GRADUATE COURSES IN ENGLISH

Spring Session 2014

Course offerings for:

Master of Arts
Doctor of Philosophy
Non-Degree Study

Department of English
College of Arts and Sciences
Humanities Building
Room HU 336
(518) 442-4099

Jennifer Greiman, Director of Graduate Studies

Courses are by Permission of Instructor as noted, otherwise by Permission of Department only. Please Contact Jennifer Greiman (jgreiman@albany.edu) with questions.
FACULTY TEACHING SPRING 2014

PATRICIA CHU, Assistant Professor – Ph.D., University of Chicago

GLYNE A. GRIFFITH, Associate Professor – Ph.D., University of the West Indies

MICHAEL K. HILL, Associate Professor – Ph.D., Stony Brook University, SUNY

ERIC C. KEENAGHAN, Associate Professor – Ph.D., Temple University

JAMES D. LILLEY, Assistant Professor – Ph.D., Princeton University

INEKE MURAKAMI, Associate Professor – Ph.D. Notre Dame

STEPHEN NORTH, Distinguished Teaching Professor – D.A., University at Albany, SUNY

HELENE SCHECK, Associate Professor – Ph.D., Binghamton University, SUNY

DERIK J. SMITH, Assistant Professor - Ph.D., Northwestern University

PAUL STASI, Associate Professor – Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley

LYNNE TILLMAN, Associate Professor and Writer-in-Residence – B.A., Hunter College

LAURA WILDER, Associate Professor – Ph.D., University of Texas
SPRING 2014 COURSES

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ENG 500 – Textual Practices 1
7684 T 7:15-10:05 p.m. BA0214 G. Griffith
This course will introduce graduate students to a range of theoretical and interpretive strategies in literatures in English. The course will use the survey approach to expose students to a broad range of statements and analyses in literary and cultural studies and will employ The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism as the touchstone text.

ENG 516 - Workshop in Fiction
1944 T 4:15-7:05 p.m. ES0108 L. Tillman
For the graduate fiction workshop, students are expected to have already been developing, thinking about, and working on fiction. Poets who are interested in writing fiction are also welcome to apply. During the workshop, each student will present pieces to the group, three or four times (depending upon our number). Each student is expected to be a full participant in the discussion and commentary on colleagues' fictions, stories, and consequent questions about issues in writing. We may do additional readings, stories and theory, to augment our discussions. This is a Permission by Instructor course. Those interested in applying should email 5 - 7 pages of their writing to Tillwhen@aol.com. In addition, students must also indicate previous writing courses; major or area of specific interest in graduate school, and reasons for wanting to take this workshop.

ENG 560 – Postcolonial Theory
9529 M 7:15-10:05 p.m. PC0355 P. Stasi
In this course we will read broadly in postcolonial theory, focusing on its earliest practitioners (Said, Spivak, Ahmad, Subaltern Studies Collective), its antecedents (James, Fanon) and some contemporary manifestations (possibly including debates around globalization, alternative modernities, cosmopolitanism and world literature). We will also read a few novels to see how we can put some of these theories into contact with literary texts. (These may include texts by Bronte, Woolf, Conrad, Rhys, Ghosh or Rushdie).

5627 TH 7:15-10:05 p.m. HU0125 M. Hill
The eighteenth century in is marked in a variety of ways as providing the origins of what we call today: modernity. The rise of print culture; the cordonning of literary from other kinds of knowledge; the divisions of labor; the notion of civil society—and its inverse twin—"savagery"; are inventions of a particular time and place that both haunt and inform what it means to go on being modern. This course will examine the history of Enlightenment modernity and its legacies (what was; what's left of it?), and do so, to the degree possible, from the vantage point of any number perspectives that modernity has tended to keep in whatever periphery. These peripheral perspectives will revolve around issues to do with the agency of writing, memory, national difference, civility, and most of all, eighteenth-century popular contention. Rather than looking for idealized forms of postmodern community, we'll try to find within in the Enlightenment—specifically, from within the genre of the novel—those forms of collective belonging that modernity has tended to occult. Readings will include current scholarship on the Enlightenment, as well as contemporary eighteenth-century material ranging across literary and philosophical archives.
When Ben Jonson memorialized Shakespeare, he praised him not as a lone “colossus” who “doth bestride the narrow world” eclipsing all other writers, but as the “Soul of the age.” The difference bears consideration: it asks us to evaluate Shakespeare in context, not only with the vertiginous historical changes that fostered the ascent of commercial theater, nor even with the extraordinary output of playwrights whose names once outshone Shakespeare’s, but in relation to the wealth of dramatic forms that influenced any writer who grew up in an age that took the theatrum mundi topos (“all the world’s a stage”) in earnest. Consequently, this class includes no more than one Shakespeare play. The rest of the time will be spent sampling representatives from the plethora of influential dramatic forms of the period: from moral drama to revenge tragedy; civic entertainment to royal entry; elite masque to folk play; and city comedy to romantic tragicomedy. We shall read professional stage poets like Marlowe and Middleton next to writers like Norton and Preston who took time out from more respectable “vocations” to dabble with the “toys” of dramatic form. The historical and critical secondary readings scheduled to accompany each dramatic text will encourage us to think about problems of genre, theatricality, publicity, and drama’s function in relation to the cultural transformations affecting all who partook in the heady collaboration that was early modern dramatic performance. Course requirements include: collaborative compilation of an annotated bibliography; a substantial presentation on your final paper topic; a term paper; and a take-home final exam.

Recent scholarship has struggled to delineate the dominant political, aesthetic and thematic trends in African American literary production of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The dramatic proliferation of the literature in recent decades and the diversity of the literature’s forms and functions, has made it difficult for scholars to establish frameworks capable of accounting for the swath of cultural production that was once contained by the sturdy rubric of “African American literature”. With prominent critics proclaiming that the category is now obsolete and many others trying to understand the contemporary moment by appealing to backward-looking, prefixed formulations—like “post-soul” or “post-civil rights”—there is an urgent need to develop a critical discourse that addresses recent African American literature in terms that are relevant to the historical moment in which it is produced. In this seminar we will search for a grammar that might live up to the various analytical demands presented by African American literature of the past three to four decades. This search we will make its way through a series of novels, both “high” and “low brow”, and examine recent scholarship in literary studies, sociology and political economy. Our readings will provide the framework for a seminar discourse that is interested in the thick relation between African American literature and a contemporary socio-economic regime that is characterized by disembedded markets, the dissipation of the welfare state, the rise of the penal state, a dualizing of the class structure, and an incessant appeal to the trope of individual responsibility. How have African American writers responded to this “neoliberal” era? How have critics responded to African American writing of the neoliberal era? These will be primary questions as we study the fiction of Toni Morrison, Colson Whitehead, Sapphire, Iceberg Slim, Percival Everett, Trey Ellis and Teri Woods, and the critical work of Kenneth Warren, Adolph Reed, Loic Wacquant and others.
ENG 621 – Current Trends in Rhetorical Theory and Research: Research Methods in Rhetoric and Composition

9530 W 4:15-7:05 p.m. HU0032 L. Wilder

This course will provide a “hands-on” introduction to an array of research methodologies in rhetoric and composition for studying “real world” reading and writing practices. Our focus will be on empirical methods such as interview, observation, experiment/intervention, survey, and process tracing (think aloud protocol). To the extent that time is available we will dip our toes into the waters of archival research, discourse analysis, and emerging digital research tools. For each method we examine we will read and discuss several published articles that exemplify the method and conduct a trial, collaborative attempt at using the method. In this way we will learn about the assumptions, practicalities, benefits, and limitations of each method. Understanding these research methods is important not only for those who anticipate employing them in their own research but also for those who want to be able to read and critique this literature and perhaps apply its findings in the writing classroom.


9531 T 7:15-10:05 p.m. HU0125 J. Lilley

Before eccentricity could become a certain quality that some humans possess—and before the eccentric would start to name a particular kind of person—astronomers first had to establish the laws of regular celestial motion. To be eccentric is to orbit erratically without a singular, static center or, more correctly, to wander with a peripheral style of motion whose center is always moving and forever absent from the equations of the everyday. This course begins by returning to the C16th and C17th in order to explore the ways in which early Enlightenment science began to register the orbit of the eccentric. In addition to readings in mathematics, geometry, and astronomy, we will also explore how the topography of the eccentric helped to provide relief for new, biopolitical modes of sovereignty and citizenship tied to logics of exception and exclusion. As we move into the C18th and the early C19th, we turn our attention to the literature of the emerging British and U.S. nations and to the new scientific disciplines of Atlantic modernity—as well as to ever-popular and eccentric pseudo-sciences such as phrenology, mesmerism, and galvanism. Rather than take for granted the seamless relay between the center and its periphery, this course assumes a frivolous and whimsical aspect in order to ask the following questions: What happens to our view of literary and political history if the orbit of the eccentric, rather than the exception of the extrinsic, is opposed to the colonizing and civilizing work of the nation-state? In what ways do economies of the erratic, the trivial, and the unique offer alternative value structures and important counter-histories to the rise of commodity exchange and the fetish of the antique in Atlantic modernity?

Readings to include: Sterne, Poe, Bacon, Hobbes, Hogg, Poe, Kepler, Walpole, Smollett, Melville.

ENG 681- The William Carlos Williams Era

8152 W 4:15-7:05 p.m. ES0144 E. Keenaghan

This seminar will consist primarily of an intensive study of the literary career of the American modernist doctor and poet Williams Carlos Williams (1883-1963) in relation to his changing historical context. Key modernists often have been credited with founding a literary and critical “era.” There’s been Hugh Kenner’s famous proclamation of an “[Ezra] Pound Era,” which Marjorie Perloff, who advocates avant-garde constructivism, defended against the rise of deconstructive and formalist readings intimating the emergence of a possible “[Wallace] Stevens Era.” More recently, there have been Ruth Jenning’s Marxist account of modernism as the “[Louis] Zukofsky Era” and Aidan Wasley’s socially conscious reading of formalist modernism that identifies American postwar poetry as belonging to the “Age of [W.H.] Auden.” My claim that U.S. poetry from circa 1916 to 1975 constitutes a “William Carlos Williams Era” is a little facetious … but just a little.

Best known as a poet, WCW also wrote prolifically in a variety of other genres—drama, short fiction, novels and romans à clef, autobiography and memoirs, literary and poetics essays, “philosophical” cultural essays—and he even produced many translations of both poetry and fiction. So, although our primary focus will be on his extensive body of poetry, we also will be making forays along the way into samplings of his other work. His entire oeuvre might be (and often has been) read as an attempt to found an American literary tradition that better reflects “an American
language,” employing an American idiom in order to found a new national (or even hemispheric) aesthetic tradition rather than a continuation of English or continental European traditions. Our examination of WCW’s work will continue to pursue that critical line of thought, but we will also be considering a fact most critics know full well and acknowledge but do not explore in great depth: namely, WCW is also one of the most influential figures on American postwar and cold war poetry. (There are a few exceptions to that rule, such as the late Sherman Paul, a few essays by critics such as Aldon Lynn Nielsen, and book length studies by John Lowney and Paul Cappucci). Through his own Auto-biography, WCW had introduced Charles Olson’s concept of projective verse to a spectrum of poets across the nation by reproducing large sections of the recently published essay, largely unknown to have hit the water outside New York City. WCW’s own late career concept of the poem as “a field of action” and his career-long concern with measure shaped the poetics of not just individual younger poets but of the New American Poetry, generally. Anyone working in epic or serial forms in the 1950s contended with the recent publication of installments of Paterson as much as Pound’s already canonized Cantos. While critics and scholars largely ignored Williams’ work in the 1950s and 1960s, academically regarded poets like Robert Lowell cited him as a formative influence. Whether one considers the colloquialism of the New York School and the Beats, or the paramount significance of measure and action and field poetics to the Black Mountain School, or the significance of personality (rather than Eliotic impersonality) to the Confessional poets and the personal politics of New Left and its related poetics, WCW’s influence is inescapable—and deserving more than a generalized, unelaborated statement or cursory nod.

The first two-thirds of the semester will be dedicated to an extensive, in-depth study of a selection from WCW’s enormous body of work, read in its historical context and in relation to small samplings from some of his poetic and even philosophical contemporaries. Class members’ annotated bibliographies and 15- to 20-minute presentations over the course of the semester will introduce those primary texts in light of the history of literary criticism about his work. Our seminar sessions will strive to use our close readings of WCW’s ideas, read through and against his own poetics statements, to come to a fuller understanding of concepts and tropes key to his evolving poetic project. The best way to more deeply understand a writer’s vision is to explore works-in-draft, unpublished correspondence and notebooks, abandoned projects, and ephemera (from grocery lists and scribbled notes to diaries and marginalia in books he was reading)—materials not ever likely to be published. So, if there is significant interest (i.e., at least four persons), I will try to arrange an optional group visit for four to five days during Spring Break to one of the two drivable archives holding the bulk of WCW’s papers: the University at Buffalo (SUNY)’s Poetry Collection or Yale University’s Beinecke Library. (Note that students have to cover their own lodging and food expenses; but carpools might defray travel costs.)

Our initial study focusing on WCW will set the stage for the last third of the semester, when we shall appraise his influence on the New American Poetry. We will consider his work in light of five writers (one per week), who explicitly claimed him as a foremost influence: British émigré then Black Mountain Review poet then political activist Denise Levertov; New York Beat then Black Arts poet and black nationalist LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka; gay New York School poet and MoMA assistant curator Frank O’Hara; Boston Beat and Black Mountain student then Gay Liberation and “proto-trans” activist John Wiener; and, finally, the unclassifiable Joanne Kyger whose decades-long career has ranged from Beat and San Francisco Renaissance to other experimental lyric leanings. Each poet not only saw WCW as aesthetically influential but also as influential for developing a more socially, even politically, engaged poetry.

**Requirements:** Seminar participation and discussion; weekly Blackboard Discussion Board posts; annotated bibliography (5-8 sources) and 15- to 20-minute presentation on criticism about assigned WCW texts; a seminar paper (20-30 pages) developed in stages (proposal, annotated bibliography, redrafted proposal, with 1-2 conferences on your progress); and brief final presentation in the last class session (length TBD) on your research. The seminar paper should address either: (1) an original, innovative reading of a work by WCW; or (2) an original reading of the well-documented influence of WCW on a poet from the 1930s until today (including, but not limited to: Levertov, O’Hara, Baraka, Wiener, Kyger, Lorine Niedecker, Louis Zukofsky, Charles Reznikoff, Robert Lowell, Robert Duncan, Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Cid Corman, Allen Ginsberg, Lew Welch, Gary Snyder, Harold Norse, Stephen Jonas, Nathaniel Mackey, Lyn Hejinian, Rae Armantrout, Ron Silliman). **NOTE:** Only creative writing doctoral students can propose a hybrid creative/critical project in lieu of a seminar paper.

The textbook list will be sent to all enrolled students in early January so that they might order their books online; but it also can be emailed earlier upon request. I recommend that before the semester begins registered students read a good biography of WCW: either Paul Mariani, William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked (the best and most
established bio, now out-of-print but easy to find cheap) or Herbert Leibowitz, “Something Urgent I Have to Say to You”: The Life and Works of William Carlos Williams (the most recent bio, as read through WCW’s work).

ENG 685 – Technologies of the Book, Pre- to Postmodern

8172   W    7:15-10:05 p.m.   HU0125   H. Scheck

As we become increasingly immersed in the digital age, it may seem absurd to think of the book as a technological advance. And yet, the development of textual representation in the European west from scroll to codex to early printed books and pamphlets radically changed the way individuals and groups treated knowledge—from formation to dissemination to valuation, which affected individuals personally as well as socially and politically. On the personal level, the changing technology of the book affected not only one’s relationship to knowledge, but cognition itself. On the social level, technology, treatment, and reception of the book helped to determine lines of access to knowledge as well as its parameters. This course will not attempt to produce an evolution of literature and literacy; nor will it pursue sociological inquiry into literacy, reading, and cognition. Instead, this course will trace developments in the material forms and functions of textual representation in the pre- and early modern age to consider abstract perceptions as well as physical experiences of literacy and their implications for constructing and construing class, gender, ethnicity, and nationality. In addition, the course will explore processes of reading, writing, and book production to reveal cognitive and aesthetic shifts in the intellectual culture of the ancient, medieval, and early modern West. Toward the end of the seminar, we will consider what that multilayered history may reveal about current aesthetic and cognitive shifts produced by new technologies through attention to our own shifting reading, writing, and publishing practices as well as our habits and abilities of cognition. Readings will range from the pragmatic aspects of book production to historiographical accounts to more theoretical inquiries into cognition, materiality, and the forms and effects of textual representation, including pieces by J.J. Cohen, Derrida, de Certeau, and Deleuze and Guattari. Our understanding of the book as a material object will be enhanced by at least one workshop on book production and, possibly, a field trip to examine actual medieval and/or early modern manuscripts and printed books. Assignments will include weekly short papers, active and regular contribution to the development and vitality of our collective inquiry, and analysis of a manuscript or early printed book that will result in a substantial seminar paper. Inquiries welcome: hscheck@albany.edu.

ENG 720 – America Since 1990: Discourses of Identity and Justice Under Late Modern Governmentality

5078   M    4:15-7:05 p.m.   BI0152   P. Chu

The narrator in Maxine Hong Kingston’s Tripmaster Monkey says of 1960s anti-Vietnam activism: “The world was splitting up. Tolstoy had noted the surprising gaiety of war. During his time, picnickers and fighters took to the same field. We’d gotten more schizzy. The dying was on the Asian side of the planet while the playing—the love-ins and the be-ins—were on the other, American side.” In the late modern moment, even amidst the globalization of everything, the same kinds of “schizzy” divisions still prevail and have even intensified, as in the distribution of wealth. We who have the constant input of information to be “picnickers,” spectators through digital means of the (other) places where “the dying” is happening, have so far failed to articulate viable bases for claims to justice, remedy and protection for those of the dying areas. In this course we will begin with some orienting narratives of the legacies of modernity (Buck-Morss, Foucault, Charles T. Mills; Benedict Anderson; Pateman) and then into accounts of the end of the era of citizenship (including Mae Ngai; Rey Chow; Rajini Srikanth; Wendy Brown; Judith Butler; Nikil Pal Singh; the school of legal Critical Race Theory). We will explore the way this political and cultural failure of citizenship manifests mostly (but not exclusively) through texts which had been assumed to work as one of the front lines of social justice: American ethno-racial novels. Authors may include: Charles Johnson, Jessica Hagedorn, Han Ong, Don Delillo, Mohsin Hamid, Karen Tei Yamashita, Bill Cheng, Colson Whitehead, Kiese Laymon, Susan Choi).
In this course, we will explore the connections between our ongoing discussion of a fairly broad question—i.e., What is the purpose of teaching English in higher education today, and how are people going about it?—with the narrower form it tends to take in our own lives: What am I supposed to do when I teach Eng ###? We will read a range of commentators on both questions, but the term’s major writing assignments will entail creating syllabi for two of the courses (one in literature and culture, the other in writing) you will likely teach during your time at UAlbany.
Course Concentration Distribution

Spring 2014

Literature, Modernity, and the Contemporary
581  The Enlightenment and its Peripheries: Community, Popular Contention, and the Novel  Hill
581  English Renaissance Drama and Culture: A Survey  Murakami
581  African American Literature  Smith
680  Eccentric Enlightenment: Literature, Science, and the Trivial in Atlantic Modernity  Lilley
681  The William Carlos Williams Era  Keenaghan

Writing Practices
516  Fiction Workshop  Tillman
621  Current Trends in Rhetorical Theory and Research: Research Methods in Rhetoric and Composition  Wilder

Cultural, Transcultural, and Global Studies
560  Postcolonial Theory  Stasi
581  African American Literature  Smith
720  The Ethnic Novel  Chu

Theoretical Constructs
560  Postcolonial Theory  Stasi
680  The Eccentric Enlightenment  Lilley
720  The Ethnic Novel  Chu
Projected Graduate Offerings (*subject to change*)

### Fall 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>Textual Practices</td>
<td>Craig</td>
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<td>516</td>
<td>Fiction Workshop</td>
<td>Schwarzschild</td>
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<tr>
<td>581</td>
<td>Early American Poetry (Reading)</td>
<td>Roberts</td>
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<tr>
<td>582</td>
<td>Shakespeare &amp; Marlow</td>
<td>Rozett</td>
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<td>582</td>
<td>Melville in Theory</td>
<td>Greiman</td>
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<tr>
<td>621</td>
<td>African-American Rhetorics</td>
<td>Carey</td>
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<tr>
<td>641</td>
<td>Marxism &amp; Cultural Theory</td>
<td>Ebert</td>
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<td>680</td>
<td>The Modernist Parenthesis</td>
<td>Cohen</td>
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<tr>
<td>681</td>
<td>Politics of American Lit Rep</td>
<td>Bosco</td>
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<tr>
<td>681</td>
<td>Contemporary Writers (NYSWI)</td>
<td>Yalkut</td>
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<tr>
<td>682</td>
<td>New Political Theology: Sovereignty &amp; Religion</td>
<td>Kuiken</td>
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<td>710</td>
<td>Textual Practices I</td>
<td>Keenaghan</td>
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<td>720</td>
<td>Textual Practices II: Peripheral Realism</td>
<td>Stasi</td>
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<tr>
<td>771</td>
<td>Teaching Practicum</td>
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### Spring 2015

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<th>Course</th>
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<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>Textual Practices</td>
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<td>Poetry Workshop?</td>
<td>Noel</td>
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<td>516</td>
<td>Fiction Workshop</td>
<td>Tillman</td>
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<tr>
<td>580</td>
<td>Anglophone Caribbean / radio and lit?</td>
<td>Griffith</td>
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<tr>
<td>581</td>
<td>Recovering Reconstruction</td>
<td>Fretwell</td>
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<td>581</td>
<td>Enlightenment &amp; Peripheries (Reading)</td>
<td>Hill</td>
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<td>615</td>
<td>African-American Poetry (Reading)</td>
<td>Smith</td>
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<td>641</td>
<td>‘Life’ Studies: Vitalism &amp; the Arts</td>
<td>Barney</td>
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<tr>
<td>651</td>
<td>Theories of Language &amp; Translation</td>
<td>Elam</td>
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<td>720</td>
<td>Textual Practices II: Literature of the Vital:</td>
<td>Lilley</td>
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<td>720</td>
<td>Philosophies of Nature, Ontologies of Matter</td>
<td>Lilley</td>
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<tr>
<td>770</td>
<td>Pedagogy &amp; Critical University Studies</td>
<td>Benjamin</td>
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