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

James D. Lilley, Director of Graduate Studies
Department of English
Humanities Building, Room 333
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Unless otherwise noted, all Courses are by Permission of Department. Please Contact James Lilley (jlilley@albany.edu) with questions.
FACULTY TEACHING SPRING 2020

THOMAS D. COHEN, Professor – Ph.D., Yale University

HELEN REGUEIRO ELAM, Associate Professor – Ph.D., Brown University

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

MIKE HILL, Professor – Ph.D., State University of N.Y. at Stony Brook

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

KIR KUIKEN, Associate Professor – Ph.D. University of California, Irvine

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

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

CHARLES SHEPHERDSON, Professor – Ph.D., Vanderbilt University

LYNN M. TILLMAN, Professor – B.A., Hunter College

LAURA WILDER, Associate Professor – Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin
In order to describe what is so distinctive about our modern forms of community and society, Mark Seltzer has famously diagnosed what he calls America’s “wound culture.” In Seltzer’s view, what brings us together as a modern society is not our involvement in some shared political process or our pursuit of universal ethical standards. Nor do more selfish quests for personal happiness or private capital seem to capture the peculiar ties that bind us into our distinctively modern social configurations. Instead, Seltzer argues that we moderns now need to revisit (time and time again) scenes of suffering and violence—replete with bodies that have been broken, brutalized, and cast aside—in order to energize us toward each other, forming communities bound together by their voyeuristic participation in the spectacle of crime.

Indeed, as Edgar Allan Poe—the inventor of the modern detective story and the true crime genre—observed in the 1830s, to be modern is to live as if we are detectives who have stumbled across the scene of some horrific and nameless crime. With Poe’s Gothic as our anchor, this course will offer students an introduction to a variety of methodologies and theories of literary study. In addition to the nature and origins of modernity’s “wound culture,” some of the other questions we’ll ponder will include: What is a ghost? What constitutes a literary genre? How do texts register the anxieties of cultural, political, and psychological trauma? How do standards of taste emerge? And how have new media technologies transformed the genre of the Gothic into such popular and lucrative contemporary modes such as the detective story, the vampire flick, and the horror movie? Some of the theories/methodologies we will engage: formalism and genre studies, psychoanalytic and post-Freudian theory, ideology critique and poststructuralism, theories of the modern and postmodern, and a variety of approaches to gender, campiness, and kitsch. Authors/movies/podcasts/TV shows to include: *Stranger Things*, *Walpole*, *Black Mirror*, *Melville*, *Missing Maura Murray*, *Blue Velvet*, *Kafka*, *The Matrix*.
problems and possibilities in making fictions. Constructive criticism, that is, aimed at noticing possible explanations and reasons for any problems. In this graduate level course, it is expected that each student-writer will have had some experience in writing stories, and in receiving criticism and providing it to others’ stories in a helpful manner. Enrollment is by permission of the instructor; please submit a sample of your fiction writing with a brief cover letter about yourself and your writing to Prof. Tillman (tillwhentillman@gmail.com).

9689  AENG555  On Translation
Thursday  04:15PM-07:05PM  Elam, Helen Regueiro

In an age of multiculturalism / transnationalism/ globalization, language is at the core of our understanding of otherness and exile, and “translation” is the process that most clearly highlights issues around linguistic and political migrations: translation understood not in its ordinary sense of ferrying meaning from one language to another, but as the very problem of “meaning” at the heart of literature and culture. A famous story of translation has a German poet translating Sophocles’ Oedipus the King literally, word for word, with a result that defies sense. What this strange exercise suggests, to this poet (Hölderlin) and to theorists of language who come after, is that “translation” occurs, already, in the “original,” and that the slippage cannot be fully contained by the grammatical safety of either original or target language. Translation unveils the “otherness” of the original, its condition of exile from itself, and thus raises questions affecting philosophies of language as well as political issues of linguistic and cultural identity: who ‘owns’ a language, a geographical space, a culture? Readings from a range of literary and theoretical texts: Walter Benjamin, Vladimir Nabokov, Marcel Proust, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida, Anne Carson, Lydia Davis, Alice Kaplan, Tejaswini Niranjana – not all of these, and possibly others. Requirements: three papers (the second a project statement, the third a term paper), intense class participation, presentations. Term projects may include creative translations (with critical intro and abundant commentary) for students who are versed in more than one language.

9690  AENG580  Reading the Haitian Revolution
Tuesday  07:15PM-10:05PM  Griffith, Glyne

Our historical model or framing event is the San Domingo Revolution, that historically significant plantation slavery revolt that blossomed into a full-blown revolution ignited by the same precepts of liberty, fraternity and equality that came to be associated with the French Revolution. Our seminar will focus on readings of C.L.R. James's The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution. Originally published in 1938, James’s text was republished in 1963 with significant authorial revisions. We will read James's text and examine other readings and assessments of this important work. For example, in Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment, David Scott reads the discursive space between James’s two editions as a “problem-space”, a conceptual space within which Scott offers his interpretation of James’s 1938 edition read against the 1963
revision. Alternatively, in *The Haitian Revolution in the Literary Imagination: Radical Horizons, Conservative Constraints*, Philip Kaisary offers a reading of James’s work from a perspective that counters Scott’s analysis in *Conscripts*. These interpretations and re-interpretations of James’s foundational text, including James’s own revisioning of his classic work, offer us profitable examples of models of history in literary criticism. In addition to the aforementioned texts, we will also read Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past: Power and Production in History*, Alejo Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of This World*, Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s *Love, Anger, Madness: A Haitian Triptych*, and Edwidge Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.

**10047 AENG580 Current Trends in Critical Theory: Comparative Realisms**

This course will be useful Masters or Doctoral students who are interested in the following set of literary and theoretical problems: the history of the novel; genre theory; realism as a narrative technique; and the relationship between science and aesthetics (especially as regards climate change and climate science denial).
We will start where the modern novel itself begins, which is in the eighteenth century, a time where an interest in the real emerged as part of the Enlightenment's investment in probability, empirical forms of knowledge, tool-based epistemology, and the veracity of human experience. Here we will examine a range of different kinds of texts—literary, scientific, and philosophical—and ask how they approach the problem of realism from their specific disciplinary vantage points. Once we have established the historical connection between different genres of realistic writing, we will move into more contemporary work on the question of the real. Here we will be interested in relating early modern endorsements of realism with two other approaches to the question of what's real—historical materialist, and speculative—in order to show how these other approaches may extend, reform, and refine, the Enlightenment's original claims.


**7954 AENG582 Hitchcock and Faulkner- Reading, Technics, and Materiality from a Post-Anthropocene Perspective**
**Thursday 07:15PM-10:05PM Cohen, Thomas**

This seminar will create a dialog between two iconic “modernist” works of contrasting mediums and styles. By pairing the literary and cinematic we will explore the interfaces they generate between them around figures of blackness, memory, technics, and the transition from 20th century writing/cinema into the era of hypertechologies and extinction events the term Anthropocene has come to designate (or obscure). Along the way, we will engage methods of close reading and consult theoretical issues surrounding us today. Participants will be expected to rigorously prepare assignments and participate in discussion, make short presentations, and define (with instructor feedback) a final essay topic.

**9692 AENG615 Personal Politics and Impersonal Poetics**
**Tuesday 04:15PM-07:05PM Keenaghan, Eric**

Between c.1960 and c.1980, amongst the New Left an activist rhetoric about “personal politics” emerged. It was not entirely new, of course. In the United States, such ideas—albeit without the catchphrase—had been common amongst anarchist, libertarian, and Popular Front activists. But the idea that individual personhood and collectivity or mutual aid were not mutually exclusive assumed more legitimacy in later decades. Before the emergence of the New Left and its related predecessor movements, especially the Civil Rights movement, socially progressive and radical writers affiliated with the New American Poetry or contemporaneous groups came into prominence. Carrying on the legacy of interwar modernism, these poets were invested in versions of an earlier modernist “impersonal poetics” that seems to run contrary to activists' advocacy of personal freedom and the
writers’ own rhetoric about personhood, freedom, and individualism. How might their work challenge current political vocabularies about and preconceptions of direct action, minoritarian and minor democratic politics, and social and political representation? To what extent does activist discourse, with its focus on direct action and embodiment, compel our reimagining of our own critical investments in poetry as capable of making strong public interventions? Where does such recursive and speculative thinking put us in relationship to our own sociopolitical commitments and writing?

Our literary studies will begin with three modernist theorizers of impersonality, as exemplified by T.S. Eliot before *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot after *The Waste Land*, and William Carlos Williams (who opposed his praxis and poetics to all things Eliot). We then will move on to explore how these two key modernists’ ideas about impersonality might be read as informing the work by various cold war and New American poet-activists, who might include: Paul Goodman, Julian Beck and Judith Malina (of the Living Theatre), Muriel Rukeyser, LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Gwendolyn Brooks, Walter Lowenfels, Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov, Allen Ginsberg, Diane di Prima, Michael McClure, Franklin and Penelope Rosemont, and John Wieners. Throughout the semester, we will be developing a conceptual context for our studies by reading excerpts from theories of impersonality, assemblage, and third-person politics; excerpts from political philosophy and theories of social justice and embodied activism from the 1960s through today; primary historical documents from the New Left and its affiliated activist organizations; and chapters from cultural and political histories of related issues in modernist and cold war American poetries. (Readings and/or authors may vary from what is listed here.)

**Requirements:** (a) Class attendance and participation (2 absences max.); (b) a researched class leader presentation on the day’s assigned poet (15-20 minutes, 3-5 sources); (c) a short position paper (5-6 pages) and annotated bibliography based on the presentation, due one week afterward; and (c) a final seminar project, developed in stages over the last half of the semester (proposal, annotated bibliography, conference, presentation of work-in-progress). The final project may take the form of either a critical seminar paper (20- to 30-pages) or a hybrid creative project (a creative manuscript, plus a 6-8 pages researched poetics statement or artist’s statement).

**Note:** In early January, enrolled students will be emailed the finalized textbook list. A reading assignment for our first meeting will be available through Blackboard two weeks before the start of the semester.
thought (particularly deconstruction), insofar as the so-called “linguistic turn” was thought to reduce everything to language and the “free play of the signifier,” thereby detaching art (once again) from its social and political context.

However inadequate these generalized claims may have been, they had – and continue to have – significant force in the humanities. Movements in literary theory with very diverse aims – including feminist theory, the New Historicism, Marxism, and the general development of cultural studies – had the great advantage of restoring the political, social and historical dimension of art as a central focus of inquiry. In the process, however, the peculiarity of aesthetic experience has often been effaced or ignored. “Cultural theory” (as it is often called – rather than “literary theory”) has tended to neglect the borders that separate aesthetic experience from experience shaped by religious, legal, political, medical and other social and discursive practices.

This course will explore the distinctive character of aesthetic experience as it appears in three different historical moments in Western thought, and the implications that emerge for the history of subjectivity. Arguments about the "social construction of subjectivity" in literary criticism too often neglect the distinctive character of aesthetic experience, absorbing it into the "social," "cultural," or "political" domain, as if there were no difference between the literary work and the medical, religious, political and other discourses that surround it. And yet, the work of art cannot simply be situated in its place and time like other historical objects, as a “sign” (or symptom) of the times, as if it were one historical artifact among others (a sewer system, a technological invention, a medical practice or a religious doctrine). The work of art does not belong to time in the same way as other “historical” objects, but has a distinctive historicity which authors as diverse as Jauss, Foucault, and Adorno attempted to elaborate. The work of art does not simply represent its time, or mirror the ideologies and discourses that surround it. Of the contrary, art has a relation to history that is distinctive, disruptive, adversarial, or just imaginatively contrary (i.e. fiction), and it thereby elaborates forms of subjective life, and possibilities of thought and meaning, that do not exist in the social world around it. This point also bears on the role of aesthetic experience in the historical formation of subjectivity. The work of art does not testify to the prior existence of a “social” form of subjectivity that exists independently and outside the work of art, as though art could only repeat or “document” the categories of class, gender, and other normative forms of social identity that predate the work of art. On the contrary, aesthetic experience brings into being new affective possibilities that challenge the social and historical forms of subjectivity that surround the work of art.

This course will focus on the peculiar character of aesthetic experience as it appears in three distinct moments in the history of Western thought – ancient Greece, the late Enlightenment, and contemporary aesthetics – tracing the overt or implicit conception of subjectivity that accompanies aesthetic theory in each of these moments. From a more or less Foucauldian perspective, we will consider the discursive and institutional formation of subjectivity that takes shape under the heading of aesthetic experience in each of these historical moments. Our main points of reference will be: (1) tragic theater as it appears in Aristotle’s Poetics; (2) the concepts of the “beautiful” and the
“sublime” as they appear in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, and (3) some representative recent texts on aesthetics in modern thought, possibly including Theodor Adorno, Hans-Robert Jauss, Michel Foucault, Jacques Rancière and Jean-Luc Nancy.

REQUIRED WORK

(1) Annotated Bibliography: Each student will produce an annotated bibliography on the topic you plan to explore in your final paper (topics to be determined individually with considerable latitude). Students will submit a list of 20 items (articles or book chapters), which will be reduced to 10 in consultation with me. The final bibliography will consist of a 2-page description of the main arguments of each item on your list. (2) Final Paper: A 15-20 page paper will be developed on the basis of the bibliography and background research.

1657  AENG770  Teaching Writing and Literature
Tuesday 04:15PM-07:05PM  Wilder, Laura

This course aims to provide an overview of both practical and conceptual concerns related to teaching English with guided practice in applying this learning for instructors who will be new to teaching at the University at Albany. As such, we will explore the immediate teaching situation course participants can expect to encounter in the English Department at the University at Albany and we will explore larger questions about the purposes for teaching English and the social, cultural, and disciplinary histories that shape the study of English today. Because “English” is a broad tent, including literary and cultural studies, creative writing, and rhetoric and composition, and because the University at Albany is a large, complex institution, our overview approach will be wide-ranging and, consequently, necessarily incomplete. But students can expect to leave the course with an increased sense of what supports and services exist on campus for you to draw on as you teach, what requirements the department and university asks you to fulfill in your teaching, what roles the individual courses you teach play in a larger curriculum and in students’ lives beyond your classroom, and what philosophies and theories you wish to underpin your pragmatic teaching choices.

Course Concentration Distribution Spring 2020

**Literature, Modernity, and the Contemporary**
ENG580: The Scandal of Excess: Early Modern Economics and Aesthetics
ENG580: Current Trends in Critical Theory: Comparative Realisms
ENG615: Personal Politics and Impersonal Poetics

**Writing Practices**
ENG516: Graduate Fiction Workshop
ENG555: On Translation
ENG770: Teaching Writing and Literature
Cultural, Transcultural, and Global Studies
ENG580: Reading the Haitian Revolution

Theoretical Constructs
ENG500: Textual Studies Survey: Wound Culture, True Crime, and the Gothic
ENG555: On Translation
ENG582: Hitchcock and Faulkner: Reading, Technics, and Materiality from a Post-Anthropocene Perspective
ENG720: Textual Studies II: Aesthetics and the History of Subjectivity