ENG 500—Textual Practices I

section: 2140
meets: W 4:15-7:05 p.m., SS 117
instructor: G.Griffith

(Open Only to English MA Students)
Permission of Department is Required

In this graduate seminar, we will examine some of the significant ways, within what we have come to think of as the Western literary tradition, that texts have been constituted and interpreted. We will take a roughly historical and genealogical approach as we consider, inter alia, the differences between literary criticism and literary theory, and between theory and praxis. Beginning with Plato's less than welcoming attitude to the poet in the Republic, we will read our way through a literary and material history of representation, conflict, conquest, resistance and liberation to arrive at our own learned conclusions about textual practices and textual praxes. The "anchor" texts in the course will be Charles Bressler's Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice, and Terry Eagleton's Literary Theory: An Introduction. When we have gained our critical "sea legs," we will weigh anchor and set our hermeneutic sights on four or five selected literary and cultural texts.

ENG 516—Workshop in Fiction

section: 2141
meets: T 7:15-10:05 p.m., HU 111
instructor: J.Roy-Bhattacharya

(Permission of Instructor is Required – Submit Writing Sample to Humanities 336)

With emphasis on the novel, this course is intended for graduate student writers interested in conceptualizing and generating a substantial piece of fiction, whether it be a collection of stories, a novella, or a novel. We will explore the ways in which a literary narrative establishes its voice and mode of expression, and the variety of technical means by which an author develops a story. Readings will include Albert Camus's The Stranger, Juan Rulfo’s Pedro Paramo, Tahar Ben Jelloun’s This Blinding Absence of Light, Cormac McCarthy’s Blood Meridian, J.M. Coetzee’s Disgrace, W.G. Sebald’s The Emigrants, and Marilynne Robinson’s Gilead.

As a novelist, Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya has established a substantial international reputation. His first novel, The Gabriel Club (UK/USA: Granta; UK/India: Penguin, 1999), was published in eleven languages in sixteen countries. Since 2001 he has been engaged in writing
**Homeland**, an epic-length novel set in Germany between the wars. In addition, his current projects include a trilogy of novels with the Muslim world as a backdrop: *The Desert of Love* (forthcoming Winter 2007), *Baghdad* (forthcoming Summer 2008) and *Black Sun* (in progress). Mr. Roy-Bhattacharya has a diverse academic background, having completed an M.A. in International Relations and studied political philosophy at the doctoral level at the University of Pennsylvania during the 1990s. He has received numerous grants and writing awards in Germany, the Netherlands, Hungary, and India. For the past three years, he has been teaching a variety of courses, including fiction and nonfiction workshops, at Bard College.

**Students interested** in registering for the workshop should send writing samples of 5–7 pages’ length to Mr. Roy-Bhattacharya at bhattach@bard.edu. For other questions, contact the English Graduate Office at 442-4099.

**ENG 517—Workshop in Non-Fiction Prose**

section: 6630  
meets: W 7:15-10:05 p.m., ED 021  
instructor: C.Yalkut

**Nonfiction Writing:** Whether it is called “the literature or fact” or “the fourth genre,” nonfiction prose is a medium of discourse in disciplines ranging from literary criticism and journalism to philosophy, history, and biography. This workshop, in which students explore a variety of techniques and approaches, encourages students to address a wide audience. Students revise their work after discussing and editing each other’s copy, and get a sense of market realities by reviewing current print and online magazines. Three short essays, reader reports, publication queries, and a final project, a magazine article intended for publication. Students are also required to attend (and write about) at least one event in the Writers Institute Visiting Writers series. Readings for this course are drawn from a constantly-changing roster of contemporary and late twentieth-century essayists.

**ENG 580.1 —Representing Islam in Early English Drama (Seminar)**

section: 6634  
meets: T 4:15-7:05 p.m., HU 113  
instructor: L.Cable

Images of Islam came to life on the English stage at a time when expansion of the Ottoman empire threatened Christian rule in Europe. International trade in luxury goods stimulated the taste of theater audiences for what they took to define the exotic Orient: cruelty in battle, dangerous eroticism in love, and imperial sensuousness in style and appetite. Even dramatic heroes portrayed as opposing “the Turk”, such as Christopher Marlowe’s Tamburlaine and Shakespeare’s Othello, shared attributes of the early modern stereotypes that demonized
Muslims. Yet up until the late 17th century, greater numbers of ordinary English people had personal contact with Muslims than they had with any other non-Christian people, including Jews and Native Americans. English-Muslim relations during the early modern “age of discovery” involved diplomatic, cultural, commercial, scientific and technological exchanges as well as joint military operations. Prior to the eighteenth century, skilled English soldiers, artisans and tradesmen looking to improve their career prospects headed for the “Barbary States” of the Mediterranean, not Colonial America, as their preferred destination. So why would English citizens take their chances among people who were portrayed so threateningly on the stage? Where did the stereotypes actually come from? Were Muslim stereotypes necessarily all negative? How did they actually function in any given play? To explore questions like these, we will read a wide variety of plays (including one or two from later periods) in the context of historical and cultural studies by scholars such as John Tolan, Matthew Dimmock, Nabil Matar, Lisa Jardine, Linda Colley, Gerald MacLean, Kenneth Parker, Daniel Vitkus and others.

Requirements: In addition to reading and active class participation, assignments will include weekly one-page response papers, an orally presented annotated bibliography for the research paper, and a final research paper.

ENG 580.2—Bio-Cultures of the British Enlightenment: Medicine, Materiality, and Literary Production (Seminar)

section: 6633
meets: TH 4:15-7:05 p.m., HU 113
instructor: R.Barney

This course will explore the intimate, often unpredictable, relation between new philosophical and scientific knowledge about human physiology and the emergence of modern concepts of “Literature” from 1660 until 1800 in Britain. While the term literature initially designated the entire range of important work in print—represented, for instance, by history, medical analysis, political theory, theology, or poetry—the phrase “bio-culture” captures the composite way in which the period gradually came to use medical knowledge to examine literary genius and readers’ responses, just as it also conjectured on how being exposed to artistic objects produced physical reactions with far-reaching implications for both individual sensibility and social organization.

We will begin with the philosophical empiricism of John Locke, which formed the basis of the 18th-century’s understanding that all human knowledge was based on sensual experience, before turning to consider how specific medical theories regarding perception (via sight), feeling (via “gut” reaction), or sensitivity (via the nervous system) produced a framework in which to interpret the experience of fictional characters, as well as to evaluate the response of readers to the emerging category of Literature (with a capital L) as distinct from other kinds of writing. Our literary texts will include poetry by authors such as Alexander Pope, James Thomson, Thomas Gray, and Anne Finch on the topics of melancholy, sublime experience, and extreme emotion, as well as novels by Eliza Haywood, Laurence Sterne, and Ann Radcliffe—
with a particular eye to the excesses of gothic fiction by the end of the century. Along the way, we will consider a number of theoretical and historical accounts of the emerging “modern” relation between the medical profession and culture, including those by Michel Foucault, Roy Porter, Aris Sarafianos, Steven Bruhm, and Jessica Riskin.

**ENG 581—Victorian Literature: Politics and the Novel in the Victorian Period**

section: 5719  
meets: W 7:15-10:05 p.m., SS 131  
instructor: R.Craig

Nineteenth-century England feared the spread of revolution from the continent even more that it prided itself on the rule of law. The French Revolution encouraged Victorians to read their history as a ghost story haunted by the restless (and head-less) spirit of Charles I. The Reform Bill of 1832 did not allay those fears, often contributing to the general anxiety that expanded suffrage would lead to anarchy. While Queen Victoria may not have feared the loss of her head, is it entirely accidental that a popular children’s tale prominently featured a Queen (ironically, of Hearts) quite fond of the death sentence? Ghosts of a British past haunt baronial estates and church cloisters in Victorian fiction, just as the foreign specters and vampires threaten the English coast.

The novel, both directly, as in Dickens, and indirectly, as in Stoker, played an active role in an ongoing and often urgent national discussion of “the condition of England.” Several prominent political figures (for example, Bulwer Lytton and Disraeli) were also popular novelists. “Novels with a Purpose” were almost as common as the escapist fictions that George Eliot pejoratively labeled “Silly Novels by Lady Novelists.” This course examines the relation between fiction and function, between imaginative narrative and the practical politics. Among the primary concerns of the course will be (1) reading the methods and objectives of fictional representations the past and (2) studying the role of fictional voices in the on-going construction of law, social theory, and gender in Victorian England. Among the writers likely to be included in the course are: Brontë, Butler, Dickens Disraeli, Eden, Eliot, Gaskell. Martineau, Morris, Norton, and Trollope.

**ENG 582—Fitzgerald & Hemingway**

section: 8712  
meets: T 7:15-10:05 p.m., HU 108  
instructor: J.Berman

The course will focus on the art and life of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, emphasizing psychoanalytic and feminist approaches. We will read Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Tender Is the Night*, Zelda Fitzgerald’s *Save Me the Waltz*, Hemingway's *Collected Short Stories*, *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and *For Whom*
the Bell Tolls. There will be two fifteen-page essays, a class presentation, and several reader-response diaries.

ENG 615—Poetics and Literary Practice

section: 8713  
meets: TH 4:15-7:05 p.m., HU 116  
instructor: H. Elam

On translation as literary practice and theoretical problem. Early readings will deal with the movement between one language and another (and students should get in touch with instructor as to what languages they can access) but the focus of the course will not be on the craft of translation but on “translation” as a problem within language and at the very heart of “literature.” Readings from a broad range of texts, philosophical and literary. Possible: Proust, Benjamin, de Man, Stevens, Nietzsche. Response papers, mid-term paper, term paper.

ENG 642—Cultural Theory (By Way of “Cultural Studies”)

section: 6637  
meets: M 4:15-7:05 p.m., BA 213  
instructor: T. Ebert

The implicit claim of “Cultural Studies” since its early days has been that it is unlike other “studies.” Its difference, however, is not in its contents (which it shares with a range of inquiries from philosophy and literature to politics, linguistics, anthropology, and…) but in its mode of knowing. “Cultural Studies” situates itself as a resistance knowing—one that takes into account but goes beyond the canonic understanding of culture as beliefs, art or, more generally, practices of affects and values—and represents itself as activating anti-regulatory knowledges. “Culture” (in “cultural studies”) thus becomes the zone of everyday questioning of all authoritarian institutions and practices, from the state to identity and (hegemonic) aesthetic reason. It is an arena that is not so much a “whole way of life” as it is a “whole way of struggle” and therefore of conflicts and change. The critical appeal of “Cultural Studies” for many intellectuals has been its contesting knowledge practices as an “outsider” in the disciplining academy. The course examines this claim in order to tease out some of its underlying assumptions about knowledge, the normative and the “outside,” and also to open up a space for inquiry into the contemporary debates over “culture” and the “cultural”—including their relation, for example, to “literature” and the “literary” and/as the “literary absolute,” as well as such interpretations of the “literary” as, for example, a textualizing of all concepts, including “culture” (as totalizing). The other question will be whether the “literary,” itself, is a (totalizing) performative grounded in the governing cultural logic.
We will start with a question that has haunted cultural theory since the Enlightenment. Is culture, as Descartes, Diderot, Hume, Condorcet, Rousseau and Kant, among others argue, a universal that unfolds by what Kant calls “Coherence according to one principle” (*Critique of Pure Reason*) or is it, the “unspeakable difficulty” of knowing actuality and the singularity of difference of the “habits, wants, characteristics of land and sky” which cannot be understood without “feeling sympathy with a nation if one is to feel a single one of its inclinations or acts, or all of them together” (Herder). These views have radically different implications for cultural theory: should, for example “reason”? (Kant) be the logic of cultural critique or “language” (Herder), and what exactly are the political consequences of Kantian cultural theory for identity, the everyday and politics? Herder’s idea of culture as the honoring of difference is strongly anti-empire (imperialism ruins the singular). We will trace the ideas of culture in Schiller and other Romantic writers, and other thinkers such as Arnold, Nietzsche, Marx, Badiou, Agamben… as well as examine Raymond Williams’ desire: “I don’t know how many times I’ve wished that I’d never heard the damn word.”

Through these questions the course will raise other questions about the “theoretical legacies” of “cultural studies” and how it understands such issues as language, space, representation, time, textuality, power, experience, labor, mimesis, imperialism, race, history, identity, gender, popular culture, sexuality, media, ideology, the “negative” (as in “negative dialectics”), and the relation of the material and the cultural. Has the material become a “materiality without materialism and perhaps without matter” (Derrida)? Is “the word” now “as material as the world” (Stuart Hall)? Is the return to matter a return to “matter as a sign” (Judith Butler)? Or is “materialism” (as in historical materialism) the dialectics of labor and nature—“social metabolism” (Marx)? What are some of the consequences of these assumptions for cultural critique? Has the critical distance that enabled critique vanished in a mediatic capitalism in which everything is said to be cultural (Jameson)? These questions lead to a different phase of inquiry into the genealogy of “cultural studies,” its institutional history, its “linguistic turn,” its “performative turn,” its “transnational turn,” and its “aesthetic turn.” One of the main issues explored in the course is the relation of culture and class, and the way this relation shapes “cultural studies” in the North and in the global South and raises questions about cultural critique as an agency of social change.

The course will be a combination of general seminar sessions, theory colloquia and individual presentations. There will be no conventional examinations. Students are required to actively participate in seminar discussions every week; write one short paper (6-8 pages); present a seminar report on specific theoretical problems, and write a long (20-25 page) theory paper. They will also have the opportunity to participate in the end of the semester “theory conference.”

**ENG 681—The Calvinist Inheritance in American Culture (Seminar)**

section: 6637  
meets: M 4:15-7:05 p.m., BA 213  
instructor: R.Bosco
The New-Englander of the seventeenth century was indeed a typical Puritan; and it will hardly be said that any typical Puritan . . . was a poetical personage. In proportion to his devotion to the ideas that won him the derisive honor of his name, was he at war with nearly every form of the beautiful. He . . . believed that there was an inappeasable feud between religion and art; . . . the duty of suppressing art was bound up in his soul with the master-purpose of promoting religion. He cultivated the grim and the ugly[,] . . . was afraid of the approaches of Satan through the avenues of what is graceful and joyous[,] . . . and [was] inclined to measure the holiness of a man’s life by its disagreeableness. In the logic and fury of his tremendous faith, he turned away utterly from . . . the pleasures and embellishments of society; because these things seemed only “the devil’s flippery and seduction” to his “aesthetic soul, aglow with the gloomy or rapturous mysteries of his theology.”

Moses Coit Tyler, A History of American Literature (1878, 1:264-65)

Puritans took pleasure in the preeminent genre of shoulds—the sermon. . . . All their literature, even meditative poems, is couched in a language of instruction, to oneself and others. They delighted in the endless elaboration of biblical truths, explained with a dogged multiplicity of firstlies and fifthlies. . . . What might make us laugh made them attend. They . . . thrived on simple similes, interchangeable from “reason” to “reason,” . . . year to year, almost century to century.

David Leverenz, The Language of Puritan Feeling (1980, p. 5)

Distant and more modern assessments of Puritan Calvinistic influences on the shape of American culture such as those cited above have hardly made contemporary readers eager to learn more about either the thought and ways of America’s earliest English settlers or how their thought continued to exert an influence on American culture into the nineteenth century—and beyond. This seminar explores the influence of American colonial and revolutionary intellectual, religious, and cultural life on the shaping of later American life and letters. The particular emphasis of readings and discussions is on the positions of selected writers from the late eighteenth century through the early twentieth century who assimilate in order to either extend or resist the Calvinist and democratic impulses of colonial and revolutionary America.

Readings for the course will be drawn from a variety of forms (poetry, fiction, and non-fiction prose [including autobiography, history, and homiletics]) as the semester progresses through three of the periods into which American literature and history are traditionally divided: Colonial (roughly 1620 to 1770), Early National and Romantic (roughly 1770 to 1865), and Realistic and Naturalistic (roughly 1865 to 1915) American Life and Letters. Some of the writers featured in the course may be already well-known to participants—Edwards, Franklin, Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Whitman, Crane, and Frost, for example—while others—Puritan historians William Bradford and John Winthrop and poets Michael Wigglesworth and Edward Taylor, Transcendentalist Margaret Fuller, early Realist Rebecca Harding Davis, and the Naturalist Hamlin Garland—may not.

Requirements for the seminar include completion of a substantial body of reading and active participation in the life of the seminar; the preparation of at least one in-class presentation based on an assigned reading; and the researching, completion and presentation of a “working paper” on a topic relevant to the content of the course.
Critics of American literature have routinely ignored the role of race in writing. Despite the troubling material circumstances of many “raced” subjects in this postmodern moment, there are academic circles in which theorizing about race has once again fallen out of vogue. Although often accused of a simplistic embrace of “essentialism” or derided for participating in “identity politics,” writers of African American literature and African American literary theorists reject calls for a post-race vision of the world. Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison, considered a “leading voice in current debates about constructions of race and gender in U.S. literature and culture . . . refuses to allow race to be relegated to the margins of literary discourse.” During the term we will read Morrison’s “fantastic earthy realism” and her compelling critical essays in order to understand how notions of blackness, race and power erupt not only in her work, but also assess how it continually reverberates in the American landscape. Furthermore, we will read critical essays by a diverse number of scholars so that we might evaluate Morrison’s work as a novelist, essayist, editor and public intellectual.

The course will examine the status of close reading and the transformations of 20th century theory and “literature” as a figurative system in the shifting institutional and cognitive horizons of the 21st century. We will use two primary examples of “American” modernist authors—Faulkner and Hitchcock—to examine the hermeneutic impasse of “American” field studies and how theoretical issues work to alter the grounds of practice, memory, and the definition of the figural today. Problems of particular interest: referentiality and its others, the topos of “race,” the interface of script and memory, the post-political or “global” moment’s relationship to “history,” what lies outside contemporary “humanist” models (cultural studies, literary criticism). Critical writers that will be consulted include Glissant, Plato, Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida, Zizek, De Man, Deleuze, Butler, Stiegler, Benjamin, and relevant interpretive commentary.
ENG 720—Textual Studies II: Global Cities, Global Slums

(This course is open to all Doctoral students, and MA Students with permission of MA Advisor)

section: 8715
meets: W 4:15-7:05 p.m., LC 013
instructor: B. Benjamin

Radical urbanization, the swift demise of a rural peasantry across the entire planet and the corresponding rise of mega-cities, amounts to, in the words of historian Eric Hobsbawm, “the most dramatic and far-reaching social change of the second half of [the Twentieth] century.” Mike Davis reports in Planet of Slums that 3.2 billion people currently live in cities (more, for the first time in human history, than in the countryside), with double that number likely by 2050. Roughly one third of those current city dwellers—approximately 1 billion people—live in slums, shantytowns, favelas, chawls, and the like, where population growth has outpaced urbanization growth since 1970.

The multi-cultural, networked, cosmopolitan city often plays the hero in globalization tales; the global slum, with its all too familiar images of lack and immiseration, stands as its Other. Postcolonial literary studies has tended to focus on the nation/narration conjuncture, the ways in which literary production constitutes and is constituted by the nation state and national consciousness. Rather than (or, in addition to) the nation, this seminar will examine contemporary literatures and theories of globalization and globality through the time and space of urbanity—the figures of global city and global slum. Reading a mix of theory, history, and novels we will approach global urbanity from a number of critical vantage points, among which may include the following: the global city/slum’s transformed role within theorganizations of neo-liberalism, flexible accumulation and post-Fordist modes of production; the global city/slum as a space or scale of collective belonging that might trouble or extend theories of the nation, cosmopolitics, or the multitude; the cityscape as the site of global cultural “flows” and contact; the city/slum and radical alter-globalization social movements (a new proletariat?); and/or the global city/slum and planetary ecology. Novels will likely include Patrick Chamoiseau’s Texaco, Chris Abani’s Graceland, Rohinton Mistry’s A Fine Balance, and Paulo Lin’s City of God. Critical work will likely include texts of Mike Davis, Bruce Robbins, David Harvey, Saskia Sassen, Aihwa Ong, Arjun Appadurai, Frederic Jameson, Immanuel Wallerstein, Amitava Kumar, Mahmood Mamdani, Achille Mbembe, Rem Koolhaus among others.

ENG 771—Practicum in English Studies: Teaching, Writing and Literature

(Prerequisite: ENG 770. Open only to English Ph.D. students)

section: 2147
meets: TH 7:15-10:05 p.m., SL 012
instructor: L. Wilder
Building on ENG 770 Teaching Writing and Literature, this course is intended to supplement and support participants' experience of concurrently teaching an undergraduate English course at the University at Albany for the first time. Towards the ends of promoting the development of reflective teaching practices open to inquiry and experimentation, course activities will include: discussion of problems posed by classroom dynamics, investigation of available campus resources and disciplinary publications related to teaching, regular reflective contributions to a teaching log, classroom observations, comparison of methods for evaluating and commenting on student work, exploration of computer-assisted classroom tools, and development of a statement of teaching philosophy.