

Queens College Department of English

Graduate Courses for the Spring 2010 Semester

You can contact the Director of Graduate Studies in English, Professor John Weir at john.weir@qc.cuny.edu or go to the office hours of any member of the graduate committee (list available in English department).

Students admitted in September 2004 and later must use the new requirements for the M.A. and the M.S. in Education/English. Students admitted earlier may use either the old or the new requirements. To make sure you are taking the right sequence of courses, be sure to consult the department website at <http://qcpages.qc.edu/english/degreeprograms/ma/>

636: History of Literary Criticism

R 6:30-8:20 E6R2A 0693 RZ 304 Ferguson

This course is an introduction to literary theory and criticism. It will provide a foundation so that students may take a more sophisticated approach towards the literature, culture, and texts they encounter in their future academic career. To this end, we will endeavor to cover as wide a range of theories and thinkers as possible. We will learn about formalism, structuralism, post-structuralism and deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminism, gender studies, political criticism, historicisms, and various cultural studies. While much of the material will be challenging, the emphasis throughout will be on praxis (practice)—literary theory is important not for its own sake, but because it allows us to better approach the world we occupy and which occupies us. So while we will work to apply theory to literature, we will also work to see how literary theory can and does show us important things about our lives.

662: The History and Structure of English

R 6:30-8:20 E6R2A 0694 KP 708 Epstein

The purpose of the course is to introduce students to the history, the main functions and structures of the English language, and to the dialects of English, and to use this knowledge to analyze texts in English, including some great works of literature.

The audience for this course will be students who will be teachers of English on the secondary and college levels, and other students who may need knowledge of the language for courses in literary criticism, anthropology, and philosophy.

There will be three examinations.

Texts:

Epstein, E .L. The Creation of Language
Epstein, E.L. A New Grammar of English
Handouts

681: Transgender Narratives and Theories

M 6:30-8:20 E6M2A 0695 HH 08 English

Gender studies, Women’s Studies, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Studies and Queer Studies—all of the above are areas of thought and politics that are newly invigorated by transgender identities, experiences, politics, histories and theories. If second-wave feminism articulated and explored the distinction between sex and gender, and third-wave feminism opened up the categories of race, ethnicity and sexuality, can we begin to see now an emergent and consistent challenge to the fundamental assumptions of ideological heterosexuality, namely that there are two (only two!), binaristic, supposedly complementary and opposite sexes? This course will consider a variety of texts and genres, especially autobiographical and fictional narratives of transgender experience, but also history, theory, political manifesto and ethnography. We will consider the varied diction, figures, narrative tropes, and both explicit and implied theoretical understandings—especially of the relations among the categories of sex, gender, sexuality and embodiment—that underlie articulations and understandings of categories such as “transgender” and “trans-sexual.”

The goal of our reading, speaking, and writing will be to explore varied and possibly new ways of imagining gender, sex, sexuality, embodied experience, etc. We will probably come to this conversation with varied experiences, understandings and vocabularies. While I do want us to learn to use a shared vocabulary (e.g., distinctions among the words and concepts “sex,” “gender,” and “sexuality”), our goal will not be to think identically. To learn to use our shared vocabulary and to develop your own understandings, it will be necessary to experiment bravely with language, to have the courage to make errors, and to accept others’ responses to your language and ideas. Also, some of our reading may produce responses in us that could be surprising and possibly difficult to articulate. In other words, while we are clearly, obviously, and definitely not having a therapy group, our reading, writing and speaking should indeed connect with some of our deepest and perhaps most personal understandings of ourselves and others. Our conversations will thrive if we can make a social environment in which we hear and respond to one another with respect and patience and in which we offer revisions of language and thinking with respect and goodwill.

681: Dialogue & Dialectic

M 6:30-8:20 E6M2B 0696 KY 320 Sargent

681: Nature and Culture in Fictions and Films

T 6:30-8:20 E6T2A 0697 HH 09 Buell

This course will explore different ways in which complex cultural texts have often been wiser than their interpreters and even their creators. It will explore how culture and nature are subtly interwoven in a wide variety of ways in literary and filmic depictions of, on the one hand, nature and, on the other, of the non-natural human world. In each case, a closer look reveals not just the truly natural in the one and the truly human in the other, but often very peculiar embraces of the two.

When society entered the “modern” world in the 16th and 17th centuries, it began what many thought was a heroic process of liberating humanity from nature. Humanity began improving itself and its milieu and set out on its “march of progress”—its one-way passage toward a better and better state. Nature, in contrast, was deemed separate and remained behind, enduring or reliably cyclic, bound always to persisting laws of nature.

Today, however, that attitude is like a troubled dream naturalists and urbanites, environmentalists and cultural theorists alike are trying to wake up from. For what the modern world achieved was, in fact, not the separation of nature and society. Instead, its cultural texts reveal the cultivation in fact of stranger and stranger embraces. Worse, today, in what is the second or even third generation of a still-growing environmental-social crisis, many of these embraces seem to be death-grips, not happy cementings of an ever-more-fruitful relationship.

We will read five or six literary texts and study five or six films. Literary texts will include works like Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Octavia Butler's *Dawn*, and films will range from movies like *Safe* to *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*. [Note however: Books will be ordered as usual for purchase at the campus store. With films, however, students will need to entrepreneurially locate copies to view outside of class before the date we discuss them.]

701: Seminar in Graduate Methodology

R	6:30-8:20	E6R2A	0698	RA 208	Williams
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This course offers an introduction to the advanced research techniques necessary to complete scholarly projects at the graduate level in English literature. Seminar participants will explore the critical debates that currently inform literary scholarship, develop papers that effectively deploy academic discourse and discover ways to incorporate their own intellectual concerns and interests into their research. There will be some emphasis on literary theory and its application to research, as well as instruction in the practical use of scholarly materials and sources, especially the digital archives and databases that are transforming literary scholarship today. We will also discuss the history of English as an academic discipline, and the professionalization of scholarship. Shorter writing assignments will allow for some experimentation with a range of approaches to research and writing, and by the end of the semester students will have worked through several stages of planning and writing to develop a thesis prospectus or a draft of the culminating essay.

T	6:30-8:20	E6T2A	0699	RA 208	Lew
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702: Graduate Methodology for Education Students

M	6:30-8:20	E6M2A	0700	KY 248	Nysenholc
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This course offers an introduction to the advanced research techniques necessary to complete scholarly projects at the graduate level in English literature. Seminar participants will explore the critical debates that currently inform literary scholarship, develop papers that effectively deploy academic discourse and discover ways to incorporate their own intellectual concerns and interests into their research. There will be some emphasis on literary theory and its application to research, as well as instruction in the practical use of scholarly materials and sources, especially the digital archives and databases that are transforming literary scholarship today. We will also discuss the history of English as an academic discipline, and the professionalization of scholarship. Shorter writing assignments will allow for some experimentation with a range of approaches to research and writing, and by the end of the semester students will have worked through several stages of planning and writing to develop a thesis prospectus or a draft of the culminating essay.

703: Composition Theory and Literacy Studies

M 6:30-8:20 E6M2A 0701 HH 12 Weingarten

722: English Novel & French Revolution

W 4:30-6:20 E4W2A 0743 KP 708 Richter

723: Romanticism and the Ruins of Paradise

R 6:30-8:20 E6R2A 0703 KY 321 Marotta

For many romantic writers, the traces "of that first Paradise whence man was driven" could be found in the imaginative and mimetic structures surrounding them.

Wordsworth and Shelley found these traces in nature; Byron in irony; Keats in aesthetics; Blake in myth and Coleridge in ethics. This course will examine how the search for these images of paradise, or as McGann said, of the idea "that poetry...can set one free of the ruins of history and culture is the grand illusion of every Romantic poet," forms the central core of belief that shapes the romantic imagination. Part of this exploration will focus on how the romantic poets layered this search onto idealized characters as well as nature. Our readings from these poets will concentrate on how each of the major poets explores and imagines the exteriors and the interiors of this vision. Active participation and two papers are required.

729: MAKE IT NEW(YORK)

W 6:30-8:20 E6W2A 0705 KP 708 Moreland

The focus of this class will be New York City as the formative site of American modernism. Its size, its speed, its cosmopolitanism, its accumulation of the peoples of the world, its centrality as both material producer and imaginative laboratory of mass and high culture all mark New York as the essential metropolis of the modern imagination. We shall examine the relationships formed among the city and its creative artists, including William Carlos Williams, Louis Armstrong, Thelonious Monk, John Dos Passos, the New York & Beat poets, Jackson Pollock and the abstract expressionists, among many others.

751: Workshop in Fiction

R 6:30-8:20 E6R2A 0704 KY 320 Weir

In the Nov/Dec 2009 issues of *Poets and Writers*, featuring a special report on MFA programs, Gabriel Packard, associate director of the creative writing MFA program at Hunter College, recommends that students show up to workshops with pieces "that you've already taken as far as you can on your own." He adds, "Don't be afraid to put forth the same piece of work several times – after having rigorously revised it each time, of course." Do we agree with him? Is the workshop a place where we haul our tired old stories into class and make our classmates read them for the 10th time? Maybe. Maybe not. Nonetheless, Packard is getting at something important: We need to learn how to revise. To revise early, and to revise

often. Too many students imagine that revision means choosing the path of least resistance, taking the suggestions of only our most easily satisfied readers and adjusting a sentence or two, adding in a paragraph of backstory, moving a comma, and then calling the thing done. Our aim in this course will be to focus on revision as a lengthy, ongoing process of reclamation and discovery. This will involve, among other things, each student submitting, along with his or her story, a statement of the major technical, strategic writerly problem he or she has set for herself/himself for each piece of writing. For example: “In this story, I want to use a first person narrator to tell a story that she only partially knows. How do I convey to the reader that her information is incomplete, and how do I show the whole story, when the narrator only knows half?” Each workshop submission will come with a Statement of Writerly Goals, and each student will leave the class session with specific Goals for Revision. The idea is to transform the workshopped writer from the passive auditor in a discussion of his or her work to an active participant in articulating helpful revision goals. There are two kinds of stories submitted to workshop: stories that need more, and stories that need less. Stories often need more: backstory, characterization, verbal fire, economy of phrasing, ambition, pages. Stories that need less usually need less of just one thing: adjectives. In any case, we’ll think about whether your story needs more or less. We’ll think about how to find material in your story that you have overlooked. More often than not, what you need is already there – it’s just a question of “pushing into” it. Alternatively, if your story needs less, we’ll find the places where the writing is on fire, where it engages the reader’s attention, and we’ll cut everything else. We will be willing to cut everything. We will be willing to change anything. We will accept that a story is not us, no matter how deeply we have invested it with our loves and fears. In short, we’ll be ruthless with our stories and generous to each other, in an effort to learn what it means to revise something. Along the way, we will read some helpful books: E.M. Forster’s *Aspects of the Novel*, Charles Baxter’s *Burning Down the House*, Flannery O’Connor’s *Mystery and Manners*, and David Foster Wallace’s novel, *The Broom of the System*. Students will submit four stories in all: two original and two revised drafts.

This course is open only to students in the MFA Creative Writing and Translation Program.

753: IN THE STUDIO: WRITING, REVISION AND PLAY

W 6:30-8:20 E6W2A 0710 KY 320 Cooley

The aim of this class is to resituate play as the center of our writing practice. And to think deeply about revision as an act of writing. To that end, we will workshop poems and write and read from a range of sources. We’ll write collaborative poems, prose poems, one-line poems as well as poems in fixed forms such as the triolet and the haibun. We’ll read a wide variety of texts, from Andre Breton’s early twentieth century surrealist games to Frank O’Hara’s *Lunch Poems* to poems in spring issues of *American Poetry Review*. We’ll talk about ephemera, archival sources and found poems.

(This course is open only to students in the MFA Program.)

755: Workshop in Drama

R 6:30-8:20 E6R2A 0744 KY 248 Schotter

757: Creative Writing Workshop

W 6:30-8:20 E6W2A 0714 RA 106 Sedarat

Under the presumption that better writers make better translators, this workshop allows those from different language backgrounds working in various genres to immerse themselves in process. Facilitated peer review from transliteration to rough and revised drafts insures greater adherence to the letter, while the collected risk of workshop members as they become more aware of their stylistic choices helps sustain the spirit of the original source text. Students work both individually on self-chosen projects as well in pairs and small groups. In addition to traditional translation, the workshop includes assignments in imitation, interdisciplinary interpretation, and performance. Fluency in a foreign language is not required.

Open to MFA students and MA students with permission of instructor.

761: Craft of Poetry: “Poetic Closure”

M 6:30-8:20 E6M2A 0715 KP 708 Hahn

“The conclusion of a poem has a special status in the process, for it is only at that point that the total pattern—the structural principles which we have been testing—is revealed.” This quote is from Barbara Herrnstein Smith's *Poetic Closure*, which was published in 1964. Using work by both established and emerging writers, we will examine a set of poems each week and explore how closure affects the whole. Class assignments will also help us to sense and identify the inner workings of closure. For myself and former students, this has proven to be one of the most important craft tools one can pick up in the classroom. Word will include response papers, one mid-term essay, and one final creative process paper. Open Only to MFA Students

781: The Short Fiction of Franz Kafka: Stories, Parables, Aphorisms, Gestures

T 6:30-8:20 E6T2A 0709 KY 248 Cassvan

This course will make possible a thorough exploration of the singular nature of the short fiction of Franz Kafka (1883-1924), with a dual focus on critical approaches to his work and on creative writerly interventions that have been made in Kafka's name and/or under his influence. In addition to a careful reading of the majority of Kafka's short works, we will focus on the ways in which a number of the major trends in literary theory and criticism have been applied to the interpretation of this highly influential body of work. We will also consider Kafka as a precursor to the work of such postmodern writers as Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, and Donald Barthelme, and contemporary short fiction experimentalists like Lydia Davis, Aimee Bender, and Ishmael Reed. And we will consider issues of translation in the presentation of Kafka's word to English readers. The course is open to both MA Literature and MFA Creative Writing & Literary Translation students, and is designed to encourage interaction and explore the fruitful dialogue between these two groups of students.

781: Verbs of Being: Nonfiction Literature

M 4:30-6:20 E4M2A 0706 KP 708 Lieu

In this course, we will examine texts by a range of recent and contemporary writers who position and discover themselves in relationship to an era, ethos, or place. Students will be assigned creative and critical reactions to the texts. Authors studied may include Gloria Anzaldúa, John D'Agata, James Baldwin, Breyten Breytenbach, Charles Bowden, Anne Carson, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Natalia Ginzberg, Pico Iyer, Hettie Jones, Maxine Hong Kingston, Michael Ondaatje, and Leslie Marmon Silko.

781: Special Seminars

T 6:30-8:20 E6T2B 2108 KY 320 Girmay

791: Thesis Course

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*** TO BE ANNOUNCED *** Z 0654 x Weir