

**DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE AND CULTURE
COURSES 2022-2023**

1ST SEMESTER

ENGLISH FICTION

This course aims at presenting a variety of genres, indicative of the artistic movements of their era, in diachronic succession and in relation to their historical and cultural parameters. Introductory lectures will include references to the timeline of the birth of the novel as well as excerpts from 18th-century prose by authors such as Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift. The rest of the syllabus will include a 19th-century novel, representative of realism, by Charles Dickens or George Eliot, as well as short stories (or even a novel) from the 20th century by authors such as Conrad, Joyce, Lawrence, and Forster.

2ND SEMESTER

AMERICAN FICTION

The course deals with American fiction from its first period of development through the 19th-century classics and onwards towards the postmodern and multi-cultural authors of today. The historical and cultural parameters of fiction are examined in conjunction with stylistic differences as these were expressed via the various literary movements, that is realism, symbolism, modernism and postmodernism. The course also aims to develop the students' capacity for critical analysis of texts as cultural products and carriers of ideological and socio-cultural debates within the larger context of the era that produced them.

3RD SEMESTER

ENGLISH POETRY

This course has a twofold purpose. First, to familiarize students with the elements of poetry, such as imagery, figures of speech, rhythm, symbol, and other conventions that will help them read, analyze, and understand poetry. Second, to offer students a historical overview of British poetry, examining the ways in which authors have used the above elements to express ideas and emotions throughout the centuries. The course is offered in the form of a series of lectures, always in dialogue with the students. Texts are taken from a main anthology and leaflets (provided). For the evaluation of knowledge gained, there will be a final exam, as well as the opportunity for optional extra-credit research papers. Students evaluate the course anonymously through a final questionnaire.

CONTEMPORARY ANGLOPHONE THEATRE

This introductory course examines contemporary anglophone plays through the sociohistorical cultural context of the 20th and 21st centuries. We analyze representative texts of various theatrical genres representing realism, expressionism, the epic, the theatre

of the absurd, etc. The course aims at sensitizing students to the particularities of the dramatic form, as well as at the development of critical thinking. There are weekly classes with lectures and dialogue. Course material includes plays, lectures from invited speakers, a photocopy pack with study questions and bibliographical lists. Students are encouraged to conduct further research on their own. The evaluation of knowledge gained is based on a final exam (80% of the grade) and on short critical essays (20%), written in the context of the critical essay workshop conducted separately as part of this course. The course will be evaluated through a questionnaire filled by the students at the end of the semester anonymously.

4TH SEMESTER

THEORY AND CRITICISM OF LITERATURE

The course examines the most important developments in 20th-century literary theory and criticism, from Russian formalism to New Historicism and Post-colonial theory. It focuses on select representative approaches to literature but also introduces students to a wide spectrum of schools and movements such as formalism, structuralism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, feminism, cultural studies and so on. Emphasis is given to the reading of well-known texts by theoreticians and literary critics, as well as the application of those theories on literary text analysis.

AMERICAN POETRY

The course studies the tradition and development of American poetry from Bradstreet to Snyder, with the aim of a detailed, comparative analysis of the work of major American poets who helped shape the cultural face of their era in their search for a personal poetic style that would help them determine truths about themselves and express its connections with the wider conceptual space that is “America.” The main schools of thought influencing poetry, from Puritanism to Postmodernism, will be examined, along with overviews of the political and social developments that led to the formation and constant re-formulation of literary movements. Finally, class analysis focuses on the multiform nature of American poetry, that which created the “tradition of the new.”

5TH SEMESTER

THEORY OF CULTURE

The aim of this course is the definition of the various concepts and figurations of culture, through which critical approaches to cultural/textual phenomena and the understanding of the ways in which creative activities contribute to the quality of human life will be examined. Issues concerning the relationship of culture and society, “higher” and “popular” culture, as well as the relations between sciences and the arts are investigated, while questions pertaining to the goals of cultural activities and the interaction among them are put forth and explored.

A.

19TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

The course aims at familiarizing students with the multiple facets of 19th-century American literature, so as to illustrate the establishment of a clear “American” literary discourse. In a period when literature follows the political and cultural disenfranchisement of the new independent nation of the USA, important figures of the American tradition pore critically over the sociopolitical contradictions of their era, and question dominant ideologies through their writings. Through a theme-based plan of approach chosen by the instructor, students will analyze selected works to compose a detailed, in-depth view into the historical, political, material, and social issues that inform American identity in the 19th century.

B.

AMERICAN MODERNISM

This course will aim to examine various forms of American modernism that developed in the early years of the twentieth century and sought to perform a radical break from earlier conventions so as to reflect the socio-cultural, economic and financial turbulence of the interwar times. Modernism saw an explosion of literary innovation and unfolded in conversation with several phenomena of modernity: new forms of social and economic integration, but also expatriate life and displacement; new modes of perspective and experience emerging from psychology, philosophy, and the visual arts; changes in urban structures; an ambivalence towards a technologically innovative mass culture; and new political discourses that altered understandings of race and gender. In view of all this, the course will pursue an interdisciplinary study of this moment by looking at literary and critical texts, but also painting and photography; it will explore aesthetic experimentation, but also alternative visions of modernism that engage ideas of progress, race and the advent of technology. Lectures will underscore the dynamic relationship between literature and history—including the history of visual arts, politics and ideas; they will consider questions of genre, and will consider a variety of topics, including the “middlebrow” and “high art” modernism, transnational mobility, and the shifting pressures of gender, race, ethnicity, and class during the modern era.

C.

AMERICAN LEGENDS

If myths and legends are the synecdoche for, and condensation of, the defining character of a nation, this course, through its detailed examination of American-born legends and myths created from the 15th to the 19th century will attempt to elucidate the defining traits of the nascent culture of the United States and use them in consequent evaluations of the native literature and cultural phenomena. Following the theoretical approach of American Cultural Studies critic Stephen Greenblatt, who sees culture and text as interacting through the manipulation of communicational “codes,” the myths and legends will be examined both as literary (or oratory) statements and as negotiators of cultural norms. Students will be called upon, through journals, class discussions, papers and presentations, to evaluate and comment on the overt and clandestine meanings of the

stories of Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed, Calamity Jane, Pecos Bill, Davy Crockett, Raggedy Dick, La Llorona, and a number of First Peoples' texts ranging from world creation myths to popular press renditions of Native figures in the 1800s.

6TH SEMESTER

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The aim of the course is to introduce students to Shakespeare's drama through the analysis of representative plays taking into consideration the historical, social and theatrical context of the Renaissance society. Emphasis is also placed on the ways by which contemporary literary theories have affected the reading of his plays regarding the treatment of important issues such as gender, race, power relations.

A.

LITERATURE AND SOCIETY OF THE VICTORIAN PERIOD

This course examines representative fiction of the Victorian period in relation to the socio-historical framework that shaped the themes and styles of the fiction of that period. Romanticism, the gothic, realism, and aestheticism will be discussed in relation to the themes of industry and ecology, urbanization and slums, the impact of science, pseudoscience, and technology on theoretical and cultural understandings of gender, psychology, and religion, vivisection, the position of women and domestic abuse, and commodity culture that permeate the fiction of Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Margaret Oliphant, and Henry James. The ultimate aim of this course is to draw connections between the Victorian period and our own, by demonstrating how the social challenges of the nineteenth century are fundamentally linked to the social and political debates that concern us today. The course is conducted as a seminar, encouraging the participation of the students. The final grade is based on the students' overall performance: written or oral assignments, active participation, and final exam.

B.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN DRAMA

The aim of this course is to familiarize students with the aesthetic and ideological character of twentieth-century American drama. Through the study of representative works by playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, Sam Shepard, Adrienne Kennedy, Maria Irene Fornes, August Wilson, Tony Kushner, Paula Vogel, Suzan-Lori Parks students are led to attain a thorough understanding of the theoretical trends and practical modes that define modern American drama. In addition, attention is given to the ways in which the plays of these outstanding American voices interrelate with their immediate socio-political and cultural contexts.

Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions and will be asked to react and comment on excerpts from filmed productions of the plays studied. Also, students will have access to a select list of relevant articles and books and will be invited to produce research papers on topics of their own interest in an effort to develop their

writing and analytical skills. Finally, students evaluate the course by submitting anonymously a written questionnaire at the end of the semester.

C.

POSTWAR BRITISH DRAMA

This introductory course aims at shedding light on the developments of postwar British drama in terms of both form and content. The disillusionment after the Second World War instilled a sense of discontent and alienation in the minds of a number of dramatists who strongly opposed the establishment and its political attitudes. The plight of the alienated modern man has been captured by playwrights like Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett. Still others, like Edward Bond, Caryl Churchill and Mark Ravenhill, pushed the limits of representation and employed shock tactics in order to “attack” their audiences out of their complacency, raise awareness and impart social change. The representation of the family and different forms of sexuality will also be considered from a perspective that highlights the function of gender as an important constituent of plot, setting and the portrayal of character. Each play is analysed in terms of its social context: the influence of World War II and the unsettling of gender stereotypes; the impact of statutory censorship in theatre production and the role of cultural institutions, such as the Royal Court Theatre, in challenging it; the changes in family patterns, the increasingly consumerist lifestyle and the impact of feminist, Left-wing politics are among the social and cultural aspects this course will tackle.

VICTORIAN POETRY

Victorian poetry is influenced by both Romanticism and Neo-Classicism, while also paving the way for Modernism. Despite being more conservative than the 19th Century English novel due to its conventional form and somewhat didactic tone, Victorian poetry displays interesting innovations, such as the “painterly” evocation of scene and realistic representation of emotion. The leading poets of the day such as Alfred Lord Tennyson, Elizabeth and Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti are concerned with the same topical issues as the novelists, such as the rapid pace of social change and the Empire, class and gender relations, and the challenge of scientific progress to religion and morality. However, there is also a tendency for these poets to sometimes take refuge in an idyllic nature and/or mythical past that appears less unsettled and conflictual than 19th Century Industrialized England. Hence, this kind of poetry reflects certain typical responses of the period to the challenges of the modern world and lends itself particularly to cultural or historicist analysis.

The course takes the form of weekly planned lectures/seminars that allow for dialogue to develop in class. Besides the set texts themselves, the study materials include photocopied handouts and a list of printed and electronic sources. Assessment is based on the final examination and an optional, supervised, term paper. Finally, the students have the chance to express their views on the instructor and the course by filling out a special anonymous questionnaire.

7TH SEMESTER

A.

MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

Welcome to the Dark Ages—quite a colorful time, actually, which we will attempt to shed light to in this introductory seminar! The aim of this course is to approach the European Middle Ages through a number of key English texts of the early, middle, and late period, in modern English translation. We will focus on both the formal aesthetic particularities of medieval literature, as well as its thematic idiosyncrasies, so foreign to us albeit so influential to the literary and cultural ages that followed since: the interplay between a strict religious worldview and a carnivalesque secularism; the construction of the socio-philosophical codes of fatalism and chivalry; the complex yet misunderstood role of women; and the formation of cultural idols. Through this brief but important selection of must-know texts, we will hopefully dispel common misconceptions about the Middle Ages while learning the truth behind them. Readings will be long, and often hard to identify with contextually; but the world they reveal is a fascinating one, and certainly worth knowing! At the end of the semester, students will be asked to evaluate this course via anonymous electronic questionnaires.

Although the instructor will provide introductory and analytical lectures for each item, your strong participation is indispensable for the implementation and assimilation of this course.

B.

MODERNIST FICTION: THEMES AND STYLE

This course offers a study of English Modernism considered within the historical, cultural, and social framework of the first part of the twentieth century. This period is generally thought to contain a particularly dense concentration of experimentation and innovation in literary form and theme as writers struggled to come to terms with drastic socio-political changes before and after World War I. Texts to be studied include fiction by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Jean Rhys, poetry and short stories, which address issues such as the modern city, mobility, exile, and alienation, and gender conflicts. The course is conducted as a seminar, encouraging the participation of the students. The final grade will be based on the students' overall performance: written or oral assignments, active participation, and final exam.

AMERICAN WOMEN POETS OF THE 20TH-21ST CENTURY

The course examines contemporary poetry by American women in the 20th and 21st century and poses questions such as the relation between politics and textuality, gender and cultural production, and the performance of gender through the performance of poeticity, centering on the woman as a subject and an agent of cultural influences, and the poem as a production of other texts, as the palimpsest of a social and personal experience that constructs our understanding of the study of gender and gendered bodies, and as an agent for cultural change. Selected texts will be examined through contemporary theoretical and literary perspectives.

C.

AMERICAN NOVEL FROM THE 1960S ONWARDS

The course examines novels by representative authors of American literature from the 1960s until today, with an emphasis on difference, pluralism and the socio-historical context of their era. We take into account the aesthetic trends and formal models affecting the selected authors, as well as the multifaceted and composite character of the United States as a nation. The selected novels are additionally examined in relation to the way they oppose or reflect a world where civil movements and rights, war, terrorism, capitalism and the increasing globalization forces destabilize and deconstruct the concept of national identity. Course authors may include Baldwin, Morrison, Walker, DeLillo, Roth, Auster, Juno Diaz, Eugenides, Franzen, McCarthy, Chabon, and Whitehead.

D.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

The course examines representative texts by Christopher Marlowe, three plays, *The Jew of Malta*, *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II*, and the epyllion *Hero and Leander*. We will read the texts closely and intensively, exploring Marlowe's relentless critique of his era, involving state power, class conflict and sexual desire. The course will also introduce students to the cultural and political contexts of Marlowe's writings, as well as to contemporary critical approaches to Marlowe, and raise questions such as: What kind of poetry, action and spectacle did Marlowe put on stage? What kind of expectations did he target in the audience? Where is he imitating antiquity and where is he introducing novelty? We will discuss these questions through a range of topics, including faith, ambition, conscience and desire. Assessment will be based on a midterm exam and a research paper.

SUBJECTIVITY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LABORING-CLASS WOMEN'S POETRY

The course examines representative texts of eighteenth-century British laboring-class women poets in conjunction to the social, economic, and political changes that took place in Britain at that time. Based on contemporary theories of subjectivity, the course will analyze the ways in which eighteenth-century British laboring-class women poets struggled to articulate their identity as regards social class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and religion. Through an analysis of representative poems by Mary Collier, Mary Leapor, Ann Yearsley, Elizabeth Hands, Janet Little, etc., the course will shed light on the effort made by these poets to emulate their contemporary (male) literary tradition as well as strongly subvert it.

8TH SEMESTER

A.

TRENDS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

What relationship exists between new, post-9/11 literature and recent transformations in American culture? What formal and thematic trends make 21st-century fiction unique?

How has the war on terror, globalization, neo-liberalism, digital media and new technologies affected contemporary American writing? This course will examine these questions by focusing on the relationship that exists between new American fiction and recent transformations in American economics, politics and media. It will engage with the most important fiction published since 2000.

B.

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH FICTION: DEVELOPMENTS IN THEME AND STYLE

Contemporary English literature is characterized by a striking pluralism which reflects, on the one hand, various social-cultural and historical developments in the post WW2 England, and, on the other, the increasingly multicultural structure of English society in our times. The course focuses on representative novels by major authors of the late 20th century and aims at exploring and identifying key thematic and stylistic trends that marked the fiction of the period. Novels by Chinua Achebe, Jeanette Winterson, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Ian McEwan will be studied in detail from a theoretical and socio-historical perspective, and topics to be examined include post-colonialism, national identity, Englishness, gender and sexuality, history vs. fiction, class, war, memory, truth, and self-consciousness in fiction. The course is conducted as a seminar, encouraging the participation of the students. The final grade will be based on the students' overall performance: written or oral assignments, active participation, and final exam.

ENGLISH ROMANTICISM AND CONTEMPORARY POSTHUMANIST PERSPECTIVES

The course will delve into the poetry and prose of major romantic figures of England from the late 18th to the early 19th century, discussing critical aspects of romantic thought through a historical/cultural framework, and addressing such concepts as ecological consciousness, creativity, the gothic, science, and the environment. English Romantic writing will also be discussed through important contemporary theoretical perspectives such as various posthumanist theories in the age of the Anthropocene.

C.

FACT AND FICTION: THE SLIPPERINESS OF "TRUTH" IN RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

The course will focus on two important and related strategies of Renaissance literature: the boundary between fact and fiction, and the slipperiness in any truth claim—as concerns the Divine, the material world, and the self. A variety of contemporary texts, both “literary” (plays, poems and prose narratives) and “non-literary” (legal documents, scientific tracts, travel reports, engravings, conduct books) will be studied. An “anatomy” of Renaissance English society (that spans from 1500-1640) as regards its politics, art, religion, and science will be conducted in relation to the above-mentioned *foci*. This analysis will forge an appreciation of the multifaceted as well as contradictory ways Renaissance men and women perceived and represented themselves, the divine, and the material world. The texts selected aim to outline the period under review, and reflect not

only the simplicity of the drab age but also the complexities of the golden age and beyond as delineated in the work of Skelton up to that of Milton respectively.

The course is structured as a weekly seminar implemented by class dialogue. Course material includes a main theoretical text, literary texts, and a selected bibliography of suggested works. Student performance is evaluated on the basis of a final written exam and on interim tests, and course evaluation is effected through the submission of an anonymous written questionnaire by the students at the end of the semester.

20TH-21ST CENTURY ENGLISH FICTION

The course examines 20th- and 21st-century English fiction, focusing on representative works by well-known authors which express the pluralism and multicultural quality of English society after WWII. Students are invited to study novels and short stories from a theoretical and socio-historical perspective and to investigate the thematic and stylistic trends of fiction during those times. Emphasis will be given on issues prominent in the fiction of the latter half of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st, such as existential and metaphysical anxieties, social alienation and loneliness, sexual and cultural identity, contemporary war and terrorism, and the effect of technology on the post-modern subject.

D.

FILM ADAPTATION THEORIES AND ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE AND CINEMA

Drawing from film adaptation theories, this module explores the conditions, the reasons and the ways in which literary texts are adapted for the screen. Through the close reading of Anglophone literary texts and film adaptations, the students will examine comparatively the stylistic and technical characteristics of the literary and cinematographic modes of expression, and assess the director's choices as well as their ideological, aesthetic and commercial implications.

AFROPOLITAN NARRATIVES, HISTORIES, TRAJECTORIES

This course examines decolonial approaches to African, Afropean (African-European) and African American writing in the twenty-first century and explores the Afropolitan social, political and aesthetic perspectives that interrogate the power relations that inform the connections, reciprocities and associations among the three continents, Africa, Europe and the Americas. We will explore several texts by decolonial and postcolonial thinkers and twenty-first century writers from the three continents and will gain critical insight on a range of topics including migration, African diaspora, belonging, human rights, environment, political and ontological sovereignty and gender inequalities. Students will be given the opportunity to write a seminar paper and give a presentation. Structure of the course: Lecture and class discussions.