GRADUATE COURSES IN ENGLISH

Summer Session 2012
Fall Session 2012

COURSE OFFERINGS FOR:
  Master of Arts
  Doctor of Philosophy
  Non-Degree Study

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Room HU 336
(518) 442-4099

Bret Benjamin, Director of Graduate Studies

Courses are by Permission of Instructor as noted, otherwise by Permission of Department only. Please Contact Bret Benjamin (bret@albany.edu) with questions.
BRET BENJAMIN, Associate Professor – Ph.D., University of Texas, Austin
RONALD BOSCO, Professor – Ph.D., Maryland
LANA CABLE, Associate Professor – Ph.D., Johns Hopkins
THOMAS COHEN, Professor – Ph.D., Yale University
RANDALL CRAIG, Professor – Ph.D., University of Wisconsin
LYDIA DAVIS, Associate Professor and Writer-in-Residence, B.A., Barnard College
HELEN ELAM, Associate Professor – Ph.D., Brown University
PIERRE JORIS, Professor – Ph.D., Binghamton University, SUNY
KIR KUIKEN, Assistant Professor – Ph.D., University of California, Irvine
JAMES LILLEY, Assistant Professor – Ph.D., Princeton University
TOMÁS NOEL, Assistant Professor – Ph.D., New York University
CHARLES SHEPHERDSO, Professor – Ph.D., Vanderbilt University
DERIK SMITH, Assistant Professor - Ph.D., Northwestern University
PAUL STASI, Assistant Professor – Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley
SUMMER SESSION COURSES

Four Week 1 (May 29 – June 22, 2011)

ENG 581—20th Century American Poetry

2745 MTWTHF 3:20-5:40 p.m. BA0224 P. Stasi

Course Description: In this course we will read a range of American poets. Our class will begin in the 19th century with Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, generally considered to be the founders of competing strands of American poetry. We will then spend the rest of our course in the 20th century, paying careful attention to how different poets understand their craft, their relationship to the literary past and the nation they are taken to represent. How can writing embody and even shape elements of the national character? What, if anything, is specifically American about these writers?

Six Week 1 (May 29 – July 6, 2012)

ENG 681—Seminar: Texts/Authors and Their Critics

1824 MTTH 6:00-8:30 p.m. ES0108 H. Elam

A study of relations between literature and criticism, this course will focus on five or six major literary texts (from different centuries and in different genres—novel, poetry, drama, nonfiction), accompanied by a critical essay on each. The critical essays are chosen not because they deploy any particular theoretical model but because they were in their time (and are) an important reading of a particular text. Possible pairings: Homer (Odyssey) and Erich Auerbach; Molière (Don Juan) and Shoshana Felman; Kafka (Metamorphosis) and Walter Benjamin; Browning: two dramatic monologues; Ponge: On the Nature of Things. Requirements: Two papers, weekly reading responses, student presentations.
# FALL COURSES

**ENG 500—Textual Practices I**  
(Open Only to English MA Students) - Permission of Department is Required

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<td>1948</td>
<td>TH</td>
<td>4:15-7:05 p.m.</td>
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This is a survey course in contemporary literary and cultural theory designed for new graduate students. It covers a range of figures and intellectual movements in twentieth-century literary theory and philosophy. Unlike many introductory surveys, this course does not rely on secondary handbooks, which are unreliable and which do not teach students to read the primary texts for themselves, and develop what Kant called “freedom from tutelage.” We will read only primary texts, and students will develop an ability to read these often difficult and technical works, and to assess and articulate the arguments made by major thinkers in this field. We will read work in structuralism (Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Benveniste and others), anthropology (Whorf, Geertz, Girard), reception theory (Jauss and Iser), the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer and Adorno), psychoanalysis (Lacan and Kristeva), and others figures including Michel Foucault and Hayden White. Students will write a series of short papers dealing with approximately six of these writers.

**ENG 515—Workshop in Poetry**

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<td>9350</td>
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From Whitman to the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, poetry has often served as a means of cultural commentary and intervention. This workshop/seminar will approach the writing of poetry from a perspective of cultural complexity. Although our focus will be on discussion of students’ work, we will also read some critical and creative texts that explore the cultural coordinates of poetry from a variety of lenses (e.g. race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, transnationalism, globalization, the environment,). Engaging with Damon and Livingston's Poetry and Cultural Studies: A Reader, and with books by individual poets, we will consider some debates in contemporary poetics, exploring questions of form as well as socio-aesthetic contexts and implications. Assignments will include workshop presentations and, at semester's end, a creative dossier with a critical introduction and/or poetics statement.

**ENG 516—Fiction Workshop**

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<td>1949</td>
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<td>L. Davis</td>
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Permission of Instructor required. Please submit a sample of your fiction writing, along with a generous cover letter about yourself and your interest in fiction, to Prof. Davis (cote@albany.edu). Any student who is an undergraduate or who is a graduate student from a department other than English should e-mail the Director of Graduate Studies (bret@albany.edu) with student ID# to inquire about workshop eligibility requirements.

In this course, each student will be expected to complete two to three pieces of fiction (short stories, short-shorts, or novel excerpts) during the semester, to be submitted for workshop discussion. Most of each class period will be devoted to this workshop discussion (for which prepared written comments will be expected), but time will also be spent studying and discussing isolated aspects of effective writing, such as description, dialogue, character depiction, exposition, openings, endings, vocabulary, and syntax. In support of this, there will be some short texts for assigned reading, as well as occasional in-class writing exercises and supplemental brief assignments. One or two books will also be assigned to be read over the semester.
ENG 580—The Transatlantic Origins of the Gothic Novel (Reading Course)

On both sides of the Atlantic, the Gothic continues to enjoy a privileged position in literary studies. The ghosts, ruins, and supernatural mysteries that haunt its pages proved successful and lucrative literary formulas when they were first published, and these same specters now enjoy a rich critical afterlife in the hands of scholars interested in, for example, the rise of the novel, the politics of the emerging British and U.S. nations, the development of modern forms of time and historicity, and the establishment of racial difference in an age of colonial expansion. In this class, we will take a broad snapshot of this literary genre, focussing on its early development in England and then tracing its movement across the Atlantic to the United States, where it would become the genre of choice for the new nation’s first professional authors. Because this is a “Reading” course, we will be spending most of our time with the novels themselves. Nevertheless, we will also read representative examples of current scholarship on the genre, providing us with the kind of breadth necessary to situate the Gothic in both historical and critical perspective. Students will be asked to prepare bibliographies and conduct guided research projects. Authors to include: Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Monk Lewis, William Godwin, Charlotte Turner Smith, Jane Austen, Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, James Kirke Paulding, John Neal, Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Montgomery Bird, and Herman Melville.

ENG 581—The Practice & Theory Of The Avant-Garde (Reading Course)

This course examines and confronts contemporary texts theorizing the concept of “the avant-garde” (via essays by Peter Bürger, Jean-François Lyotard, Marjorie Perloff, Octavio Paz, Charles Bernstein & others) with the actual work of the core practitioners of the international avant-garde movements from the Symbolists — Mallarmé, specifically — via the Negritude poets to the post-modern movements. We will study selected poems & creative works, as well as manifestos, reflections, & descriptions of compositional processes, etc. as proposed by 20C avant-garde artists & movements (Italian & Russian Futurism, Gertrude Stein, Dada & Surrealism, Ezra Pound & H.D., Aimé Césaire & Léopold Senghor, John Cage & Charles Olson, the Tel Quel group, the Arab "Shi’ir" movement, among others.)

REQUIRED READINGS:


Charles Bernstein, A Poetics, Harvard UP.

ENG 582—John Milton

“Why Milton?” That intentionally provocative query was not new to Milton criticism even in 1988, when British scholar Catherine Belsey made a point of voicing it. Milton's disconcerting blend of classical
literary discipline and Puritan revolutionary ideology has sparked critical controversy for more than three and a half centuries, not least because the interrogation works both ways: underlying assumptions make every new generation of critics vulnerable to Milton's iconoclastic thinking. By reading most of his poetry and some of his prose through the lens of 17th century controversies that shape his artistic mission, we will gain an intimate sense of Milton as a radical thinker who confronts the most powerful religious and political forces of his time. In the process, we will also learn about contemporary critical activity that followed Christopher Hill's Marxist interventions into seventeenth century English political history, and Stanley Fish's interventions via affective stylistics into precisely the difficulties previous Milton critics preferred to avoid. Exploring as well psychoanalytic, feminist, and new-historicist readings, we will discover why current Milton criticism finds articulate debate, rather than consensus or resolution, to more truly reflect Milton's artistic and intellectual character. Previous experience with Milton's poetry and prose (e.g., Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, Samson Agonistes, Areopagitica) is very helpful but not required. Selections from less familiar prose will also be assigned (e.g., Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Treatise of Civil Power, Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth). Requirements include (but are not limited to): • Weekly Short Essays (approximately 1 page each); • Oral Report with Annotated Bibliography; • Term Paper (approximately 25 pages) based on the oral report and bibliography.

ENG 582—Dickens
8353  W  4:15-7:05 p.m.  ES0108  R. Craig

A study of the major works of Charles Dickens. In addition to analyzing the language, narrative techniques, fictional forms, and thematic preoccupations that enable one to identify a Dickens novel, we will try to understand the “Dickens phenomenon,” which arose during his lifetime and which continues to this day— as witnessed by the numerous celebrations of the two-hundredth anniversary of his birth.

ENG 615—Poetics and Politics: Cultural Production of the Black Arts Era
7818  T  4:15-7:05 p.m.  ES0147  D. Smith

This seminar will examine the efflorescence of African American cultural production of the late 1960s and early 1970s. By reading literature and criticism of the so-called "Black Arts era" seminar participants will begin to understand the powerful and diverse critique of mainstream American politics and aesthetics that black artists produced during the Civil Rights/Black Power period. We will chart the emergence of a militant intellectual ethos that gave rise to a poetics that was expressly and unabashedly political. But we will also engage the work of black writers who felt that the temper of the new aesthetic was compromisingly vulgar and propagandistic. Our readings of a wide range of Black Arts era poetry and criticism will be supplemented by evaluations of the period by scholars writing in recent decades. Taken together, these texts will illuminate an important period of American literary history, even as they lay bare transhistorical concerns that animate the intersection of aesthetics and politics.

ENG 641—Reading Capital
9351  T  7:15-10:05 p.m.  HU0125  B. Benjamin

Marx’s Capital stands as one of the foundational texts of modern critical theory. Some acknowledge openly the debts owed to Marx’s seminal analysis of capitalism and his philosophical contributions to historical materialism; others consider the obligations odious. Between Marx’s critics and Marxist critics, Capital casts a long shadow.

Never more relevant than today, at this moment of global economic crisis following thirty years of “free market” triumphalism, Capital Volume I (in its entirety) will serve as the primary text for this course. In
contrast to broad ranging, book-a-week grad seminars (my own previous seminars included), this course will assume a slower, more meticulous pace; we will devote the majority of the semester to a careful, critical reading of this difficult but rich text. To supplement our primary reading of Marx we will examine several more recent theorizations of Capital’s legacy from distinct, though overlapping disciplinary perspectives: Frederic Jameson’s Representing Capital: A Reading of Volume One, Kevin Anderon’s Marx at the Margins, John Bellamy Foster’s Marx’s Ecology, and, time permitting, Raymond Williams’ Marxism and Literature or Louis Althusser’s For Marx.

Interdisciplinary by nature, this seminar is open to graduate students from other departments as well as those from English. Contact Bret Benjamin <bbenjamin@albany.edu> for additional information.

ENG 681— The Politics of Literary Reputation

5372 M 4:15-7:05 p.m. BA0209 R. Bosco

Justifying his highly selective appropriation and interpretation of historical fact to suit his artistic purposes when writing The Crucible, the American playwright Arthur Miller remarked, “One finds I suppose what one seeks.” Miller’s comment is one individual’s acknowledgment of how the intellectual, imaginative, and aesthetic predispositions of creative writers and readers exert a substantial influence on their disposition toward historical materials, and it is as instructive for biographical and critical writing and theories of textual editing as it is for fiction, poetry, and drama that nominally locate their sources in history. It is especially instructive in accounting for the variety of ways in which biographers, critics, and literary editors have treated the respective lives, thought, and writings of Americans Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor, Benjamin Franklin, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Emily Dickinson. Put another way, the thesis of this seminar is that, regardless of the theory informing their practice, no biographer, critic, or textual editor ever “objectively” or “disinterestedly” approaches the subject of his or her research; it is a thesis admirably demonstrated by the enormous range of revisionist biographical and critical studies on each of these writers produced over the last twenty years as well as by print and online arguments presently advanced concerning the “authority” and “accessibility” of ongoing and recent editions of the public and private (personal) writings of Taylor, Emerson, and Thoreau.

Each of these writers enjoys reasonably sound canonical status today, and so the purpose of this course is to examine the ways in which biographers, critics, and textual editors have contributed to that status. Here, Bradstreet and Taylor, Emerson and Thoreau, and Whitman and Dickinson will be purposely treated together in order to promote comparative and contrastive discussion of their primary works and the construction and evolution of their respective reputations; by contrast, Franklin and Hawthorne will stand alone. Discussions about personal or cultural needs that all these writers and their work were found to fill will dominate the course. Readings will be equally divided among primary texts and biographical, critical, and textual studies.

Requirements include two brief in-class presentations and by the end of the semester a substantial “working paper” together with an in-class presentation on a topic related to the explicit thesis of the seminar. So that each person will be reading primary sources for class from the same text, The Norton Anthology of American Literature, ed. Nina Baym et al, 8th edition, vol. 1 (A, B), (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), will be the one required text for the course. Students who already know the identity of the author (or authors) on whom they will devote their major research may wish to obtain one of the collections listed below of that author’s writings; although no collection has been listed for Franklin or Thoreau, volumes on each in the Library of America or Norton Critical Editions series should suffice.


Walter Benjamin’s elusive and iconic essays in aesthetic politics have served as backdrop and provocation used by a succession of critical and theoretical “(post) modernisms.” Yet his aim was to destroy the partitions between aesthetics and politics, technology and memory formations, the image and writing (graphics), “allegory” or cinema and political interventions which accompany various modernisms of recent stripes. These have alternately fueled and eluded various 20th century critical projects (Marxian, deconstructive, Judaicist, “modernist aesthetics,” the thinking of technics, translation), and more recently the thinking of 21st century ecocatastrophe and climate change (Zizek, Taussig, Latour). This seminar will engage select writings to trace currents of thought he accessed (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud, Adorno) and a succession of deployments by late 20th century theory (Jameson, de Man, Derrida) together with more recent the thought on technics, alternate temporalities, and “shock” (Bernard Stiegler, Naomi Klein, Agamben, Sam Weber). The seminar will retest the sense of Benjamin’s “materialistic historiography” and his rethinking of “image.” In doing so, we will ask what critical tasks extends (or do not) into 21st century or post-global problematics associated, today, with the emergence to view of an “anthropocene” era which subsumes 20th century historicisms, culturalisms, political definitions and other forms of “materiality” unaccounted for by 20th century models. Seminar participants will be make presentations involving the assignments on a rotating basis. We will routinely complement our readings of theory with interpretive explorations of representative texts and media.
ENG 710—Textual Studies I

5839 TH 7:15-10:05 p.m. HU0108 P. Stasi

This course introduces some of the central debates and key concepts that have helped shape the field of English Studies. We will begin our story in the 19th century, reading texts by Marx, Freud and Nietzsche that, in various ways, have set the parameters for 20th and 21st century intellectual inquiry. We will then track a series of intellectual genealogies from these figures (reading Althusser, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Lukacs, Fanon among others) with an eye towards some of the most pressing and relevant areas of contemporary critical debate: biopolitics, postcolonial/globalization studies, the (no-longer) New (but still entirely dominant) Historicism and the revival of affect and aesthetic theory.

ENG 720—Textual Studies II

6160 TH 4:15-7:05 p.m. HU0115 H. Elam

The tension between remembering and forgetting, understood in the poetic, philosophical, and psychoanalytic discourses of our time, acquires specific intensities in texts by Nietzsche, Wordsworth, Freud. This course will be moored in Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals, Freud’s Negation, and [passages from] Wordsworth’s Prelude. Other readings—Molière, Kafka, Dickinson, Proust—might be threaded through this focus. Two short papers leading to a term paper, weekly responses to readings, seminar presentations.

ENG 771—Practical Teaching Writing & Literature

7498 M 7:15-10:05 p.m. HU0108 K. Kuiken

Building on the work you’ve done in AENG 770, this course will focus on the practices of teaching, with the aim of supporting participants as they lead their own undergraduate English classes. We will discuss and develop strategies for handling a variety of challenges that might arise in the course of teaching: from instructing specific skills, to developing assignments and evaluating student work. Topics may also include a focus on specific challenges such as the role of gender and politics in the classroom, to the uses of instructional technologies. We will also engage in comparisons of methods for evaluating and commenting on student work, and work on developing a statement of teaching philosophy. This course is designed for you to reflect upon the work you are already engaged in for the classes you are teaching, and to produce constructive discussions about that work with your colleagues.
Course Concentration Distribution

Literature, Modernity, and the Contemporary
ENG 580—The Transatlantic Origins of the Gothic Novel, Lilley
ENG 581—Avant Garde, Joris
ENG 581—The Practice & Theory Of The Avant-Garde, Joris
ENG 582—John Milton, Cable
ENG 582—Dickens, Craig
ENG 615—Poetics and Literacy, Smith
ENG 681—The Politics of Literary Reputation, Bosco
ENG 685—Walter Benjamin and the Destruction of “Modernism”, Cohen

Writing Practices
ENG 515—Workshop in Poetry, Noel
ENG 516—Fiction Workshop, Davis
ENG 581—The Practice & Theory Of The Avant-Garde, Joris

Cultural, Transcultural, and Global Studies
ENG 615—Poetics and Literacy, Smith
ENG 641—Reading Capital, Benjamin

Theoretical Constructs
ENG 641—Reading Capital, Benjamin
ENG 685—Walter Benjamin and the Destruction of “Modernism”, Cohen
ENG 581—The Practice & Theory Of The Avant-Garde, Joris

Projected Spring 2013

(Note: schedule of grad offerings is subject to change. We hope, however, that it will be of some help in planning a sequence of courses that accounts for likely offerings in future semesters)

500 Textual Practices
516 Fiction Workshop
580 Shakespeare: Sources and Influences (Reading)
581 Late 19th C US Lit (Reading)
582 Fitzgerald and Hemingway
583 History of English Studies
680 Renaissance Scandal of Excess
681 Contemporary Authors
681 Popular Fictions
685 Anglophone Caribbean
720 Queer Poetry/Politics
770 Teaching Writing and Literature

Barney
Tillman
Rozett
Chu
Berman
Wilder
Murakami
Schwarzschild
North
Griffith
Keenaghan
Scheck