

Spring 2021 Graduate Courses

CPLT 751-1: "Literature and Justice: Writers on Trial" - Shoshana Felman

Mondays 4:20PM – 5:35PM (ONLINE)

[Cross-listed with ENG 789-6 & LAW 621]

Content: History has put on trial a series of creative thinkers. At the dawn of philosophy, Socrates drinks the cup of poison to which he is condemned by the Athenians for his influential teaching, charged with atheism, and corruption of the youth. Centuries later, in modernity, similarly influential (similarly charismatic and ironically subversive) Oscar Wilde is condemned by the English for his homosexuality, as well as for his provocative artistic style. In France, the most outstanding writers-- Flaubert and Baudelaire -- are both indicted as criminals for their first (shockingly innovative) literary works; Emile Zola is condemned for defending a Jew against the state which has convicted him, and flees from France to England to escape imprisonment.

However different, all these accused have come to stand for something greater than themselves: something that was symbolized -- and challenged -- by their trials. Through the examination of a series of historical and literary legal dramas, this course will ask: Why are literary writers, artists and philosophers, repetitively put on trial, and how in turn do they challenge culture and society? What is the role of art and literature as political actors in the struggles over ethics, and the struggles over meaning?

Texts: Texts selected among: Plato's Dialogues; Molière's plays; Shakespeare's plays; Oscar Wilde (Plays, Autobiography, Critical writings); Gustave Flaubert (novels, letters); Charles Baudelaire (poems, criticism, theory of art); Emile Zola (political writings); Herman Melville (novellas); Bertolt Brecht (plays)); Hannah Arendt (Essays, Interviews); Spinoza (Ethics); Sigmund Freud (Psychoanalytic Writings); Jacques Lacan (psychoanalytic seminar); E. M. Forster (novel); Virginia Woolf (novel); Franz Kafka (short stories, parables).

Particulars: Regular attendance; Two short papers distributed throughout the course of the semester; Brief oral presentations; Intensive weekly reading assignment (weekly one-page reading reports) and active preparation of texts for class discussion; ongoing participation.

*****NOTE:** *In some cases, recommended advanced undergraduates might be able take the class (by permission).*

ENG 789-1: Sexual/Textual Empires – Deepika Bahri

Tuesday, Thursday 2:40PM - 3:55PM (ONLINE)

[Cross-listed with CPLT 751]

In his discussion of racialized sexuality as a product of “stereotypic, symbolizing, and condensing discursivity,” Abdul Jan Mohamed suggests that “it is the hystericized, over-sexualized body of the black male that is used by the discourse of racialized sexuality to reinforce the hysterical boundaries between the two racialized communities (“Sexuality,” 105–6). The “open secret” of the white master’s desire for the female sexual slave, on the other hand, is characterized by a “peculiar silence” (104, 94). How does racialized sexuality constitute subjects and identities? This course investigates sexual/textual empires through the scenes of interracial desire, colonial masculinity, postcolonial/queer intersections, carceral sterilization, and visions of trans futures. We will read short stories and novels (including twitterature) by African, Asian, Black British, and American authors likely to be drawn from this list: authors such as Adichie, Dangarembga, Devi, Egan, Evaristo, Levy, Lahiri, Roy, and Rushdie.

CPLT 751R-7: The Philosophy and Literature of Cynicism: Ancient and Modern - Bracht Branham

Mondays 2:00PM – 5:00PM (ONLINE)

[Cross-listed with ENG 789]

The purpose of this seminar is to investigate the origins and nature of the Cynic movement in antiquity and its reception in Renaissance and modern Europe. We will focus initially on the primary sources for the Dog- philosophers (e.g., Diogenes Laertius, Lucian, Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, et al.), the most influential figures in the movement (Antisthenes, Diogenes, Crates, Menippus) and the peculiar place of the Cynics within Greek culture (including its role in the invention of Stoicism). The rest of the course will be devoted to exploring the ideological, literary and cultural ramifications of Cynicism in a variety of contexts from the Renaissance to the twentieth century: 1) the response to Cynicism in the works of the Renaissance Humanists, Diderot, Nietzsche and Foucault; 2) Cynic literary forms such as Menippean satire, satiric dialogue and aphorism; and 3) the Cynic philosophy of laughter will provide central points of reference. In general we will be asking: What made Cynicism the most influential branch of the Socratic tradition in antiquity? Why has it become an object of contemporary interest in Nietzsche, Sloterdijk and Foucault? No previous knowledge of Greek philosophy is required. Greek, Latin, French, German or Italian is useful, but the basic texts are available in bilingual editions. D. R. Dudley's *A History of Cynicism* (recently re-issued in paperback by Ariel) provides a good introduction to the ancient traditions.

Materials: D. R. Dudley, *A History of Cynicism* (Cambridge 1937) rpt. Ares Pub. Chicago 0890053650; R. B. Branham and M. O. Goulet-Caze, eds., *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy* (Berkeley 1996) 0520216458; and Diogenes Laertius, *Loeb Classical*

Library vol. II (Cambridge, Mass. 1970) 0674992040; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* (ed. J. Miller; trans. P. Mensch; Oxford 2018) 9780190862176; L. Shea, *The Cynic Enlightenment: Diogenes in the Salon* (Johns Hopkins 2010) 0801893852.

Requirements for the course are active participation in the seminar and seminar reports; a paper is optional.

ENG 789-2: Exhibiting Yeats and Heaney (open to undergrads) - Geraldine Higgins

Mondays 9:40-12:35 (ONLINE)

[Cross-listed with CPLT 751]

This course requires students to research the life and works of Ireland's two poet laureates before considering the process and politics of exhibitions. There have been countless comparisons made between Ireland's two Nobel prize-winning poets (including the fact that Heaney was born in 1939, the year that Yeats died). Both poets wrestled with the responsibilities of the artist to the demands of violent conflict, both resisted the call of propaganda and both became spokesmen for a civic and cultural agenda in public life. Yet Yeats and Heaney responded in significantly different ways to their personal, historical and political circumstances.

Topics for discussion will include archival research, digital humanities, poetry in the public sphere, and the role of the curator. For the Yeats component of the course, students will use the online exhibition, "The Life and Works of William Butler Yeats" at <http://www.nli.ie/yeats/>. For the Heaney component of the course, we will study elements of Emory's 2014 exhibition "Seamus Heaney: The Music of What Happens" as well as the National Library of Ireland's Dublin exhibition "Seamus Heaney: Listen Now Again."

CPLT 751R-3: Mind, Brain and Image in Film and Fiction – John Johnston

Wednesdays 4:00PM – 7:00PM (ONLINE)

[Cross-listed with ENG 789-5]

In this course we will explore some of the ways that neuroscience and the mind-brain split have figured in recent film, philosophy and prose fiction. We begin with a discussion of the cave drawings and paintings from the upper Paleolithic period (specifically in Chauvet Cave) and the claim that the human mind essentially begins with the creation of these images. (To spur discussion, we'll read a short selection from *The Sapient Mind: Archaeology Meets Neuroscience*.) We'll then jump to Bergson's theory of the image and brain in his book *Matter and Memory*, followed by excerpts from Gilles Deleuze's two cinema books, *The Movement-Image* and *The Time-Image*, where he argues that "the cinema...never stops tracing the circuits of the brain". We continue with excerpts from Patricia Pister's cinema book, *The Neuro-image*, which extends Deleuze's argument to contemporary films, at which point we will discuss two

assigned films, Aronofsky's Pi and Bress and Gruber's The Butterfly Effect. We then turn to readings about the brain and the mind-brain distinction, beginning with Catherine Malabou's short book, What Should We Do with Our Brain?, followed by a series of readings authored by actual neuroscientists, specifically: Stanislas Dehaene on consciousness and learning, Olaf Sporns on the brain's networks, and Cris Frith's fairly short Making up the Mind: How the Brain Creates our Mental World. Finally, before turning to the prose fiction, we will read a chapter or two from Jonah Lehrer's Proust Was a Neuroscientist. To conclude the course, we will read one or two novels (depending on how much time we have) which the class will choose from the novels that Marco Roth discusses in his essay "The Rise of the Neuronovel".

Requirements:

- Read all of the assigned material and fully engage in class discussion.
- A 20-minute class presentation on a topic of your choice, but that I approve in advance.
- A 15-18-page seminar paper due at the end of the semester

ENG 798: Seminar in Pedagogy and Professionalization – Paul Kelleher and Catherine Nickerson

Wednesdays 4:20-7:15 (ONLINE)

The course prepares students for teaching a literature section in the fall or spring of their fifth year. Students will gain experience in preparing documents for fellowship applications and the job market, such as cover letters, curriculum vitae, teaching, diversity statements, writing samples, and interpretations of job and postdoctoral ads. The seminar will also investigate careers beyond academia, in coordination with the LGS Asst. Dean for Prof. Dev and Career Planning, allied PhD pgms, the Alumni Office, the CFDE, and other relevant programming.

CPLT 751-5: "Scholarly Work as Creative Practice" – Angelika Bammer

Thursdays 4:00PM – 7:00PM (ONLINE)

[6 Seats CPLT/4 ENGLISH/ 2 ANTHRO] [Cross-listed with ENG 789-4/ANTHRO]

Established forms of scholarly inquiry often appear immutable. The peer-reviewed essay, the monograph, the conference presentation, have long served as professional markers in the academy, counted as evidence of productivity and used for scholarly legitimation. However, the rise of new fields of inquiry, coupled with growing dissatisfaction about the limitations (aesthetic, intellectual, and political) of normative forms, are both challenging these established norms and expanding the ways that scholarly work is practiced. This course explores the productive possibilities of such shifts. Even as the academic humanities continue to grapple with the myriad pressures of a contracting market, this course proposes that the emergence of new forms offers productive opportunities for innovation and creativity. And while our focus will be

on a range of text-based forms, we will extend our inquiry to include visual forms, exhibition, and performance.

Texts: John Berger and Jean Mohr, *A Seventh Man* (1975), Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals* (2019), Terry Kapsalis and Gina Litherland, *The Hysterical Alphabet* (2008), Jason de León, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail* (2015), Nick Sousanis, *Unflattening* (2015), Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (2007)

Work: (1) Weekly exercises: Imitations of assigned class materials with critical commentary. (2) Final Project: Presentation of a scholarly project in the form of a creative practice, accompanied by a paper offering critical commentary on the reasons for and yield of the chosen form.

The primary texts will be framed by a reading in critical theory readings from a range of fields.

ENG 789-6: Digital Humanities and Literary Institutions: Prizes, Programs, Publishing – Dan Sinykin

Tuesdays 4:20PM - 7:15PM (ONLINE)
[Cross listed CPLT 751R-1]

This course has two goals: to introduce students to institutional criticism and to provide a foundation in computational methods. Prizes, creative writing programs, and publishing are the three central contemporary literary institutions. James English and Mark McGurl, with *The Economy of Prestige* and *The Program Era*, have written two of the most celebrated contributions to literary studies in recent decades. English emphasizes how prizes, like the Booker and the Pulitzer, organize how readers and writers value literature. McGurl observes that maybe the biggest change in how Americans wrote novels after 1945 was that they wrote them on college campuses. The rise of creative writing programs created an expansive patronage system that organized life and labor for novelists with far-reaching aesthetic implications. More recently, scholars have begun to study the publishing industry as a site for understanding contemporary literary production.

We will focus on contemporary literature. Contemporists studying institutions face a challenge: how to account for the vastness of the domain? In the last few years, the expansion of digital libraries and developments in modeling have made new computational methods possible. Working from ground zero, with no expectation of any background, we will introduce students to these new methods. Students will have access to unprecedented data on prizes, programs, and publishing through ECDS and the Post45 Data Collective. We might read literature by Percival Everett, Toni Morrison, Helen DeWitt, Sandra Cisneros, and N. Scott Momaday. We might read theory and criticism by Kinohi Nishikawa, Richard Jean So, Janice Radway, Kalyan Nadiminti, Sarah Brouillette, and Jacqueline Goldsby.

ENG 789-3: Sonic Diaspora - Meina Yates-Richard

Mondays 1:00PM - 3:55PM (ONLINE)

This course is an advanced study in African American and African Diasporic literatures and theory that tracks some of the most insistent questions and distinctive features of these fields from the mid-19th through 21st century. Attuning our readings to the sonic descriptions and elements embedded within African American and diasporic textual production from the slave narrative tradition forward, we will interrogate multifarious politics of sounding and listening across the terrains of race, gender, sexuality, and attend to concerns of nation and diaspora, in order to examine the ways in which African diasporic thinkers have leveraged sound within their textual productions. We will further consider what political urgencies lie within and are represented through sound to assess what novel theorizations of race, time, space, trauma, memory, intersubjective relations, and “freedom” might be gleaned from close listening to these bodies of literature.