of the 1940s, from fascism's spread across Europe to the onset of the Cold War. Writers and artists, far from triumphalist, questioned the nature of humanity in the wake of incomprehensible catastrophe. A planetary consciousness emerged along with the modern ecological movement and the UN. Expect to read major authors like Richard Wright, Gertrude Stein, and Ernest Hemingway, novels of the war and a classic ecological treatise, alongside film and visual arts.

4770 Transits of Empire: Movement, Encounter, and Critique in Early American and Native American Travel Writing  
T 12:20 - 2:15  Pexa, Christopher  
4 credits. (Also AMST 4770) 
This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 courses required of English majors.

This course examines early American travel literature by and about Native Americans in a comparative perspective. Beginning with Columbus's *Diario*, we will move sweepingly through to the 1830s, viewing along the way the writing of a broad group of travelers including Lewis and Clark, and Edgar Allan Poe. As a body of literature, their work observes and imagines "new" lands and places as a way of constructing and, occasionally, questioning colonial knowledge about Native others. Crucially, we will also be reading texts written by Native American authors (Samson Occom, William Apess, George Copway, and Black Hawk, among others), whose physical and narrative movements in and among Native networks here and abroad challenged colonial powers through their assertions of longstanding geopolitics, kinship systems, and cosmologies.

4773 Narrative and Moral Crisis  
T 12:20 - 2:15  Harpham, Geoffrey  
4 credits. (Also COML 4773) 
It is often said that literature encourages ethical reflection, and even that it somehow fortifies our disposition to behave in ethical ways. This class will consider a different possibility, that literature, or narrative more generally, often represents or provokes circumstances of extreme moral uncertainty. Such uncertainty, sometimes focused in a moment of decision and sometimes arising from a clash of perspectives, can gather around characters, narrators, authors, and even readers. We will be focusing intensively on a few works of literary and cinematic art, ranging from the Book of Genesis to Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, in which moral issues emerge with particular urgency and complexity.

4910 Seminar 101 Honors Seminar I: Contemporary Black Literature and Art  
M 10:10 - 12:05  Woubshet, Dagmawi  
4 credits. 
In this course we will explore the work of contemporary black writers and artists from around the world—including England, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Haiti, Jamaica, the United States, and Zimbabwe. What similarities of experience and aesthetics can we glean from comparing black art globally? And what differences stand out? Along with literary works, we will consider visual art and music to gain a more textured sense of black art in today's global world. Authors/artists will include: Afrika Bambaataa, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Edwidge Danticat, Spike Lee, Toni Morrison, and Yinka Shonibare.
This course may be used as one of the three pre-1800 courses required of English majors.

“I trust nothing but on the faith of my eyes”: Francis Bacon’s declaration became a central tenet of philosophical inquiry during the seventeenth century, as gentlemen and artisans began to collect specimens, dissect bodies, and survey the physical universe. This course explores how the new experimental “science” reverberated in imaginative productions in the age of Shakespeare and Milton. How did poetry and fiction find room for the growing domain of “fact”? Why did Englishmen focus this new scientific gaze on “curiosities” such as the human cadaver, the hermaphrodite, and the New World Indian? In surveying the major developments in English scientific thought before the Enlightenment, the interdisciplinary readings in this course will also introduce students to important literary and philosophical texts from the Renaissance.

Courses Originating in Other Departments

Text Analysis for Production: How to Get from the Text onto the Stage
Examines the play as the central, essential source for production decisions made by the actor, the director, the designer, and the dramaturg. Students "present" their conclusions about the performance of studied texts through project work as either an actor, director, designer, or dramaturg, as well as through two to three papers.

Wordsworth and Rousseau
When we try to “act naturally,” when we try to be “authentic,” we’re aiming to live by ideals that come from Rousseau and Wordsworth. What do those ideals have to do with writing poetry or Confessions, or with inventing a passionate love affair, or feeling the turmoil of fear? We will read fiction, poetry, and autobiography by these two hugely influential writers. We’ll be reading Rousseau’s works in lively, clear English translations, alongside his originals for those who read French, but no knowledge of French is required for this course. This course is open to all students.

Building a Verbal-Visual Movement: Chicano/a & U.S. Latino/a Art Stories
This seminar focuses on Chicano/a and U.S. Latino/a art movements in the 1960s and 1970s. We will examine their different and interrelated social, political, and economic origins within a larger civil rights movement, as well as their aesthetic, literary, and cultural legacies in the twenty-first century. Theorizing that Chicano/a and U.S. Latino/a artists built a verbal-visual architecture for the civil rights platforms of the 1960s and 1970s, we will examine visual icons, verbal slogans, motifs, and sounds that created and fortified an exciting and complex lexicon, visual culture, and poetics of an American experience. Students will also learn about and engage archives and special collections at Cornell and other institutions that house extensive works from this prolific era of artistic and cultural production. Artists, poets, and authors include: José Montoya, Yolanda López, Pedro Pietri, Patssi Valdez, Asco, Miguel Piñero, Sandra María Esteves, Luis Valdez, Ester Hernández, Alfredo de Batuc, Carmen Tafolla, and others.

Body Politics in African Literature and Cinema
The course examines how postcolonial African writers and filmmakers engage with and revise controversial images of bodies and sexuality—genital cursing, same-sex desire, HIV/AIDS, genital surgeries, etc. Our inquiry also surveys African theorists’ troubling of problematic tropes and practices such as the conception in 19th-century racist writings of the colonized as embodiment, the pathologization and hypersexualization of colonized bodies, and the precarious and yet empowering nature of the body and sexuality in the postcolonial African experience. As we focus on African artists and theorists, we also read American and European theorists, including but not certainly limited to Giorgio Agamben, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Joseph Slaughter, detecting the ways in which discourses around bodies in the African context may shape contemporary theories and vice versa.
This course examines the cultural and historical interaction of Muslims and Jews from the emergence of Islam in the seventh century through the classical age of Islam down to the turn of the thirteenth century. The intersection of the two cultures (scriptural, spiritual, intellectual, literary, communal, and interpersonal) and members of their respective religious communities will be studied through readings of primary texts (in translation). The course will conclude with some brief reflections on historical memory and the modern and contemporary significance of the two religious communities' interactions during the classical age of Islam.

What kinds of poetry might be usefully characterized as "postcolonial" and what are the stakes of such a designation? What relation do specific poetic features have to geopolitical, cultural, historical, economic circumstances, and to the condition(s) of what has come to be called the "postcolonial" in particular? With special reference to Edouard Glissant's influential concept of a "poetics of relation," attending as well to our own situatedness as readers—perhaps also, though not necessarily, as writers—of poetry within U.S. (and) academic context(s), this seminar will focus on Caribbean and U.S. poetry as especially fruitful sites for exploring a diversity of approaches to these and related questions concerning postcoloniality, poetry, community, language, culture, and identity.

This seminar considers the points of intersection between theories of affect, emotion, and sexuality in recent queer and feminist thought, and the set of critical and cultural developments that has come to be called the "nonhuman turn." We will explore contemporary critical attention to the agential, sensory and cognitive capacities of the non-human, considering how this body of work reconfigures the relations between human and nonhuman worlds, and the more flexible and nuanced accounts of "nature" and "environments" that they make possible. At the same time, we will examine how the radically expanded ethos of being-in-common proposed by the non-human turn operates alongside the structures and histories of dehumanization to which feminist, queer and critical race theory have drawn our attention.

This course will address the 2014-15 Society for Humanities theme of "sensation" through questions of method, focusing in particular on the interdisciplinary challenges of documenting and archiving sensation. Areas of focus will include: theory and practice of the archive from both queer studies and postcolonial studies; intersections of queer theory and affect theory that explore non-normative experiences of sensation, attachment, and intimacy; questions of genre and media, with particular emphasis on the limits and possibilities of "writing" sensation as opposed to representing it in other media, especially experimental and new media practices such as performance and art installation that are more explicitly embodied and/or material.

Do principles of artistic production or theories of the aesthetic encounter suggest a trans-historical facet to literature, or even to the experience of reading it? This seminar responds to these questions through a study of sensation in classical and early modern literature and philosophy. How might we engage early modern literature and philosophy in ways that suspend or defamiliarize historicist accounts of human embodiment, activity and sensation? On the one hand, changing ideas of sensation may reflect significant shifts in western histories of physiology and selfhood, and the seminar will attend to these familiar themes. But on the other hand, the topic of sensation suggests ways of reading classical and early modern literature as works of art, following Deleuze and Guattari's claim that "Art thinks no less than philosophy, but it thinks through affects and percepts" that form “compounds of sensations.” Deleuze and Guattari's theory will thus steer our approach to works of literature as aesthetic, trans-historical compounds linking classical, early modern, and modern worlds of sensation.