

# Spring 2016 Graduate Seminars

## **ENG 599R: Master's Thesis**

Nickerson, TBA, TBA, Max: 999

**(Written Permission of DGS required prior to Enrollment)**

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## **ENG 704R: Chaucer**

Morey, M 10:00-1:00, Max: 12

**Content:** This course covers Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, most of the *Canterbury Tales*, and his four dream visions (*Book of the Duchess*, *House of Fame*, *Parliament of Fowls*, *Legend of Good Women*), with supplementary readings of literary analogues and criticism. Chaucer synthesizes classical (e.g. Ovid), vernacular (e.g. Dante) and biblical models and thus redefines the medieval traditions of epic, romance, fabliau, Breton lay, saint's life, and exemplum. Edmund Spenser called Chaucer the "well of English undefiled," and John Dryden called him the "father of English poetry." As we examine these claims, we shall attempt to fathom at least three of the great mysteries of Chaucer's life and work: how such a prolific poet could also find time to be a prominent diplomat and court official, how his poetic persona consistently veils and deprecates his genius, and how his complicated relationships with women find poetic expression.

**Particulars:** Short papers, class presentations, and term paper.

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## **ENG 732R: Studies in Victorian Literature: The Victorian Novel: Gut Responses and Critical Interpretations**

Otis, F 1:00-4:00, Max: 12

**Content:** This course offers students the chance to study five rich, complex Victorian literary works from diverse critical perspectives. The novels to be read and analyzed are Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Anthony Trollope's *Barchester Towers*, George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. These novels will be paired with classic and recent critical studies that examine them from a range of interpretive perspectives. The methods of post-structuralist, psychoanalytic, and socio-historical criticism will be considered, as well as those of eco-criticism, animal studies, disability studies, and cognitive and neuroscientific approaches to literature. All interpretive approaches are welcome, including the knowledge that creative authors build in their attempts to write evocative fiction. The course will pay special attention to Victorian writers' representations and evocations of emotion. The class is designed to guide and inspire literature teachers, but there is no presumption that students plan to teach Victorian literature or that they have any expertise in it. The course aims to enrich students' backgrounds by creating familiarity with some superb fiction and insightful criticism, which they may then apply to their research and teaching. Two 8-10 page conference-length papers will be required rather than a standard seminar paper, and students are encouraged to prepare conference presentations that link the works analyzed to their particular fields.

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## **ENG 789R: Special Topics in Literature: American Poetry from Walt Whitman to Sylvia Plath**

Bauerlein, TH 10:00-1:00, Max: 12

**Summary:** A readings course in American verse from the “language experiment” of *Leaves of Grass*, 1855, and Emily Dickinson’s corpus through the High Modernism of Pound *et al.* through the post-War efforts of Bishop, Lowell, and Plath, plus one or two contemporary poets to be selected.

**Assignments:** Weekly 3-4 page papers on a noted work of scholarship or criticism on the author assigned the previous week.

**Texts:** Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1855); Emily Dickinson, *Complete Poems*; Edna St. Vincent Millay, *Collected Poems*; Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems*; T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems*; E. E. Cummings, *Complete Poems*; William Carlos Williams, *Spring and All*; Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poems*; Robert Frost, *The Poetry of Robert Frost*; Elizabeth Bishop, *Complete Poems*; Robert Lowell, *Collected Poems*; Langston Hughes, *Collected Poems*; Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems*; Gwendolyn Brooks, *Selected Poems*; Sylvia Plath, *The Collected Poems*; Laurence Ferlinghetti, *A Coney Island of the Mind*.

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**ENG 789R: Special Topics in Literature: Art and Acts of Justice (Literature, Psychoanalysis and Law)**

Felman, M 4:00-7:00, Max: 3

**Content:** A study of scenes of judgment in literature, art and philosophy, focusing on literature’s specific ways of dealing with injustice (and with trauma) in various literary, psychoanalytic, political and legal circumstances. We will examine both (great) literary texts and actual trials, dramas of great literary writers brought to court because of their innovative work, perceived as having pushed the boundaries of the accepted social standards. We will try to understand: What does literature mean, and why is it important, why does it matter? Why does a pathbreaking work of art provoke each time not just a controversy but a larger cultural crisis? Topics under discussion include the interaction between justice, truth, desire, censorship, testimony, injury, memory, exile, and cross-cultural, global exchanges.

**Texts:** by Sophocles (*Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*), Molière (*Tartuffe*), Gustave Flaubert (*Three Tales*), Charles Baudelaire (*The Essence of Laughter*, *Flowers of Evil*), Oscar Wilde (*The Artist as Critic*, *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, *De Profundis*), Moises Kaufman (*The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*), Sigmund Freud (from *The Interpretation of Dreams*), Jacques Lacan (from *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*), Jean Anouilh (*Antigone*), Harper Lee (*To Kill a Mockingbird*).

**Requirements:** Two short papers (spread throughout the semester); weekly reading responses (1-2 pages written notes on the week’s reading assignments); oral presentations; regular attendance; active participation in class discussion.

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**ENG 789: Special Topics in Literature: The Literature of Politics**

Bhaumik, TU 4:00-7:00, Max: 2

**Content:** This course considers the literature of the field understood as “political philosophy.” Considering some of the seminal texts, theses, and scenes of political philosophy, requires also posing the question of reading. How do we read Aristotle for questions of speech and action or figure and dramatic form? How does the reading of literature, poetry, and scripture inform political philosophies of citizenship and law? In order to approach the study of political philosophy as also the study of a set of texts, we will briefly trace debates and also pose questions about theories of reading: “allegories of reading”; “reparative reading”; and “surface reading.”

The class will begin by explicating key theses and scenes from classical philosophy but then move also to examples from American political thought and postcolonial theory. The writings of Hannah Arendt, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Frantz Fanon will be key to rethinking established theses on democracy, rights, and social

contracts. Finally, we will consider an overt literary example of political philosophy: Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* as a rewriting of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*.

**Selections from:** Aristotle, *Politics*; Plato, *The Republic*; Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (along with selections from Tocqueville by Sheldon Wolin); Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*.

**Entire Text:** Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic and Human Condition*; Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*; W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*; Enrique Dussell, *Twenty Theses on Politics*; Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*.

**\*\* Please don't buy books until after the first class meeting.**

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### **ENG 789R: Special Topics in Literature: Pedagogy of Literature**

Goodstein, TU 1:00-4:00, Max: 12

**Content:** This colloquium focuses on helping graduate students prepare to teach successful literature and cultural studies classes. Building on your experiences teaching composition and argumentation, we will address the full range of issues surrounding teaching undergraduate language and literature classes, from developing syllabi and assessing the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies to coping with the pragmatic challenges that arise in practice. We will read and discuss pedagogical theories, become acquainted with contemporary empirical work on teaching effectiveness, and work together to develop strategies for success. This course will also help you prepare for the next steps in your career by providing support as you develop multiple syllabi, draft statements of teaching philosophy, work on your web presences, and begin to put together your teaching portfolios.

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### **ENG 789R: Special Topics in Literature: Disability Literature**

Garland-Thomson, TU 2:00-5:00, Max: 12

**Content:** Questions about how disability influences and appears in the arts are one of the most compelling and vibrant aspects to emerge from critical disability studies. Scholars and critics are examining how disability as a fact of human life and embodiment affects artistic production across aesthetic genre, from the visual arts, music, dance, literature, to theater. Because the human variations that count as disabilities are pervasive aspects of the human condition, cultural narratives and representations of disability pervade literature.

This graduate seminar considers what constitutes disability literature. We will read works of fiction or nonfiction (not memoir) that have some kind of disability politics or positive identity consciousness (and consider what these terms mean) and that say something significant about disability and disability experience. Together we will develop a definition and criteria for what counts as disability literature. We will begin with a provisional reading list of disability literature and develop our own canon of disability literature in the course.

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### **ENG 789: Special Topics in Literature: Derrida**

Bennington, TH 1:00-4:00, Max: TBA

**Content:** The class aims to come to a general understanding of some basic Derridean "concepts" and an appreciation of what we might call some of the manners of deconstruction. Each session will concentrate on one or two texts, and the class as a whole will work cumulatively. Some further readings in Derrida are suggested, but are not obligatory.

**Texts:** No secondary reading is required, although you may be helped by any or all of three now classic accounts of the "early Derrida" on which we concentrate in the first part of the course: Jonathan Culler's *On Deconstruction*, Rodolphe Gasché's *The Tain of the Mirror* and (dare I say it) my own "Derridabase" (in Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*). You will also find good (though sometimes difficult) work in Marian Hobson's *Jacques Derrida: Opening Lines*, and Richard Beardsworth's *Derrida and the Political*. Other essays of my own on Derrida are collected in my books *Legislations*, *Interrupting Derrida* and *Not Half No End*. Recent books by Penelope Deutscher, Martin Hägglund, Peggy Kamuf, Nicholas Royle, J. Hillis Miller, Michael Naas, David Wills and Sarah Wood, and the "very short introduction" by Simon Glendinning may also be of interest. The biography by Benoît Peeters is serious and informative.

**Particulars:** No prior knowledge of Derrida (or indeed of any other philosopher) is expected. Although the class will aim at a reasonably philosophical (rather than, say, "literary") understanding of Derrida, it also assumes that Derrida's thinking is not philosophy in any usual sense. For some of the reasons, see my "Deconstruction and the Philosophers" (in *Legislations*), and "Jacques Derrida," "Emergencies," "Genuine Gasché (perhaps)" and "An Idea of Syntax" (all in *Interrupting Derrida*).

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### **ENG 789R: Special Topics in Literature: Art of Scholarly Writing**

Bammer, M 1:00-4:00, Max: 4

**Content:** This course asks basic questions about academic and scholarly writing: What do we write about and why, and how do we go about writing it? By foregrounding the form, rather than the content, of our writing, we lay bare assumptions and expectations, costs and rewards that often go unspoken and remain unexamined. In the process, questions of form (clear and accessible vs. "difficult" writing, analytical detachment vs. passionate engagement), structure (am I making an argument, telling a story, exploring a question, all of the above, or something else entirely?) and meaning (are what I care about and what I write about connected; if so, how, and if not, does it matter?), will be up for discussion. The goal of the course is to support writing that both meets the criteria of our profession for good academic writing and satisfies our desire to say what we want to say in the way that we want to say it. It envisions writing that is effective, meaningful and satisfying.

**Texts:** TBA

**Particulars:** TBA

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### **ENG 789R: Special Topics in Literature: Clint Eastwood, Race and the American Western**

Jackson, Th 1:00-4:00, Max: 12

**Content:** Drawing from the body of work reflecting the Hollywood gunfighter and outlaw folk-hero Clint Eastwood, the course will investigate American cinematic representations of slavery (and more specifically its absence), the Civil War and racial formation along the United States' southwestern frontier in films produced from the 1950s through the contemporary period. A focus on the cultural icon Clint Eastwood enables a close examination of American cinematic fantasies of the frontier, frontier violence and the desire to escape or erase the tensions of race and slavery that have deeply permeated the American cultural consciousness, particularly the creation of American masculine ideals. The course will also take decided note of the national shift from liberal "Great Society Programs" of the 1960s to the conservative "neoliberal" social and cultural ideals in the 1980s and 1990s. Our purpose is to consider the organization and reformation of hegemonic power by way of the complex morality play the western film evokes, typically

considering the interstitial geographies between civilization and savagery, belonging and alienation, and metropolis and colonial outpost. We will privilege in our discussions the contested frontiers of racial dominion. The curriculum is complicated by several significant points of departure from the traditional category of the Hollywood-based American western: a film to frame the question of colonialism and resistance, as well as examples of black cinematic efforts re-drawing boundaries of the racial frontier. (Are they formed at the Caribbean, the easternmost littoral? The postindustrial city? Do they correspond to the romance of organized crime and its fantasy of empire?)

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**ENG 789R: Special Topics in Literature:** Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project  
Goodstein, TBD, Max: 6

**Content:** In recent years, Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) has come to be celebrated as a pioneering cultural theorist, catapulting this formerly unknown thinker to posthumous fame and generating a minor industry of translations and secondary literature. This class will center on the unfinished archaeology of the modern, the so-called Arcades Project, that is regarded as Benjamin's principal achievement, attempting to read a text that, while it appears to be a book and is often referred to as though it were a coherent object, in fact consists quite literally of a series of fragments. A palimpsest of theoretical reflection, historical narration, citations, excerpts, intertextual allusions, and metaphysical speculations, Benjamin's *Passagen-werk* is both highly resistant to the reader and extremely open to interpretation and appropriation. At once archive and unfinished magnum opus, it embodies the material traces of a revolutionary method of cultural inquiry even as it attests to Benjamin's tragic failure to bring his dreams to reality. By turning a "work" into a "project," the English title begs the question of the relationship between that failure and Benjamin's distinctive achievement. It is quite possible, however, that the *Passagen-werk* is not simply unfinished but unfinishable. In attempting to discern Benjamin's legacy in the fragmentary openness of this book that is not a book, we will develop a critical perspective on the history of reception that represents this text as a coherent point of reference even as we ask Benjamin can teach us as interdisciplinary scholars, as readers, and as critical participants in modern culture.

**Required Texts:** Benjamin: *The Arcades Project*; Eiland and Jennings: *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life*.

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**ENG 790R: Composition Theory**  
Fisher, TU 10:00-1:00, Max: 16

**Content:** The New London Group (1996) invented the term "multiliteracies" to describe literacy pedagogy that addresses "our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies" as well as "the proliferation of communications channels and media" that support "cultural and subcultural diversity." This course offers a sustained introduction to literacy pedagogy and the history, theories, research methodologies, and technologies that characterize writing studies, an interdisciplinary field that intersects communication studies, computer science, creative writing, education, psychology, linguistics, literary studies, and media studies. As we imagine the implications of multiliteracies pedagogies across the disciplines, students focus on two teaching "probes" or "experiments": one emphasizing linguistic diversity and the other employing communication tool(s) or design practices discovered or developed during the semester. By the time you finish this course, you should be able to

- Highlight areas of debate, articulate theoretical issues, and identify pointed areas of contention among competing theories of literacy and composition.
- Initiate or continue to develop an ePortfolio, including a statement of teaching philosophy or position statement about multiliterate pedagogy.
- Develop a line of inquiry and protocol for a classroom- or curriculum-based study.

- Work with digital composing tools in preparation for developing, assessing, and assisting students with multimodal composing.

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**ENG 799R: Doctoral Dissertation**

Nickerson, TBA, TBA, Max: 999

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