

ENGLISH & CREATIVE WRITING COURSE OFFERINGS

✧ Spring 2026 ✧

ENGLISH

ENGL 220 / FMST 201: Introduction to Film Studies (Cheever)

Alternatively called “pictures,” “movies,” and “films,” the feature film is a vibrant and influential cultural practice that first emerged in early 20th century and has continued to evolve into the 21st. *Introduction to Film Studies* examines feature filmmaking as simultaneously an art form and a culture industry, considering 1) the formal components that make up feature films (such as the narration, *mise en scène*, composition, editing, etc.) and 2) the industrial practices that shape its production and exhibition. We begin by exploring early examples of narrative film from the US and Europe to discover how stylistic innovations—such as the use of close ups to communicate a character’s emotion or the deployment of cross-cutting to allow for greater narrative complexity—became filmic conventions that still structure contemporary filmmaking. We then consider how filmmakers use movies to comment upon important cultural concepts by examining two major methodologies in film analysis: genre studies and director studies. We will ask: what unites a group of films under the category of a genre? Or as the product of a director’s cinematic imagination? How does the gangster film invite us to think about American ethnic and racial subcultures, the twinned concepts of justice and criminality, and ideologies of the American dream? And in what way do Alfred Hitchcock’s films question midcentury American ideas about gender and class, and love and obsession? By the end of the course, students will have learned important concepts and methodologies of film studies, developed their skills in visual analysis and argumentative writing, and will be prepared to take upper-level courses in Film Studies and the English Department.

ENGL 221: Introduction to Poetry (Schwartz)

Human beings have composed, performed, and later written and read poetry for almost as long as there have been human beings on the earth. The art is indeed at least as old as, and probably a good deal older than, the earliest human civilizations, and it has been practiced in various modes by all peoples and in all languages. It is, we might say, a very old human technology, one that involves the organization of language according to conventional sound patterns, and it has always been associated with *particular* purposes and themes or ideas. This class is designed to introduce you to this ancient practice—to how it works and to what people have thought it is for—by studying one particular cultural tradition that has arisen in its long and complex history: the tradition of lyric composition that arose with the emergence and wide dissemination of Modern English. We will therefore be principally concerned with the work of lyric poets over the past 400 years or so (mostly in England and the United States, although there are Australian, Canadian, and Irish poets on the syllabus as well). The course is arranged thematically, rather than historically, however, and the thematic units are designed to give you a sense of how

poems have served their readers and authors in the face of some of the basic difficulties of being human and in the course of changing historical conditions.

ENGL 223: The Modern Novel (Outka)

How, as humans, do we navigate challenging times? How do we persevere through fear, loss, and uncertainty, and work to change destructive patterns? The classic modern novels we'll explore offer powerful examples of how literature may grant solace, recognition, and imaginative ways forward, even as they depict the significant challenges we face.

Throughout the semester, we'll study the techniques and approaches modern writers have used across the 20th and 21st century, analyzing narrative voices, plot structures, imagery patterns, and the sensory details of language.

ENGL 234: Shakespeare (Russell)

This course introduces students to a selection of Shakespeare's splendid comedies, histories, tragedies, and romances, works that profoundly shaped the subsequent English literary tradition to our day. From *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* to *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, we will explore this author's memorable and influential investigations of love, sex, gender, race, religion, identity, politics, and much more. The course will approach these plays as literary works, as theatrical performances, and occasionally as creatively appropriated in film adaptations such as *She's the Man* and *Ten Things I Hate About You*.

ENGL 237: Queer Literatures (Snaza)

This class is an exploration of "queer literatures," a phrase that signifies *both* literatures "about" the lives, practices, and relations of people with "queer" identities—lesbian, gay, trans, nonconforming or fluid—and literatures that are, *formally*, queer texts. We will read important, almost exclusively twentieth century texts, in US and global Anglophone literary traditions. And we will ask how stylistic and formal experimentation is linked to the experimental ways of living, loving, and relating that animate queer lives. Readings many include work by Mel Y. Chen, Nella Larsen, Audre Lorde, Alice Oseman, Hil Malatino, Shani Mootoo, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, William Shakespeare, Monique Truong, Monique Wittig, and Ocean Vuong.

ENGL 240: Literature and Comedy (Pelletier)

Humor, as we will see, is one of the principal engines of Western literary history, and "comedy" is the term we use to describe the narrational mode (i.e. the method of storytelling) of those works that are meant to elicit laughs. Comedy can be much more than merely funny, however. And, in fact, sometimes comedy isn't funny at all. At its most interesting, comedy amuses, but it also confronts, critiques, confounds, transgresses, subverts, appalls, inflames, enrages, devastates. Indeed, as Mark Twain once observed: "Against the assault of laughter, nothing can stand." These features are precisely what make comedy difficult to think about, and, at times, hard to digest. As social commentary and political critique, comedy challenges and often excoriates the very norms a culture uses to define and preserve itself. In this course, we will survey canonical as well as non-

canonical comedic texts in order to understand how “comedy,” both as a tradition of writing and a mode of thought, has developed over the course of Western literature. We will cultivate a more nuanced and historical understanding of the workings of comedy as we examine literature (and performance) from a variety of cultures and over a long span of time. We may even enjoy a laugh or two along the way.

ENGL 296: Faulkner and After (Lurie)

William Faulkner is one of the most accomplished writers of the 20th Century. Winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1949, his work chronicles the difficulties of racial tension in his native South, particularly the lives of characters in small towns like his home, Oxford Mississippi. Known for his challenging experiment with the novel form, Faulkner’s fiction is also timely for our country’s ongoing effort to manage differences around class and gender as well as race relations. His critique of white Southerners is unsparing, as our discussion will show, and is evident in his influence on later, equally important writers.

Our course will examine key Faulkner novels and stories and will trace his influence on writers as well as filmmakers. Likely Faulkner works include *The Sound and the Fury*, *Sanctuary*, *As I Lay Dying*, “Dry September,” and “Barn Burning.” Other course materials suggest his role in works such as Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Jesmyn Ward’s *Sing, Unburied Sing*, and the Coen Brothers’ film *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?*

ENGL 299: American Literature in the 21st Century: The Historical Novel (Siebert)

Six historical novels by U.S. American writers published in the last three years. Arranged in three pairs: Hannah Pylvainen and Lauren Groff on settler colonialism in 19th century Scandinavia and 17th century Tsenacomoco/Virginia; Percival Everett and Jesmyn Ward on self-emancipation from enslavement in ante-bellum United States; Mona Powers and Tommy Orange on Indigenous histories in North America.

In this course, we will read attentively and think intensely about how these novels imagine the past through a variety of narrative experiments, surprising plots, and complex protagonists. Each engrossing in and of itself, together these novels offer an opportunity to reflect on the historical novel as a genre with its own already long history and to explore its continuing popularity in the present moment. We will ask what it means to reconsider history in creative ways right now and what particular histories capture contemporary writers’ imaginations and to what effects.

This is a course for irreverent intellectuals, that is, people who believe that thinking critically about our world matters greatly and that literature, and art in general, helps us parse through the many complex issues defining our contemporary moment. As we engage in reading, writing, and conversation, you will become more attentive and insightful readers of literary texts, learn how novels work and what preoccupies contemporary U.S. American writers, and become more persuasive and elegant writers of arguments.

ENGL 299: Modernism and the City (Brauer)

This course will introduce students to varying artistic representations of the modern experience – literature, painting, sculpture, music. Through a focus on the modern city from the 1910s-1930s, we will examine how artists sought to fully represent their

experience of the world and to translate to readers, viewers, and listeners what it felt to be alive in that place and time.

ENG 330: Special Topic: Violence, Gender, and God in Medieval and Renaissance English Literature (Schwartz)

This course will survey many of the major (and some of the minor) literary works of the first four major periods of English Literary History (the Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman, Middle English, and Early Modern English periods). The structure will be roughly chronological, but in the course of the semester we will keep in mind three over-arching matters in order to give our readings the shape of an argument or narrative: 1) the ways in which the literature of these periods represented the proper and improper uses of violence as a tool for the establishment and maintenance of social order, 2) the ways in which they represented changing ideas about gender and gender relations, and 3) the ways in which they expressed changing religious views. We will also pay close attention to the ways in which later literary historians and writers imagined a continuous, developing tradition through (and later back through) the actually rather discontinuous years of the Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman, and Middle English periods and the ways in which writers imagined and represented the individual human subject in their texts (the ways the representation of the individual changed as the relative cultural prestige of the individual itself changed).

English 338: Victorian Literature (Gruner)

The period spanning the years 1832 to 1901 in the British Empire was a period of rapid political, economic, social, and literary change. Industrialization and imperial expansion mark an era also known for the flowering of both the realist novel and children's literature, as well as biography, autobiography, and new experiments in both epic and lyric poetry. This course provides a survey of selected literature of the Victorian period, focusing especially on the way the Victorians thought about travel and empire.

ENGL 369: American Culture / American Film (Cheever)

American Culture / American Film considers twentieth century American cinema in the context of key cultural, historical and/or ideological movements and events. In spring 2026, we will investigate conspiracy films and their relation to what Richard Hofstadter called “the paranoid style” in American political and cultural life. Our investigation begins with the Cold War and the communist conspiracy films of the 1950s—a period when Hollywood was under intense governmental scrutiny as a potential source of “dangerous” propaganda—analyzing films such as Kazan’s *On the Waterfront* (1950), Siegel’s *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1955), Frankenheimer’s *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) and Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) alongside contemporaneous works of sociology, political science, and journalism to explore how postwar filmmakers created a conspiratorial aesthetic in response to government pressure on the industry. We then consider the evolution of conspiracy films during the late 1960s and 1970s as Hollywood responded to both the upheavals of countercultural protest and the industry-wide turmoil created by studio conglomeration. Under this lens, films such as Pakula’s *The Parallax View* (1974), Dixon’s *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973), Forbes’s *The Stepford Wives* (1975), and

Borden's *Born in Flames* (1983), emerge as key opportunities for filmmakers to reflect on the emergence of late-stage capitalism and the dramatic social upheaval created by the Watergate crisis, rising Black nationalism, and the women's movement. Taken as a whole, the course explores why and how conspiracy films emerge as a aesthetic response to the complicated political, cultural, and economic changes that define the second half of the twentieth century.

ENGL 379: Film Directors- Martin Scorsese and Stanley Kubrick (Lurie)

This course splits its focus on two very different, but equally accomplished filmmakers. While the movies of Stanley Kubrick and Martin Scorsese have been richly praised (with Kubrick continuing to make accomplished films), the directors' style, characters, and tone could not be more different. Kubrick is famous for his cool, some would even say clinical or cold detachment from his characters malice as well as intellectualism such as *Paths of Glory*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *The Shining*, *Full Metal Jacket*. Scorsese's films are filled with hot-headed, often hot-tempered characters (frequently men). *Gangs of New York*; *Mean Streets*, *Taxi Driver*; *Raging Bull*; *The King of Comedy* and *Goodfellas*.

ENGL 400: Art (and Nature) Amidst Adversity- Resistance, Resilience, Recovery (Outka)

It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet [people] die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there. — William Carlos Williams

This seminar will explore the role of art in difficult times, investigating how different forms of art may represent hardships, provide a blueprint for resistance, reimagine alternatives, and offer strategies for resilience and recovery. Engaging with UR's Eco-Corridor, we'll also study how art may help bring us into deep conversations with the natural world, reminding us of the illusory borders between humans and everything else. Designed as a capstone course for the English major or minor, the course questions why we make art and why we need art and nature to survive. Focusing on literature of the twentieth and twenty-first century, but also encompassing music and the visual and performing arts, the course engages works that directly depict how people use art under adverse conditions, and/or works of art that provide a reader, listener, or viewer with ways to navigate those conditions. Alongside the central works, we will read essays and talks by writers and artists on the creative process, as well as literary and historical analyses. Our focus will be on issues surrounding mental health, race, gender, sexual and political violence, and the climate crisis; while these are heavy topics, the emphasis of the course will be on art's transformative ability to envision change and provide aesthetic consolations.

CREATIVE WRITING

CRWR 300: Introduction to Creative Writing (Harlan)

This course introduces students to the fundamental elements of craft in both fiction and poetry. It is run as a workshop with discussion focusing on craft issues, assigned published work, and original student fiction and poetry.

CRWR 320: Selected Topics in Creative Writing - Genre Fiction (Harlan)

A workshop focused on writing with science fiction, fantasy, horror and other genre elements. In addition to critiquing original student work, discussion will interrogate relevant craft elements, published texts, and the utility of genre as a concept.

CRWR 312: Poetry Writing (Brian Henry)

Analysis of literary models. Discussion and evaluation of students' own poetry.

CRWR 319: Literary Editing/Publishing (Brian Henry)

Provides students the opportunity to learn about literary editing and publishing from both editors' and writers' perspectives.