ENGL 7274: Topics in Shakespeare

Visiting Assistant Professor Michael Booth
CRN: 34656
Fulfills: Medieval through Early Renaissance

This class has two objectives: to involve graduate students in an enriching, semester-long conversation about Shakespeare's works; and to link our conversation, week by week, with the insights of professional literary critics and theorists who have found meaning and matter in Shakespeare. The class will thus offer professional preparation for those intending an academic career in literary study, and will also offer an opportunity for the immediate satisfactions of discussing Shakespeare with a group of well informed, curious and attentive readers.

We will read one play for each week's class meeting, moving chronologically through Shakespeare's works, and we will also read a short critical or theoretical work. Each week someone in the class will begin our meeting by leading a short discussion of that week's assigned critical reading, after which we will shift our focus to other points of interest in the Shakespeare text.

There will be one graduate seminar paper due at the end of the semester, of a quality suitable for publication in a scholarly journal.

ENGL 7275: Milton

Professor Francis Blessington
CRN: 34657
Fulfills: 17th Century/Restoration/18th Century


ENGL 7311: Introduction to Linguistics

Professor Janet Randall
CRN: 34659
Fulfills: Theories & Methods

This course introduces students to a new way of thinking about language. Normally, we use language unconsciously: when we speak and understand sentences, we are unaware of the complex mental activities going on at each moment. This course provides an opportunity to look carefully at our unconscious knowledge of sentence structure (syntax), meaning (semantics), word forms (morphology), and sound patterns (phonology). These lead to related issues: "talking" computers, the nature/nurture controversy, and sociolinguistic debates about standard and non-standard English, gender issues in language, and language change. A weekly problem set or essay plus a take-home final exam will be required.
ENGL 7342: Topics in Criticism: Joyce and Vico

Professor Patrick Mullen
CRN: 34660
Fulfills: Theories & Methods

This seminar will be organized around the close reading of Joyce’s *Ulysses*. As a focus for our reading, we will be thinking about the question of history. What is history and how does it relate to Joyce’s aesthetic project? Are there different kinds of history? Economic, political, literary, social? To what various uses does Joyce put these different kinds of histories? What might it mean to read history through Joyce? What might it mean to read Joyce historically? To help us attend to these questions, we will be reading from the rich body of scholarship on Joyce. We will also be engaging a key philosophical figure that helped to fire Joyce’s historical imagination and who continues to inspire historical criticism: Giambattista Vico. We will not simply be reading for Vico’s influence on Joyce, which is more properly tracked in *Finnegan’s Wake*, but rather asking of Vico what we ask of Joyce, what does it mean to write and read in relation to human history? Students will be asked to do a series of short writing assignments that will fold into a larger seminar paper. This course is also part of the newly formed Boston Joyce Forum, which in conjunction with Boston College, will address through a number of events, lectures, and activities this year’s Forum theme: Joyce and History. Students will be asked to prepare for and to attend 2 mini-colloquia and be invited to participate in Forum activities such as the *Finnegan’s Wake* reading group, Raidin the Wake. There will be an undergraduate version of this course offered as a Junior/Senior Seminar and a version offered as a Graduate Seminar. Both seminars will be invited to collaborate.

ENGL 7351: Topics in Literary Study: Visual Postmodernities

Professor Kimberly Juanita Brown
CRN: 34661
Fulfills: Theories & Methods -or- 19th Century/20th Century, Women's Studies, Cinema Studies

This interdisciplinary course ponders the imagistic imperative of postmodernism as a developing disillusion of the eye. We will focus on its gendered manifestations, using feminist film and photography theory alongside literature, conceptual art, museum studies and photography. We will be interested, for instance, in the transmigration of affect within the filmic body; the fragmentary discord of video art installations; the reflexive manipulations of self-portraiture photography, and the non-linear interventions of the fictive world. Visual Postmodernities will culminate in a gallery exhibition collaboratively curated by class participants. Each student will choose one artistic piece and develop his or her final paper as an experimental exhibition catalog entry. The course will include works by: Shawn Michelle Smith, Wahneema Lubiano, Pippilotti Rist, Toni Morrison, Zeinabu Irene Davis, Ntozake Shange, Martha Rosler, Laura Mulvey, Edwidge Danticat, and Sarah Ahmed.
ENGL 7360: Topics in Rhetoric: Figuring Law

Professor Beth Britt
CRN: 33684
Fulfills: Rhetoric and Composition -or- Theories & Methods

Like other human sciences (sociology, economics, history, anthropology), law has not been immune from the interpretive turn. Increasing numbers of scholars—from both law and other disciplines—work on the assumption that the activities of legal actors and the very institutions of the law itself are rooted in the indeterminacies of language. For many, this recognition means that the law is always “interested,” reinforcing particular social relations and ways of thinking at the expense of others. Because law “plays on a field of pain and death” (as legal scholar Robert Cover puts it), the relationship between interpretation and law thus has profound implications for justice. This course explores that relationship. We will ask questions such as: What is the relationship between law and justice? What role do rhetoric and interpretation play in this relationship? What are the implications for legal actors (judges, juries, lawyers) and for the people upon whom law acts? Because the interpretive turn in law is an interdisciplinary phenomenon, we will explore these questions across a range of texts and disciplines, from philosophy to literature to legal studies to rhetoric.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the subject matter, the course will make the promises and challenges of doing interdisciplinary work an overt area of exploration. Assignments will include analyses of Law, Culture and the Humanities (the premier journal for people working in this area), a proposal, a presentation, and an essay that engages in a conversation from this journal. Students will be able to tailor assignments to their own research interests in rhetoric, composition, literature, literary theory, gender studies, linguistics, or film.

Featured GCWS Course:

U.S. Women’s Biography: Lives/History/Feminist Theory

Professor Carla Kaplan, with Susan Ware 3 semester hours Tuesday, 6-9 PM February 1, 2011 – May 3, 2011

This course operates with a double lens: biography and feminist theory. Our premise is that women’s biography can introduce students to the keywords and key concepts developed by interdisciplinary feminist theory and, by emphasizing an array of issues involved in narrating women’s lives, also provide an exploration of why those concepts have mattered, and to whom. By focusing on narrative constructions of such diverse women as Alice James, Eleanor Roosevelt, Nella Larsen, Amelia Earhart, Ella Baker, Anne Sexton, Janis Joplin, Zora Neale Hurston and others, we will introduce students to a range of feminist theory about politics, literature, family, music, the environment, government, celebrity, and sexuality in a reading-intensive, seminar-style discussion course. The syllabus features both classic theoretical texts (with attention to the historiography of interdisciplinary feminist theorizing) as well as more recent ones, designed to deepen our thinking and discussion and to raise questions of approach and methodology.