Summer 2023

ENG 200-411: Lit & Human Experience | Bestsellers in American Lit | Online Asynchronous | Jesse
Since its birth as a field of study, “American Literature” has struggled with questions about the relationship between “high art” literary products and more “popular” modes of textual production. In this course, we will explore the issues associated with this ongoing tension by focusing our attention on popular, bestselling texts published within the last decade (2010-20). In addition to reading and analyzing texts across a range of multiple genres (including novels, short fiction, memoir, poetry, and young adult literature), we will also devote significant attention to formal and informal writing that supports these investigations. Taken together, the reading and writing we do in this class will prepare you to think more critically about the role that literature—whether canonical or popular—plays in how we understand and experience the world around us.

ENG 200-421: Lit & Human Experience | Communal Ownership/Fairy Tales | Online Asynchronous | K. Hart
Although the Disney Corporation owns copyrighted versions of Cinderella, Snow White, The Little Mermaid, and Beauty and the Beast, the basic plot motifs at the core of these stories are not the sole property of Disney. The fairy-tale genre originated centuries ago in the folktales, mythologies and legends of various communities and cultures to satisfy the human desire to escape persecution, find relief from human and social anxieties, explain natural and social phenomena, find happiness, and be entertained. Because the creation of fairy tales is communal and diverse, no one person can own them. They belong to us all. But why should we care about who owns fairy tales? How do folkloric “tale types” migrate across the globe and change to reflect the dreams, anxieties, and experiences of different authors, cultures and groups of humans? How can fairy tales inspire our critical thinking, helping us to learn more about ourselves, and our world? How can they help us work through human and social issues? What role does storytelling and literature itself play in our human experiences? I hope that you will all be engaged in discovering answers to these questions as we investigate the pleasures and thought-provoking meanings of Cinderella, Snow White, Trickster Tales, Beauty and the Beast, Bluebeard, Sinbad, Snow Queens and Mermaids, and practice interpretive strategies that will be useful in your future professional and personal lives.

Fall 2023

ENG 200-01: Lit & Human Experience | Disability Lit, Drama, Film | TTH 9:25-10:50 | In-Person | Crutchfield
ENG 200-02: Lit & Human Experience | Disability Lit, Drama, Film | TTH 12:40-2:05 | In-Person | Crutchfield
We will discuss various modern and contemporary stories, short novels, plays, and films featuring people and characters with disabilities, including Of Mice and Men (a classic novel about friendship, cognitive disability and euthanasia), The Elephant Man (a play based on the real life of Joseph Merrick—a man with significant physical deformities—and his interactions with freak show and medical institutions in the late 1800s), Crip Camp (a documentary film about a summer camp for teenagers with disabilities and the disability activist movement that some campers helped spearhead), The Sound of Metal (a fictional film about a metal band drummer who loses his hearing), The Cancer Journals (journals of cancer survivor and African-American lesbian poet Audre Lorde), and The Bad Doctor (a graphic novel about a family physician with obsessive compulsive disorder). Students will learn about the cultural, historical, and aesthetic meanings of disability while striving for a better understanding of their own attitudes, perceptions, and preconceptions about disability as a personal, intersectional, and cultural phenomenon. Students will also learn about “narrative medicine,” a framework for health practice that uses the skills of literary analysis to enhance patient care. This course will particularly appeal to students in the health sciences and physical recreation, as well as in education, pre-medicine, political science, sociology, psychology, and other related fields. The course is also a good introduction to the topics and methods studied in the English for Medical Professions major.
This course emphasizes various ways of reading, studying, and appreciating this changing medium with its wide variety of genres, themes, and styles. The course examines the history of comic books and their commentary on culture, society, and politics.

This class will engage the significant diversity of American people, literature, and culture. Students will learn about various ethnic American historical and cultural contexts through fiction, non-fiction, poetry, slam poetry, drama, music, film, art, history, and critical thought. The class will explore cultural issues that are brought up by ethnically diverse authors—issues that relate to assimilation and tradition, economic inequalities, race, gender, sexuality, language, ethnic identity, education, agency, marginalization, history, nationalism, laws and justice. The class will also engage conversations about ethnocentrism and cultural relativity, cultural awareness and cultural competence. Migration does not occur in a vacuum, so this course will include work by African American and Native American / Indigenous authors, as well as Latinx, Asian American, Dominican, Haitian, Jewish, and Muslim authors. As an introduction to ethnic literatures, this course cannot include all the manifestations of American ethnic identities, but it attempts to open doors to understand the significant diversity of American people and cultures.

We hear more and more about how divided society is and how disagreements between and among individuals and groups drives deeper the wedges between people. In this section of ENG 200, we read works of fiction and poetry by Nobel Laureate authors worldwide as we investigate the possibility of compassion and a desire for peace as dual means of bridging divides—of understanding others—especially those who are not "like us," as members of a shared humanity. We will engage in mindfulness and compassion practices as we explore various ways of reading, studying, and appreciating literature as an aesthetic, emotional, and cultural experience.

What constitutes a utopian or a dystopian society? How are the citizens treated, especially teens and youth? Who maintains political and social control, and what are the effects of this control? In this course we will explore the intersections between political repression and literature by reading texts depicting fictional dystopian societies and a real-life dystopian society. These literary responses to writing under and about political repression reveal the roles writing can play in these societies: to become censored and controlled, just like people; to bear witness to abuse; to speak back to power.

Reading about trauma allows us to better understand scarring experiences that might be unfamiliar to us. Trauma literature also acts as a testament to the experiences of historically marginalized people. In this course, we will examine literary approaches to trauma specific to women authors. We will focus on the struggles women authors have faced being writers of their time, how social norms have affected these writers, and in turn, how their pieces have affected the society in which they live(d). We will also focus on the theory of intersectionality and issues of racial, class, and gender discrimination. We will spend our time reading and analyzing literature that represents different cultures, time periods, genres, and forms, while focusing on literature's ability to defy the norm through artistic expression and rebel from societal expectations and restrictions. Readings may include the novel The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy, Woman Warrior by Maxine Hong Kingston, “The Thing in the Forest” by A.S. Byatt, “Bloodchild,” by Octavia Butler, and other short works of fiction.
This class will explore how place and setting (urban rural, or national) shape personal identities, both for the authors we read and for ourselves. We will read canonical poetry and prose beginning with Britain’s Romantic era (such as famous love sonnets by writers like Keats and Elizabeth Barrett Browning), through the tales of horror in the backstreets of Victorian urban London (including Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde), to the colonial voices speaking back to Britain from Jamaica and India in voices of humor, critique, and irony. Some of the questions we will consider include: How did writers depict the relationship between humans and nature? What were the changing views toward country and the city during eras of increased mass production and suburban expansion? How did the shattering impact of World War I transform notions of “home” and “animal”? How did the process of global colonization reveal cultural hypocrisies and racism? And most importantly, how do we express and imagine our own ideas of home and identity?

The western industrial revolution of the eighteenth century was accompanied by revolutions of the mind and of the body politic known collectively as the Enlightenment. This course begins with an introduction to some of the writers whose ideas contributed to these revolutions, then traces the fallout of their ideas through the following centuries to the present. We will read famous writers that will help us delineate major movements—Romanticism, Aestheticism, Existentialism, Marxism, Modernism, Postmodernism—but the most important question we’ll ask is “who are you in relation to these writers and their ideas?” So while this course offers a general survey in western culture since the Enlightenment, it is also a very personal course that will help you, as Friedrich Nietzsche put it, “become the person you are.”

This course examines cultural themes in American literature in an effort to enhance student awareness of the multi-ethnic nature of American culture. Students engage in close reading, discussion, analysis, and interpretation of texts written by individuals from a variety of American ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

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For well over two hundred years, popular stereotypes have portrayed America as a uniquely independent country made up of “self-reliant” pioneers and “rugged individualists.” Whether or not this is an accurate portrait, one thing is certain: at least in the field of American literature, the spirit of experimentation and innovation—of “breaking all the rules”—has become a defining characteristic of the nation’s most influential authors and artists. This course focuses on unique literary works that break away from tradition to create new forms of artistic expression. Along the way, we’ll also be looking at how these texts reflect America’s everchanging attitudes toward race, gender, class, and national identity. Course readings stretch from the late-1800s up to the present day and include novels, short fiction, poetry, drama, and non-fiction.

In this course, students examine a wide array of texts in British literature from the late 18th through the early 21st centuries. This period in British history includes many issues of sociopolitical conflict and the literature of the time reflects them vividly. Poets, essayists, fiction writers and memoirists explore subjects including the impact of the French Revolution on England, the emergence of women's rights, the role of art, working conditions in the age of industrialization, changing relationships to nature in the machine age, and the conflict between science and religion following Darwin's writings. England's colonial power abroad also spurred questions of ethics and identity for both those living in England and the colonies they occupied. This course provides essential literary and historical background for any advanced study in British literature.

ENG 202-01: American Lit after 1865 | TTH 12:40-2:05 | In-Person | Schaaf
ENG 202-02: American Lit after 1865 | TTH 2:15-3:40 | In-Person | Schaaf

ENG 204-411: British Literature after 1800 | Online Asynchronous | Online Asynchronous | DeFazio
ENG 204-412: British Literature after 1800 | Online Asynchronous | Online Asynchronous | DeFazio

In our specific course, we will focus on how multi-ethnic US storytellers use folktales, fairy tales, poems, myths, family stories and heroes to engage us in complex cultural and human questions about what it means to create a community, home, family, identity, and even justice in the United States. We will read selections from Leslie Marmon Silko’s The Storyteller, Toni Morrison’s Tar Baby, Kao Kalia Yang’s The Latehomecomer, Sandra Cisneros’ Woman Hollering Creek, Ta Nehisi Coates’ Marvel comic adaptation “The Black Panther,” and Isaac Bashevis Singer’s “Gimpel the Fool.” We will also screen the first episode of the TV series The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel (2017) and clips from Disney’s Black Panther (2018). By investigating these stories and storytellers more closely, we might gain a better awareness of what Homi Bhabha called the “ongoing negotiation” of cultural experience, or the complex way we negotiate multiple cultural identities to create a sense of self in the world. Behind this awareness is the hope that storytelling can lead to wisdom, transform stereotypes, oppressive norms, and prejudicial attitudes, and reveal the beauty of the diverse human experience that connects us all.
What stories do cultural phenomena like Tarot cards, crystals, and the Zodiac tell their readers about gender, sex, and sexualities? How might the fields of feminist and cultural studies help us to critically read the texts of Tarot? This course will explore the current fascination with Tarot cards and the stories they tell. We will consider the role these visual and symbolic texts play in the construction of gendered identities, the ways in which sex and sexuality are culturally-mediated through Tarot’s particular interpretative logic, and how social, political, and cultural ideas of pleasure, agency and power are framed by representations of gender and sex, both historically and in our present moment. We’ll also learn and practice the art of reading Tarot.