

DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE AND CULTURE

COURSES 2024-25

1ST SEMESTER

ENGLISH FICTION (63LY01)

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 (63LY02)

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 both artistic textual singularities and 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 (63LY03)

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 (63LY04)

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 (63LY06)

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 (63LY05)

The course studies the tradition and development of American poetry from Bradstreet and Wheatley to the 21st century, 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 Ecocriticism, 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 will attempt to highlight the distinct characteristics of American poetry, which created the “tradition of the new.”

5TH SEMESTER

THEORY OF CULTURE (63LY07)

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.

20TH AND 21ST CENTURY ANGLOPHONE POETRY (63LE176)

The course traces the period from the beginning of the 20th century up to now through anglophone poetry. In particular, it explores the ways in which poets experiment with language and image, find the proper means to speak about gender, race and history, emphasize the role of poetry in public discourse and manage to defy all sorts of boundaries. Through a creative and critical analysis of poems and poetic mechanisms, students will become familiar with some of the most important and distinct poetic voices of the 20th and 21st century, but also with some of the theoretical tools used in reading and analyzing poetry.

BLACK CULTURES AND ACTIVISM IN THE U.S. (63LE164)

The course maps how activist thinkers, poets, and artists approached a black African American consciousness, its histories and expression, from the early 20th century to the present day. Through a focus on a range of forms, spanning political speeches, manifestos, poems, music and the visual arts, we will explore how cultural production at large intersects with activism and visions of social change. We will begin with the origins and the formation of the New Negro Renaissance in Harlem; we will discuss networks and the dissemination of the cultural production of Harlem and we will focus on the paradoxes and blindspots of the promotion of racial uplift, and the prevalent affirmative rhetoric of the leading figures of the movement. We will move onto the entanglement of race, class and gender through literary representations of New Negro Women, and explore the troubled political alliances with the Marxist Left through the trajectory Langston Hughes.

We will then examine how literature remains a form of protest after the New Deal, specifically in the writing of Richard Wright and James Baldwin, and how these writers paved the way for the political alliances that emerged in the Civil Rights era as the Black Power movement was gaining momentum. We will focus on how figures like Amiri Baraka and Sonia Sanchez, Jazz musicians like Max Roach and Abbie Lincoln, artists that were brought together in AfriCobra, embraced Black Power and engaged in their work the complex co-articulations of race and racism, gender, sexuality, cultural self-determination, the activist imperative, and formal experimentation. Throughout the course, we will discuss how an art form and/or cultural practice is conceived as a form of resistance and active intervention, as is the case with black feminist abolitionism, how a cultural practitioner becomes an ally to a political and cultural vision, whether embracing a political cause may or may not compromise experimentation, and in the case of hip hop, how artists navigate fame, oppositionality and co-option.

It is essential that you familiarise yourselves with materials and related documentation before each class and that you study recommended secondary resources and handouts in advance of each session. You also need to become familiar with the richness of African American culture and tradition in order to approach critically the materials that we will study; you can access numerous links and resources on the e-class. All seminar material can be accessed on the eclass.

B.

TRAGIC MYTH IN INTERCULTURAL THEATRE (63LE179)

This course introduces students to issues of reception of ancient Greek tragic myth in contemporary intercultural theatre. The study of representative works from around the world invites them to examine and reflect on questions concerning the ethical, political, and aesthetic dimension of diverse manifestations of modern tragic myth reception. Emphasis is placed on revisions and adaptations of tragic myths in socially and politically conscious dramaturgy, as in the frame of programs addressing and involving at-risk youth, rape survivors, PTSD patients, etc., and programs involving in-crisis communities (e.g. war zones, refugee camps, ghettos). The course also explores the place of tragic myth in digital theatre, especially in digital theatre aiming at supporting vulnerable populations.

To make the experience of this course as rewarding as possible, it is important that students participate in the discussions, the analysis of selected works, case studies, and generally in the reflective, research or creative tasks which form an integral part of the educational meetings. The said tasks, as well as the lectures, draw on the playtexts of works under study, excerpts therefrom, digitized performances, and related archival and bibliographic material, to which timely access is provided.

Course examination is based on a project comprising a research and a creative component, which tap into the course's content, and on a final written examination, which includes short-answer questions, multiple-choice/true-false questions, and a critical question of an interpretative nature. Feedback and evaluation of students' projects are provided soon after their submission, using a tailor-made rubric and including explanations as per their strengths and areas for improvement. Finally, students evaluate the course by filling a special questionnaire anonymously.

C.

OSCAR WILDE: AESTHETICISM AND ITS LEGACIES IN THE LITERARY AND THEORETICAL THOUGHT OF THE 20TH CENTURY (63LE133)

This course will concentrate on the study of important critical, theoretical and literary works by Oscar Wilde, familiarizing students with the basic principles of aestheticism in Britain during the 1890s. Seminal philosophical questions will be addressed such as the affinity between truth and lying, the critic as artist, and the importance of art and the beautiful in the 20th century and the contemporary world. Major concerns of the course will be the exploration of the legacies of aestheticism in the first decades of the 20th century, and its impact upon the literary theory and critical thought of that century. More specifically, the course will establish the connections between Wilde's aestheticism (and aesthetics) and crucial theoretical schools of the twentieth century, such as the New Criticism and Deconstruction.

This course will be a combination of lectures and seminar activities. Evaluation will be based on the student's overall performance, optional written assignments (that will be presented in class), midterms and final exam.

THE CITY IN ANGLOPHONE FICTION (63LE178)

The course focuses on the concept of urban space as well as the lived experience associated with it, and explores the ways in which Anglophone fiction grapples with the multifaceted challenges that the city signifies in different cultural, ethnic, historical,

geographical and other contexts. Through the study of novels, short stories, and other forms of fiction that may represent any era and/or geographical context, students will have the opportunity to examine the diverse ways in which Anglophone fiction contributes to the vigorous and ever-evolving debate on urban space and the urban experience. Areas of interest may revolve around manifestations of constant change in urban space, power relations as they are negotiated and shaped through it, social and political problems that the city “hosts.”

6TH SEMESTER

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (63LY08)

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.

WOMEN’S STORIES IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (63LE172)

The course will investigate women’s stories in the long eighteenth century (1688-1815), focusing on questions of authority and authorship, as well as on issues of gender, race and class. Although in the past decades, scholars have rediscovered an extensive corpus of women’s literature and have reconsidered women’s participation in political and social transformations in Britain and abroad, it is still a challenge to move beyond the traditional narratives of female empowerment and disempowerment as an approach to women’s writing. The course aims to introduce students to the narratives of British women writers in the long eighteenth century by examining a diverse range of genres, prose fiction, letters, journals, essays and travel writing, and reflecting on the interplay between fiction and life writing. It will explore constructions of gendered and racial difference and themes such as romance, domesticity, feminism and anti-feminism, slavery, colonialism and education in works by Aphra Behn, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Frances Burney, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, Mary Prince, and Jane Austen among others.

The course sessions include lectures and discussion, where students will be expected to make presentations and the final grade will depend on a midterm exam, a final exam, and a class project.

19TH CENTURY ANGLOPHONE FICTION (63LE169)

The course traces the development of fiction during the 19th century in the UK and the USA through representative novels, short stories, and other types of fiction. The instructor can focus on one or more thematic units (such as industrialization, colonization, gender roles, religion, social conventions and inequalities, etc). The aim is to examine the ways in which fiction depicted but also responded to the dramatic social changes and challenges and the shifts in thinking about class, gender, race, sexuality, ontology, epistemology, the

nation and culture. Attention will be paid to the literary movements and trends of the 19th century and especially to the innovations in theme and style, as well as to the relations and controversies developed between texts and creators.

B.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN DRAMA (63LE09)

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.

ISSUES OF GENDER IN 20TH CENTURY ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE (63LE167)

This course explores gender and sexuality in 20th-century Anglophone Literature focusing on prose fiction (novels and short stories). It traces some of the main questions that have triggered theoretical discussion around the study of gendered subjects and sexualities in literature. It explores how Anglophone novels and short stories represent prescribed gender roles and heteronormative, patriarchal cultures, register love and gender relations, define sexual difference and same-sex desire, embrace the Postcolonial reconfigurations of the family unit, and adapt, towards the end of the 20th century, to the evolving notional understanding and fluidity of these complex terms at a moment prior to the looming radicalism of LGBTIQ+. We will explore the figuration of sexuality in a range of literary texts and illustrate through literary examples the difference between sex and gender examining through specific examples the ways in which gender roles appear to be constructed. The course surveys theoretical and critical perspectives (Gender Studies, Feminist Criticism, Queer Theory, Postcolonial Sexualities) and charts how different theories and methodologies work in practice engaging with a variety of literary texts. The broad range of themes and approaches explored will assist students build a sound critical discourse. The course aims at developing a critical understanding of the literary intersections of gender and sexuality with questions of race, class, and nationality, presenting the centrality of gender and sexuality in the discussion of literature.

C.

ENGLISH ROMANTICISM (63LE173)

The Romantic Movement in England, traditionally spanning from the publication of The Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* in 1789 to the death of Sir Walter Scott in 1832, although

heterogeneous and diverse, typically reacted to the Enlightenment's emphasis on emotional restraint, reason, and decorum. Born out of eighteenth-century landscape painting and infused with the Idealist philosophies of Schlegel and Kant, Romanticism promoted the wildness or sublimity of nature as opposed to the narrow conception of beauty favoured by Neoclassicism. In sympathy with the American and French Revolutions but critical of the ravages of the Industrial Revolution, Romanticism was politically, religiously, and aesthetically radical. Romantic writers chose subjects from everyday life, describing them not in the polished and high-flown language of the 18th Century, but in the vernacular spoken by the common man or woman. Romantic writers sought to represent and give a voice to labourers, children, and the poor, i.e. those disadvantaged, marginalized, or oppressed by an increasingly urban and utilitarian English culture. They also testified to the importance of the individual in an ever more faceless modernity by foregrounding the poet's own subjectivity and imagination at its most idiosyncratic or experimental.

The course takes the form of weekly planned lectures that allow for dialogue to develop in class. Contextualized close readings of representative works by both poets and novelists will be performed in class, focusing on their distinctive styles and unique contributions to the Movement. 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, course paper. Finally, the students have the chance to express their views on the instructor and the course by filling out a special anonymous questionnaire.

20TH CENTURY POLITICAL NOVEL (63LE170)

The course focuses on the twentieth century—the era of ideologies, revolutionary movements and world wars—which brought forth a new kind of novel and ventured beyond the 19th-century novel of manners in criticizing modernity. With its roots set in diatribes of political utopias, like Plato's *Politeia* and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, the 20th-century political novel confronts contemporary experiments in social engineering, targeting totalitarian regimes and other mechanisms of power that succeeded in twisting humankind's dream of progress and liberation. Under this light, the course may opt to examine the failure of the modern state to implement the visions of Enlightenment and/or the ways in which technological and scientific breakthroughs often served as means for the state-controlled manipulation and subjugation of the masses through biopolitics, police-state regimes and militarism.

7TH SEMESTER

A.

NO LITERATURE COURSES OFFERED IN THIS SLOT

B.

MODERNIST FICTION: THEMES AND STYLE (63LE18)

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.

CONTEMPORARY MULTI-ETHNIC LITERATURE IN THE UNITED STATES (63LE137)

The course focuses on contemporary novels that offer intriguing representations of hyphenated and ethnic identities, cultural contexts and discourses also in order to move beyond them. We will first study Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* (1984) in the context of a Native American literary tradition, focusing on how Erdrich probes central themes of Native American literature, notably survival, memory and oblivion, alienation and marginalisation, assimilation and resistance. We will then move onto Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* (1997) to explore how her West Coast novel reflects on globalisation, migration and borders, through cross-cultural encounters.

In the second part of the course, we will focus on two twentieth-first century writers, and explore cosmopolitanism, mobility as well as issues of class and race in Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011) in a post-national and/or post-racial world; we will conclude with Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019) we will explore post/colonial traumas and dis/affiliation through a focus on an autobiographical poetics of queer intimacy and vulnerability.

Attending students are assessed by coursework and in class exercises that will be held during term-time. There will be a final exam weighted at 100% at the end of the term for non-attending registered students. There will be a resit examination in September.

C.

MEDIEVAL LITERATURE (63LE158)

Welcome to the Dark Ages—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.

POSTMODERN AMERICAN DRAMA (63LE101)

The aim of this course is to familiarize students with the distinctive qualities of postmodern American drama, in terms of themes as well as aesthetics. The purpose is twofold: on the one hand, through the study of contemporary plays students will be led to attain a thorough understanding of the theoretical trends and practical modes that define the postmodern moment, while on the other particular attention will be given to the ways in which contemporary American playwrights position themselves and their artistic output vis-à-vis the current socio-political and cultural context. The course focuses on how these playwrights answer back to the peculiarities of this moment while they themselves also contribute decisively to fashioning out the very contours of postmodernity. Areas of interest develop around the predominance of the image at present and along with problematics of race and/or gender, as well as attempts at re-writing/ erasing history and occasions of (dis)empowering the word on stage, are examined through the works of playwrights such as Sam Shepard, Adrienne Kennedy, Arthur Kopit, Jean-Claude van Itallie, David Mamet, Suzan-Lori Parks.

Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions. In addition, they will be asked to react and comment on excerpts from filmed productions of the plays studied. Students will have access to a list of bibliography, while the assessment is based on two critical essays (optional) and a final exam.

D.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE (63LE13)

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.

GREECE IN CONTEMPORARY ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE (63LE177)

Focusing on different examples of contemporary Anglophone literature, which may or may not represent all literary genres (fiction, poetry, drama) as well as the critical and/or travel essay, the course examines the special position that Greece holds in this field. Students will be invited to study in depth the various ways in which contemporary Anglophone authors respond to the Greek element and rediscover Greece both as an imaginary landscape and a multileveled cultural and geographical place of specific coordinates. Topics of interest may

vary greatly, extending from intertextual and intercultural approaches of ancient Greek literature and culture to analogous assessments of modern and contemporary Greece.

8THSEMESTER

A.

NO LITERATURE COURSES OFFERED IN THIS SLOT

B.

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH FICTION: DEVELOPMENTS IN THEME AND STYLE (63LE57)

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.

POSTWAR BRITISH THEATRE (63LE13)

This course explores diverse facets of post-war British theatre that together afford a fresh re-interpretation of the theatre art itself. The developments on which we focus refer mainly to the aesthetic idiom and thematic content of representative works, but also concern methods of acting, organizational strategies, the shape of theatres, as well as the shaping of the theatrical landscape. Students will study and reflect on the co-existence of national theatres and fringe theatres, bold experimentation and illustrious tradition, the subversive and the mainstream, but also on styles as different as “kitchen sink,” theatre of the absurd, political theatre, or “in-yer-face theatre.” Emphasis is placed throughout on the many ways in which writing for the theatre, dramaturgy, and production undergo transformations in order to respond effectively to the new needs and expectations of theatre creatives and audiences in post-war English society.

To make the experience of this course as rewarding as possible, it is important that students participate in the discussions, the analysis of selected works, case studies, and generally in the reflective, research or creative tasks which form an integral part of the educational meetings. The said tasks, as well as the lectures, draw on the playtexts of works under study, excerpts therefrom, digitized performances, and related archival and bibliographic material, to which timely access is provided.

Course examination is based on a project comprising a research and a creative component, which tap into the course's content, and on a final written examination, which

includes short-answer questions, multiple-choice/true-false questions, and a critical question of an interpretative nature. Feedback and evaluation of students' projects are provided soon after their submission, using a tailor-made rubric and including explanations as per their strengths and areas for improvement. Finally, students evaluate the course by filling a special questionnaire anonymously.

C.

TERRORISM AND LITERARINESS IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES (63LE116)

This course studies the phenomenon and different aspects of terrorism through the examination of philosophical, literary and political texts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We will address the affinity between literary thought and the concept of terror and terrorism, also posing the question of the interrelatedness between aesthetics and terrorism and the role of ethics in this debate. A number of thinkers and novelists will be discussed, such as De Lillo, Conrad, Burgess, Waldman, Hamid, and others, in conjunction with texts by diverse thinkers like Lyotard, Baudrillard, Zizek, Kant and Burke. The course takes the form of a seminar so that in-class dialogue and critical thinking are encouraged. The course material includes literary and theoretical texts, various handouts, and a selected bibliography. Student evaluation is based on the final exam, class participation, in-class presentation, a research project, or in-class assignments.

TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE (63LE123)

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.

D.

ANIMAL PRINT: THE NONHUMAN OTHER IN ANGLOPHONE FICTION (63LE175)

Since the dawn of human culture, animals have been significant not just as physical, but as metaphysical, philosophical, and aesthetic presences as well. Predators or food, totemic avatars of the self or embodiments of Otherness, rivals or companions, living beings with a capacity for feeling, suffering and conscience or stock representations of abstract values, subjects of scientific study and metaphorical conduits for knowledge, nonhuman living beings are inextricably and diachronically involved in the multifaceted game of human self-awareness and the episteme of our world. This relationship—and the wide, and often extremely powerful—scope of emotions and thoughts it generates in human consciousness are depicted in art and literature of all nations and eras, revealing each time not only the particularities of specific cultural schemata, but also basic parameters of human nature.

The course focuses on representations of animals in Anglophone fiction, in an attempt to investigate, with the help of theoretical texts and notable examples from the history, literature and philosophy of the past, the multiple and multileveled meanings and uses of animality in the creation and identification of the human self. Students will become deeply familiar with quality texts of literature (all genres) and will analyze how animals in them mediate characteristic facets of anglophone (and broader human) cultures and histories. Student performance will be gauged on the basis of a mandatory research assignment and a final examination component, as well as a number of in-class projects and discussions.

IDENTITY AND SEXUALITY IN ANGLOPHONE THEATRE (63LE168)

Focusing on Anglophone plays that may represent any era and/or geographical context, the course introduces students to important topics relating to the notions of identity and sexuality. In particular, students will have the opportunity to study through various theories of gender and identity the conceptual interrelation between “sexuality” and “identity” and to engage critically with the very representation of “sexual identity” as it is constructed and deconstructed in relation to social, political, historical and ideological structures to which it is subject. The study of plays may facilitate the development of a critical dialogue with contemporary theoretical approaches and may also lead to a careful examination of the connections between drama and theatre, on the one hand, and various movements emphasizing issues of gender, racial and sexual identity, and social class, on the other.