ENGL 5103: Proseminar

Professor Laura Green

CRN: 15245
Fulfills: MA core requirement

For all first-year Master’s students and first-year doctoral students not holding a Master’s degree in English. This class introduces students to the historical arc and current scholarly practices of the discipline of English studies. Texts may include parts of Mark McGurl, The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing; Franco Moretti, Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms; Judith Butler et al., eds., What’s Left of Theory? New Work on the Politics of Literary Theory; John Guillory, Cultural Capital and the Problem of Literary Theory. Visits by members of the graduate faculty will introduce departmental strengths and foci, including theoretical and methodological approaches to literature, visual narrative, rhetoric, composition, and linguistics. The class will also offer opportunities for practice in fundamental scholarly tasks such as formulating research questions, using research databases, and drafting and revising in short scholarly forms (conference proposals, oral presentations, book reviews, etc.).

ENGL 7211: Topics in American Literature: Literary Tricksterism in American Literature

Professor Bonnie TuSmith
CRN: 15068
Fulfills: 19th Century/20th Century literature requirement; Women's Studies

“Change the joke and slip the yoke” - from folklore to fiction, tricksters abound in the Western literary tradition. This course explores Trickster and tricksterism as myth, theme, literary trope, and narrative strategy. Using a historical and cross-cultural approach, the course progresses from picaresque to postmodern trickster narratives. Contemporary theorists on trickster discourse (e.g., Bercovitch, Gates, Hyde, Hynes, Landay, Vizenor) will frame our examination of specific texts. Featured authors might include Melville, Stowe, Twain, Hurston, Morrison, Wideman, Erdrich, Alexie, Jen, Kingston, and Diaz. Requirements include weekly written responses, a class presentation, and an analytical paper.

ENGL 7282: Topics in Renaissance Literature: Renaissance Women

Professor Marina Leslie
CRN: 15070
Fulfills: Medieval through Early Renaissance literature requirement; Women's Studies

In 1977, historian Joan Kelly Gadol posed the question “Did Women Have a Renaissance?” in a ground-breaking essay that inaugurated a conversation among early modern feminist scholars who have, in the years since, both greatly expanded and fundamentally transformed our understanding of early modern women and early modern culture more generally. This course will trace the major turns of that conversation to consider early modern women as objects, subjects, interpreters and producers of early modern culture. We will examine the complex interactions of gender, genre, and class; women’s inscription in and descriptions of private and public spheres; and the archive and the canon as privileged and problematic sites for the representation of the intellectual labor of women. Readings by both men
and women will include: Castiglione, Vives, de Pisan, Lanyer, Cary, Wroth, Hutchinson, Philips, Behn, and Cavendish. Requirements will include an archival exercise and a final seminar paper.

**ENGL 7324: History of the English Language**

Dr. Heather Littlefield (Linguistics)
CRN: 15666
Fulfills: Theories & Methods -or- Linguistics requirement

In this course, we will examine the history of the English language from its Indo-European roots to present day. In doing so, we will focus on the complex social contexts which have led to changes in the English language, as well as the specific linguistic features that have changed over time. This will lead to a greater appreciation of contemporary English, and provide students with the basic background they need to analyze texts in Old English and Middle English. For example, why are there silent letters in words like 'castle', 'know', 'gnat', 'soften'?

Why does the English spelling system seem so irregular? Why do so many words in English seem to come from French? How are sets of words like 'triangle' and 'three', 'fish' and 'Pisces', 'foot' and 'pedestrian' related? How did the word 'meat', which originally referred to food in general (think of the compounds 'sweetmeat', 'nut meat', and 'mincemeat'), come to refer to the flesh of animals? In studying the history of English, students will gain an understanding of the various factors that give rise to language change, and the long-term results of these forces. No background in linguistics is assumed.

**ENGL 7351: Topics in Literary Study: Postcolonial Theory and Caribbean Literature**

Professor Nicole Aljoe
CRN: 15073
Fulfills: Theories & Methods (formerly "Literary Studies"); Women's Studies; Cinema Studies

The Caribbean has produced some of the most exciting Postcolonial Anglophone writing of the past half-century. In addition to two Nobel Laureates (Derek Walcott 1992 and V.S. Naipaul 2001), this chain of small islands and neighboring nations on the coasts of Central and South America has produced vibrant literatures that expand the bounds of English and transcend the printed page to include music, dance, images, and film. This course will introduce students to this stimulating work as a means to explore Postcolonial theories and methodologies. More specifically, we will consider the myriad ways in which these texts and the theories developed to address them are grounded in the region's unique social context, which celebrates multiplicity and hybridity. In addition to prose fiction, we will also consider poetry and film. Authors may include: Phillips, Brathwaite, Naipaul, Cliff, Brathwaite, Walcott, James, Danticat, Kincaid, Powell, Lovelace, Chin, Garcia, Condé, Carpentier, and Rhys. Films may include: “Black Shack Alley,” “Life & Debt,” “Island in the Sun,” “Harder They Come,” “Dancehall Queen,” “Third World Cop,” “Burn!”
ENGL 7361: Modern Poetry

Professor Guy Rotella  
CRN: 15074  
Fulfills: 19th Century/20th Century literature requirement

“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.” Yeats captures the modern moment’s convinced, if dubious sense that a radical break with the past distinguishes and defines it. Meanwhile, Yeats’s tone of disaster aside, modern poets celebrate and seek to intensify as well as mourn and seek to repair the collapse of cultural centers (or their multiplication), feel freed as well as shattered by accelerating change in everything from suffrage to science. We’ll examine modern poetry’s competing responses to change, both in general, in terms of the modern tendency to treat past and present comparatively, and in particular, in terms of modern poets’ treatments of death, as one exemplary comparative category (in literary terms, for instance, modern poets continue, discard, and revise the inherited conventions of elegy; in cultural terms, they evaluate prior and current obituary and funeral practices). As to method, we’ll seek to combine a formalist emphasis on order and coherence with a poststructuralist alertness to ruptures and discontinuities.

Poets to be considered include Yeats, Frost, Stevens, Moore, Williams, Hughes, and H.D. Seminar participation, a paper proposal, and a course essay are required.

ENGL 7392: Writing and the Teaching of Writing

Professor Patricia Sullivan  
CRN: 15075  
Fulfills: Theories & Methods (formerly “Literary Studies”) -or- Rhetoric and Composition

Open to new Teaching Assistants only. This course introduces students to the teaching of writing in a range of theoretical, social, and institutional contexts. Students study their immediate institutional contexts of practice (Northeastern’s First-Year Writing Program and/or Writing Center). They also have the opportunity to examine other sites of the teaching of writing, including the Advanced Writing in the Disciplines Program, writing-intensive courses offered through the English Department, or writing courses and programs at other institutions or organizations. Students explore pedagogical issues that they find intellectually stimulating, examine a range of teaching strategies, develop and articulate their teaching philosophy, and learn how to represent and document the intellectual work of teaching writing in a teaching portfolio. This portfolio may include various teaching artifacts, such as a teaching philosophy statement, an annotated assignment sequence, peer observation letters, examples of comments on student writing, and an essay theorizing one or more of their teaching practices. Readings may include Vandenberg, Hum, & Clary-Lemon’s Relations, Locations, Positions: Composition Theory for Writing Teachers (NCTE, 2006); Moore and O’Neill’s Practice in Context (NCTE, 2002); and self-directed reading chosen from the Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing and articles published in scholarly journals.
ENGL 7395: Topics in Writing: Composing into the 21st Century

Professor Chris Gallagher
CRN: 15076
Fulfills: Theories & Methods (formerly "Literary Studies") -or- Rhetoric and Composition

The course will focus on changing conceptions of writing and writers over the past four decades. We will study the writing process movement in Rhetoric and Composition in the 1970s and 1980s and the —post-process interventions of the 1990s and 2000s, examining the various theoretical and methodological frameworks that have been advanced for understanding writing and writing subjects (i.e., —writers ). Our survey of process and post-process theories will become the occasion for exploring the historical forces that have shaped the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition and the teaching of writing from their inception. For example, the writing process movement was shaped in part by a broader social effort to democratize higher education in the 1960s and 1970s; its proponents were influenced by, and in many cases participated in, civil rights movements and campus campaigns such as the Students’ Rights to Their Own Language and open admissions. We will view the writing process movement as an attempt to redefine the social mission of college writing instruction, which for a century or so had been to mediate ongoing debates over —access and —standards in higher education by remediating student writing.

In turn, these historical investigations will inform our consideration of the production, circulation, (re)mediation, and uses of writing and writing subjects today. Though this is not a course in new media composing, we will explore how new and emerging information and communication technologies shape our conceptions of writing and writers in a moment that has been called (in addition to —post-process ) —post-public, —post-identity, and —post-literacy.

Course requirements will include consistent participation, weekly writing in the form of a notebook or blog, a minor research project and presentation, and a culminating essay. Readings may include —classic writing process studies (e.g., Emig, Sommers, Flower and Hayes), Kent’s Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing Process Paradigm, Welch’s Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Privatized World, Selber’s Multiliteracies for a Digital Age, and short pieces by media and technology theorists whose work bears on our concerns (e.g., Benkler, Granovetter, Shirky).

(Please note: Students who have taken previous iterations of Topics in Writing are welcome to take this one as well.)