6120 Beowulf
4 credits. (Also ENGL 3120, MEDVL 3120, MEDVL 6120)

Zacher, Samantha

A close reading of Beowulf, the earliest epic-length poem in the English language. Attention will be given to relevant literary, cultural, theoretical, and linguistic issues. One semester’s study of Old English, or the equivalent, is recommended.

6161 Literature of the Crusades
4 credits. (Also ENGL 4141, MEDVL 4141, MEDVL 6161)

Galloway, Andrew

The Crusades occupied brief periods, with events far from most Western writers, but kept a long hold on European historical, religious, and literary imagination. This provides an opportunity to consider how literature responds to ideological and military conflict. Exploring the ideas leading to the Crusades, and some narratives from those directly involved, from the Chanson de Roland to other French and Latin chronicles and poems, the course will consider a wide span of later Middle English literature from romances to the works of Chaucer and his contemporaries in order to reconsider the imprint of the Crusades on the wider English literary tradition. Goals include gaining proficiency in Middle English and its literature, as well as theories of how narrative responds to cultural and ideological crisis.

6430 Trauma Theory Today
4 credits.

Caruth, Cathy

This course examines the history, and historicity, of the theory of trauma at crucial moments in the 20th and 21st centuries. We will examine major theoretical texts in relation to their historical contexts and more recent attempts to expand the field in new directions, including terrorism, nuclear threat, ecological catastrophe, neuroscience, legal contexts, political discourse, theological discourse, and non-Western contexts. Questions will concern the nature of history, event, and testimonial archive as well as the changing question of (the language of) witness in a world in which traumatic repetition is bound up with historical erasure. Guest speakers include Robert Jay Lifton, Shoshana Felman, Elisabeth Weber, Elizabeth Rottenberg, John Zilkosky, Peter Balakian, Carolyn Dean, among others.

6553 Erotics of Instruction
4 credits.

Hanson, Ellis

Instruction is a sensual experience with innumerable orientations: teaching, learning, analyzing, interrogating, suspecting, lecturing, suggesting, introducing, initiating, mentoring, indoctrinating, exhibiting, proving, disproving, discrediting, discovering, disavowing, and always, always discussing. We will discuss a range of classic texts on the relation of pleasure, power, and knowledge in the erotics of instruction, inside the classroom and out. We will begin with Plato’s Symposium and trace its reimagination and critique through psychoanalytic, deconstructive, feminist, and queer theory. In this framework, we will explore works of erotic philosophy by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, David Halperin, Jane Gallop, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, among others, as well as related works of contemporary cinema.

6941 Twenty-First Century African American Literature
4 credits. (Also ASRC 6941)

Crawford, Margo

This seminar will examine novels, drama, poetry, and theory tied to 21st-century black aesthetics. After the first decade of the 21st century, we can now begin to trace the turns and twists that might define twenty-first century African American literature, visual culture, and performance. We will foreground black satire, black diaspora theory, black queer theory, and the framing of neologisms such as “post-black” and “post-soul.” Our texts may include Michael Thomas’ Man Gone Down, Danzy Senna’s You are Free, Paul Beatty’s Slumberland, Percival Everett’s Erasure, Harryette Mullen’s Sleeping with the Dictionary, Toni Morrison’s A Mercy, Colson Whitehead’s Apex Hides the Hurt, Post-Black Plays, Darby English’s How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness, and Kevin Quashie’s The Sovereignty of Quiet.

6970 Cosmopolitanism and Post-Enlightenment
4 credits. (Also COML 6970)

Saccamano, Neil

This course will examine cosmopolitanism as a cultural, moral, and political concept both historically, with reference primarily to the eighteenth century, and theoretically, in contemporary debates. The aim will be to elaborate critically the universalist and egalitarian premises of the Enlightenment notion of cosmopolitical subjects and to evaluate what progressive or ideological functions this notion continues to play in discourses on sovereignty, human rights, religious tolerance, and cultural dissemination and aesthetic community. Works by Cicero, Hobbes, Adam Smith, Rousseau, Kant, and Marx will be read with those by Arendt, Balibar, Derrida, Habermas, Honig, and other contemporary theorists.
In an era of increasing interdisciplinary collaboration, the fields that comprise the humanities are engaging in new ways with law as well as with each other, and projects developed within the context of law schools themselves bear renewed relevance to the humanities. This colloquium will bring together scholars working at the forefront of legal history, law and literature, law and culture, and critical theory from the institutional vantage points of both law and the humanities. Those who present materials will be asked to speak not only about their specific research but also to address where their work is situated within new developments in law and humanities as a whole.

This year, the colloquium will focus on the topic of “law and representation.” The course will begin with three weeks of seminar designed to apprise students of existing work in law and the humanities and to situate current developments within this broader frame, particularly concentrating on the many representational challenges and demands faced by law. We will, for example, read law and literature scholarship investigating the nature of literary and aesthetic representation, legal history concentrating on constitutionalism and popular sovereignty, and legal and political theory tied to questions such as voting, trial procedure, citizenship, and other aspects of democratic process. After the introductory sessions, the remainder of the course will be organized around a series of speakers, some drawn from Cornell and some from other universities.

Students will be required to write six three- to five-page papers responding to the speakers’ pre-circulated talks; these will be due in advance of the class session and shown to those lecturing in order to prompt and enhance discussion.

Readings works by authors such as Octavia Butler, Lucille Clifton, Toni Morrison, and Zadie Smith, we will explore the house in literature and art. In Clifton's [if I stand naked in my window], the poem's speaker suggests the wild, transformative power of inhabiting the “New Thing” that is one's own house. But the house is such the container of memory, it serves as a dangerous and direct portal to history in Butler's Kindred. And Morrison writes in Beloved, “Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief.” We will write poetry, fiction and essays on the house. Where can it take us and where can we, as writers, take it?

**Courses Originating in Other Departments**

What can lawyers and judges learn from the study of literature? This course explores the relevance of imaginative literature (novels, drama, poetry, and film) to questions of law and social justice from a range of perspectives. We will consider debates about how literature can help to humanize legal decision-making; how storytelling has helped to give voice to oppressed populations over history; how narratives of suffering cultivate popular support for human rights; the role played by storytelling in a trial; and how literature can shed light on the limits of law and public policy.