ENGLISH LITERATURE

Please consult the online class schedule for specific days and times of these courses.
https://sunspot.sdsu.edu/schedule/search

ENGL 600 Introduction to Graduate Study  Y. Howard

This seminar has two goals.

First, it will provide an introduction to the history of literary and cultural theory. We will read and discuss influential theoretical writings and become acquainted with some of the major movements in critical thought related to literature, film, art, music, aesthetics, identity, politics, and representation. Ideally, students will become familiar with the methodological and epistemological underpinnings of Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, Psychoanalysis, Cultural Studies, Feminism, Queer Studies, and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies.

Second, the seminar will emphasize the skills and practices associated with being a professional intellectual. Regular attendance and active participation is absolutely essential.

ENGL 624 SEM: Victorians Abroad  K. Shumaker

In this course we will discuss Victorian novels, plays, essays and poems about the world outside of England. During the 1800s, while developing their Empire that would encompass 25% of the world at its peak, the British traveled outside their Empire in Europe and the East, inventing images of the foreign other in their literature. To create context, we will start by reading excerpts from Byron’s Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, a Romantic era poem in which the first Byronic hero embarks upon the Grand Tour of Europe that wealthy young Englishmen (and later, women) often took in the 1700s and 1800s.

Charlotte Bronte studied in Belgium where she fell in love, gaining inspiration for her novel Villette. Elizabeth Barrett Browning and her husband Robert moved to Italy and set much of their work there. Dickens visited France several times and contemplated its controversial Revolution, as Thomas Carlyle does as well. George Eliot’s wide-ranging travels and research are evident in Daniel Deronda, which envisions not only Europe but also the as-yet-to-be invented Israel. In the comic opera The Mikado, Gilbert and Sullivan draw upon the craze for Japanese culture and art that arose after Japan started allowing Westerners to visit it in the mid 1800s. Whereas art critic John Ruskin finds a political message in Venetian Gothic architecture, Henry James’s The Princess Casamassima portrays an anarchist who loses his taste for revolution after visiting Italy. In Rider Haggard’s She, which contains racist undertones that justify Imperial conquest, Englishmen explore a fantastical Africa, while Elspeth Huxley’s Edwardian memoir vividly depicts her growing up in Africa.

Requirement: You will write weekly one-page informal meditations on the readings, including discussion questions. You may choose to write one twenty-page essay or two ten-page essays, which will be workshopped with your peers. You will also give a thirty-minute talk on an assigned topic or book related to the course.
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ENGL 624  SEM: Victorians Abroad           K. Shumaker
Continued

Reading List:

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Aurora Leigh
Robert Browning, My Last Duchess
Charlotte Bronte, Villette
Lord Byron, Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage (excerpts)
Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities
George Eliot, Daniel Deronda
E.M. Forster, Passage to India
Gilbert and Sullivan, The Mikado
Rider Haggard, She
Elspeth Huxley, The Flame Trees of Thika
Henry James, The Princess Casamassima
John Ruskin, The Stones of Venice (excerpts)
Thomas Carlyle, The French Revolution (excerpts)

ENGL 625  SEM: American Short Story                                   L. Champion

Description Not Available

ENGL 725  SEM: Auditory Cultures & Sound Studies                    Y. Howard

This course will investigate the status of the auditory in the literary and will closely engage with sound as a key site of aesthetic expression in American cultural production of the 20th and 21st centuries. We will explore the question of silent versus noisy texts, the modes of listening with/to literature and film, and significant music histories associated with ethnic, gender, and sexual difference. Texts will include (but not limited to): Pinch and Trocco’s Analog Days: The Invention and Impact of the Moog Synthesizer, Alice Bag’s Violence Girl: East L.A. Rage to Hollywood Stage, A Chicana Punk Story, Alexander Weheliye’s Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity, and Jonathan Sterne’s MP3: The Meaning of a Format. Some of the writers and performers on the syllabus will join us in conversation.

ENGL 726  SEM: Post Colonial Women Writers                                L. Edson

A study of postcolonial women’s writing produced in a wide variety of cultural contexts. The course is organized around major contemporary political, social, and cultural issues: (1) tensions between tradition and modernity; (2) postcolonialism, displacement, transnationalism; (3) contemporary voices; and (4) postcolonialism, marriage, and polygamy. Primary texts include Buchi Emecheta’s The Joys of Motherhood (Nigeria), Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions (Zimbabwe), Maryse Condé’s Desirada (Guadeloupe), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus (Nigeria), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun (Nigeria), and Mariama Ba’s So Long a Letter (Senegal). Primary texts are read in tandem with theoretical and critical essays.

Requirements: Oral presentations, reading journal, mid-term and final papers.
ENGL 727 SEM: Science Fiction for Children & Young Adult

Science Fiction for Children & Adolescents is a graduate-level seminar that explores science fiction texts written from young people. Beginning with picture books – such as Chris Van Allsberg’s Zathura – and moving through science fiction texts for elementary-age children (like Norton Juster's The Phantom Tollbooth) and on through middle-grade texts (such as Madeleine L’Engle's Wrinkle in Time) and, finally, into science fiction aimed at young adults (like M.T. Anderson’s Feed), this course theorizes the science fiction genre as an especially complex paratextual category, one whose complexities only multiply when the audience includes children and young adults. Informed by the theoretical insights of Samuel Delany, Donna Haraway, and others, the course will culminate in a research paper of publishable quality.

ENGL 750F MFA SEM: Fiction Writing

This workshop will focus exclusively on the short story. You will be expected to write two separate short stories and submit them for workshop discussion, revising one of them at the end of the semester. What's a short story? Obviously, this term includes a wide range of aesthetic and thematic strategies. But for the purposes of this workshop, the term will not include flash fictions, sudden fictions, long stories, parts of novellas, or parts of novels. Short stories that are meant to be parts of a book-length short story sequence will be acceptable, provided that they can function as completely independent works. I will expect your stories to be roughly 2,500-10,000 words in length, and I will provide models of various aesthetic strategies throughout the semester to enhance our discussions. All assigned readings for this class will be taken from recent issues of selected literary magazines. Special emphasis will be placed on enhancing your chances of publishing in these journals, and others like them.

ENGL 750F MFA SEM: Fiction Writing

This class is linked to the 791B also taught by Professor Farris this semester. Students taking 791B and 750F this semester will also need to sign up for those courses in Fall 2016. This linked two-semester class (12 total units) is required for all third-year fiction students to complete the program of study for MFA in fiction. It may be open to other students with the permission of the instructor only. Students with questions should contact Professor Farris at farris_katie@yahoo.com

Requirements: This course will consist primarily of one-on-one meetings developing the narrative, structural, and linguistic elements of each student’s MFA thesis, which can consist of a novella or collection of short stories. Each student will be expected to produce between 45-60 pages of their thesis by the end of the semester, for a total of 90-120 pages by the end of the year. In addition to the production of a thesis, students will be assigned individual reading lists and will be expected to produce roughly 30 pages of reading journals per semester.
ENGL 750F  MFA SEM: Fiction Writing
Short Short Texts
H. Jaffe

This course is designed principally for MFA students, but MA students are welcome. Each participant will be required to submit a minimum number (not yet established), of abbreviated texts, usually (though not always) with a specific word count (50, 100, or 250 words, for example).

It is crucial to understand that short short texts are especially in demand now for several reasons, one of which is that offline journals are not appearing 3 and 4 times annually as previously, but just once, and very short texts permit editors to publish more writings than if they (the journals) came out more frequently.

I will ask for sequences of very short texts: two or three, for example, on particular subjects. I wish to see every text you write electronically, and at the end of the course I am asking each participant to submit a portfolio of all the writing s/he has done, which will include the short short texts, brief critical responses to the assigned readings, and a commentary on each of the assigned books.

In addition to the assigned books, to read pleasurably and to generate your own mini- or micro-fictions, there will be occasional brief or collaborative prompts and films, to explore short short narrative in different contexts.

Regarding critical commentary on peers’ texts and other details, each participant will comment on six shorts or sequences of shorts of his/her choosing; we will discuss that and other options in class.
Feel free to contact Dr Jaffe for further information hjaffe@mail.sdsu.edu.

Required texts (provisional)

Franz Kafka, Parables and Paradoxes
Harold Jaffe, Induced Coma: 50 & 100 Word Stories
Borges, Book of Imaginary Beings
Clarice Lispector, Selected Cronicas
Diane DiPrima, Memoirs of a Beatnik

ENGL 750P  MFA SEM: Poetry Writing
The Long Poem
S. Alcosser

It’s possible to shape a manuscript in one semester by: studying the long poem; responding to both published work and work-in-process; posing a question or idea that is critical to your place in the world. With this in mind we’ll explore the long poem—the modern poetic sequence and its variations: meditations, cantos, epics, serial poems, verse novels, poetic essays, polyphonic voice constructions, collaborations et al. In The Modern Poetic Sequence M.L. Rosenthal and Sally M. Gall describe this work as the result of each poet’s need: to mobilize and give direction to otherwise scattered energies. A sequence encompasses disparate and often powerfully opposed tonalities and energies, a complex music involving a number of radiant centers. The modern poetic sequence goes many-sidedly into who and where we are. Modern sequences are not bound by thematic, philosophical, or formal conventions (for instance, “Song of Myself,” by Walt Whitman, is structured to neither resolve a problem nor conclude an action, but to evoke the keenest, most open realizations possible). The form(s) may be opened or closed; the movement is organic. Each writer will have an individual reading list that might include Homer, Ovid, Dante, Basho, Issa, Shakespeare, Whitman, Dickinson, Baudelaire, Rilke, Stevens, H.D., Niedecker,
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ENGL 750P MFA SEM: Poetry Writing  S. Alcosser

Continued

Williams, Hikmet, Reznikoff, Milosz, Swir, Walcott, Heaney, and contemporaries like Michael Ondaatje, Louise Gluck, Eduardo Corral, Natasha Trethewey, Larry Levis, Lyn Hejinian, Olena Kalytiak Davis and Tracy K. Smith. Because we will discuss not only a governing question of your world view, but also the discrete architecture of individual poems within your larger composition, beginning and advanced poets, as well as prose writers, will find this workshop and seminar helpful to the creation of your book.

ENGL 750P MFA SEM: Poetry Writing  B. Falconer

When I was a graduate student years ago, Edward Hirsch urged our class to think of the various poetic devices and elements as keys on a piano. The more practiced we became, he said, working across the entire keyboard, the greater repertoire of songs we could perform. With this analogy in mind, this argument against complacency and mannerisms, we will examine our own impulses, where we are most comfortable, and with a strong appreciation of the poetic foundations, explore those areas that we have neglected. Generating new work, we will consider, among many subjects, the relationship between narrative and the lyric, syntax and the line.

Reading contemporary poets, we will discuss how traditional forms and modes can shape contemporary voices. By the end of the semester, we will have built upon what we already know while challenging ourselves to write the foreign, the unfamiliar with the hope of ultimately expanding the range of what we can say and how we say it.

ENGL 784 SEM: Creative Nonfiction  H. Jaffe

*The decisive blows are always struck left-handed.*

This 2016 version of creative nonfiction will mostly proceed from the underside, and many of the readings and viewings will be dissident, generated by those discourses which are typically unseen, unheard, unwitnessed; in effect, subjugated discourses.

A majority of the exercises will be imaginative and generated by the readings and visuals, but other exercises will be more precisely analytical. Feel free to email me for further info.

**Required reading or viewing (provisional)**

- Charlotte Zander, *Outsider Art*
- John Berger, *Art and Revolution*
- Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*
- Tom Phillips, *A Humument*
- Norman Mailer, *Marilyn: a Biography*
- Pablo Neruda, *Passions and Impressions*
- Harold Jaffe, *Brando Bleeds*
- Films and videos (various)
As Robert Frost famously suggested, the poems in a single-author collection should function together in such a way that they create a work of art that is, forgive the expression, greater than the sum of its parts, that each page contributes to the whole, building upon and challenging the reader's expectations. Some books do this by developing a narrative or delving deeper into the speaker's psyche, while others offer a complex and nuanced meditation on a theme. There are many and often complementary ways to structure a volume; the point is that poetry books are more than fifty pages of your favorite poems, and during this workshop, we will consider how poems offer a sense of coherence while also threatening that coherence, how they support and contradict each other to create a more dynamic experience for readers. We will generate new work and look at poems that you have written during your time at SDSU to find the recurring images, as well as formal, narrative, and thematic threads. In building your own books, we will discuss titles, order, sections, epigraphs, and revisions, among countless other topics on the subject. By the end of the course, each of you will have a chapbook or full-length collection of poems that reflects the ideas and insights from the semester.

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