English & Creative Writing
Course Descriptions – Spring 2027

ENGL 203: Children's Literature (Gruner)
Analysis of children's literature, from folk and fairy tales to today's stories, poems and novels for children

ENGL 204: Literature and Culture- Slavery & 19th Century U.S. Literature (Pelletier)
This course examines the way American slavery, as an economic and social system predicated on and justified by notions of racial difference, shaped the development of American literature. It shouldn't come as a surprise that American writers were obsessively discussing the institution of slavery and the ideas of race on which slavery was preserved. With this in mind, we will look at how conceptions of slavery developed and were debated throughout the nineteenth century, and the ways in which the literature of this period participated in this larger cultural conversation. We will explore how slavery preoccupied nineteenth-century authors and how this preoccupation led to diverse and oftentimes conflicting (and even bizarre) imaginings. Several key questions will guide our reading throughout the semester: What role did slavery play in the way writers imagined "America"? Did a national identity require an imagined "Africanist presence," as Toni Morrison argues? How was "whiteness" imagined as a racial category? Most importantly, we will come to appreciate how a variety of literary genres—including fiction, autobiography, pamphlets, legal confessions, among others—shaped, and were in turn shaped by, an institution that would eventually tear the nation apart.

ENGL 215: Reading Science Fiction and Fantasy (Korsnack)
Analysis of selected works of science fiction and fantasy. Possible authors included in the course range from Edgar Allan Poe and Jules Verne to Philip K. Dick, Harlan Ellison and Ursula K. LeGuin to writers not typically identified with the genre. Students will consider a variety of interpretive frameworks (formal, psychological, feminist and others)through which literary sci-fi and fantasy are frequently read. Texts will include short stories, novels and film.

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 continues to evolve in the 21st. *Introduction to Film Studies* examines feature filmmaking as 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 examining 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 exploring 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 222: Short Fiction (Harlan)

Analysis of short fiction as a means of defining its many formal and philosophical expressions.

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, and the culture at large. From A Midsummer Night's Dreamand 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.

ENGL 241: Witches in Literature and Film (Snaza)

This class will ask what we mean by "witches" and "witchcraft," and explore the cultural, political, and economic work those concepts have done. Our attention will often be on the roles of gender and sexuality in those cultural discourses, and we will generally approach this intersectionally, thinking about how colonialism, capitalism, and religion shape contextually-specific understandings of witches. We will ask about the ontological status of witchcraft—is it "real"?—and we will ask about epistemology: how do we know whether witchcraft is "real" or not? This set of questions guides the course's attention to allegory: a particular representational structure in which a story being told is both what it appears to be, and also a "figurative" telling of or commentary on some other event, usually one in the present. Alongside literature and film, the class will look at how witchcraft has been understood by historians, cultural critics, and feminist theorists. Literature will include Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the fairy tales "Hansel and Gretel" and "Snow White," Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Maryse Condé's *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, and Afia Atakora's *Conjure Women*. Films will likely include *Häxan*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Blair Witch Project*, *The VVitch*, and *The Craft*. We will read analytic texts by Kristen Sollée, Carlo Ginzburg, Jules Michelet, Silvia Federici, and Barbara Ehrenreich and Dierdre English.

ENGL 242: Introduction to Environmental Literature (Outka)

In this course, we investigate literary works that engage with the environment, moving from creation stories and classic 19th century American texts to key works of the 20th and 21st century. Throughout the semester, we explore the symbiotic relations between nature and *representations* of nature, tracing how the natural world shapes stories and metaphors—and how stories and metaphors profoundly shape nature in turn. Through our field notes, writing, and reading, we engage in conversations with the natural world and start to unravel the illusory borders between human and non-human nature. Alongside the literature, we study the ecological crises of our time, analyzing how some stories and frameworks may contribute to these crises, and others may remind us of all that's worth saving, including ourselves. The stories we tell and the metaphors we use about the natural world have vast consequences, and learning to analyze them is critical both to address our ecological emergency and to create new stories about our planet's future. The course serves as an introduction to the English major or minor and may count as an Environmental Studies elective, or for the Sustainability Minor (Social Sustainability elective). It's also part of the University's general education curriculum and fulfills the Literary and Textual Inquiry area and one of the Written Communications focus areas.

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 European imperial projects 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 a more attentive and insightful reader of literary texts, learn how novels work and what preoccupies contemporary U.S. American writers, and become a more persuasive and elegant writer of arguments.

ENGL 299: American Expatriates (Brauer)

This course explores how the experience of being an expatriate has provided American writers with a vantage point from which to critically engage notions of American identity. Through a focus on Paris in the 20th century, students will consider how artists' Americanness impacted their experience overseas and also how their experience abroad shaped their ongoing notions of themselves as Americans and of "America" itself. That dynamic tension will center our engagement with the fiction, memoirs, poetry, and criticism that we will read. Writers will include Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, James Baldwin, Julia Child, Josephine Baker, and more.

ENGL 299: Food in Literature (Ireland)

Food in literature is rarely just sustenance; it often stands in for culture, class, character, or morality. This course examines the presence and function of food in literature to see how writers use food as a tool for

building characters and developing narratives. We will look at texts spanning the premodern to the present. Authors include Thomas Aquinas, Roald Dahl, Anthony Bourdain, and Karen Russell.

ENGL 325: Age of the American Renaissance (Pelletier)

In this course, we will explore the emergence of America's first distinctive literary and intellectual tradition—what F.O. Matthiessen in 1941 called the "American Renaissance." What inspired this tradition? What were some of its primary preoccupations? In addition to answering these questions, we will investigate so-called "marginal" literatures that were coterminous with the Renaissance—those texts (and authors) that existed at the cultural periphery but were ultimately no less important, no less transformative; these were the cultural reformers, the early feminists, the abolitionists. We will scrutinize the designation "American Renaissance" in order to uncover its ideological underpinnings. Why this designation? Why these authors and not others? Because it is specifically an "American" renaissance, we will pay close attention to the national (though often anti-nationalist and anti-imperialist) arguments that this literature makes.

ENGL 330: Chaucer and Friends (Ireland)

Fourteenth-century poet Geoffrey Chaucer is a slice-of-life writer whose body of work reads like a greatest hits of human nature. But Chaucer was a translator as well as a writer who drew much of his own material from Latin, Italian, and French sources. This class surveys works from Chaucer in the original Middle English as well as analogues and source texts by writers such as Ovid, Boccaccio, Marie de France, and Guillame de Loris. Texts will include selections from *The Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and shorter works such as *The Book of the Duchess*.

ENGL 330: Common Law and Literature (Ireland)

Common law has been the basis of the legal systems in much of the English-speaking world since its introduction to England in 1066. The primacy of common law in those areas, however, hasn't been without conflict, and with conflict comes storytelling. In this class, we'll look at the early narratives surrounding common law and its (mis)applications in medieval England, then trace its development and its intersection with fictional narratives over the following centuries in Britain and its former colonies. We'll look at a variety of medieval and early modern sources, including poems, chronicles, and law itself, as well as writers such as Charles Dickens, Bruce Chatwin, and Peter Carey.

ENGL 347: Politics, Social Change, and Modern Drama (Outka)

In this course, we'll explore the literary history of western drama from the late 19th century to the current day, moving from Henrik Ibsen's ground-breaking naturalism, to abstract modernist rebellions, and finally to contemporary drama's new variations. It considers how playwrights alter the dramatic form—and to what end—and what distinguishes the theater from other artistic endeavors. Throughout the semester, we return to the question of social reform and the theater, asking how different playwrights saw their work in relation to, and even as a remedy for, various social, political, and cultural concerns. We explore how issues surrounding race, gender, sexuality, orientation, nation, politics, and class weave their way into the written play and its performance. We explore the performative elements of the plays by producing a written scene study, doing in class readings, and analyzing recorded clips.*** Throughout the semester, we'll also investigate how questions of work, career, and meaning weave through these plays, and—in partnership with Career Services—we will parallel these discussions with opportunities to explore your own path, and to study how the research, analysis, presenting, and writing we do builds toward your future work.

ENGL 370: The Contemporary First-Person Novel (Manganaro)

It's not just Instagram and TikTok but also novels: we are living in an age that favors the first-person. In popular romance fiction, the demand for first- over third-person is clear to the point that authors have reported shifting to exclusively first-person narratives to meet consumer demands. Across the landscape of celebrated literary fiction in the last two decades, we can also see a notable rise in experiments with the first-person mode, centrally in the category of "autofiction," which blends fiction with nonfiction/memoir. Some literary critics understand our moment as one of "postfiction," distinguished by its disinterest in the traditional categories of a "fictional novel" in which an omniscient third-person narrator sets up a fictional world with made-up characters. In this class, we will read a collection of twenty-first-century novels that experiment with the first-person mode. We will ask about what is new to this moment and will also consider some of the limits and potentials of the first-person. We will consider a wide range of kinds of first-person novels from around the globe (some in translation), including works by W.G. Sebald (German), Han Kang (Korean), Rachel Cusk (British), Mircea Cartarescu (Romanian), Teju Cole (Nigerian-American), Jon Fosse (Norwegian), and Patricia Lockwood (American). We will also consider literary critism reflecting on the book market, late capitalism, social media, and more.

ENGL 370: Leonard Cohen (Schwartz)

This is a course in the words and music of one of the most important North American songwriters of the second half of the 20th Century. Born in 1934, Leonard Cohen was the child of a privileged Montreal Jewish family, but rather than take a place in the family business and in that community, he turned to writing. He published four books of poetry and two novels between 1956 and 1966, achieving a modest level of local acclaim before trying his hand at songwriting and finding himself suddenly and unexpectedly famous all over the world. In this course, we will be primarily concerned with the songs he wrote and the recordings he made over the subsequent 50 years of his career in music, although we will spend some time reading selections from his early poetry and fiction (and some of the later poetry as well—he continued writing and published 5 more collections). Since his death in 2016, more and more posthumous archival materials and works of criticism and biography have been released giving us a fuller picture of Cohen's life, career, and practice as an artist. We are also in a good position to witness and consider the complex and different ways in which Cohen has been valued and understood not just as an artist, but as a celebrity of a certain kind (somewhere between "cult figure" and "household name"). We will also explore some interesting questions about the relationship between words and music in the art of popular song, the relationship between poetry and popular music as art forms themselves, about vocal style, and about the way songwriters perform their own music and what happens when others perform it. Although not particularly complex or sophisticated in their musical language, Cohen's songs have an unconventional musical originality to them that works in fascinating ways with the poetic intensity of their lyrics, and they draw on a wide array of generic and cultural influences and on a complex blend of different religious and cultural traditions. Cohen was also deeply concerned with the meaning and purposes of art, often torn between very high claims and strikingly modest or critical caveats, and he is one of a small set of artists who not only produced work at the highest level of ambition and achievement right up until their death at an old age, but whose later work is also held by many to be, by several measures, richer, deeper, and more complex than their earlier work. We will carefully consider what it is about the songs that make them so compelling to so many and what we are to make of them ourselves against the backdrop of Cohen's life and the cultural history of the late 20th and the early 21st centuries.

ENGL 400: Radical Romanticism (Manganaro)

The "Romantic era" in English literary history (~1790–1830) marked major lasting transformations in the idea of what literature is and what literature is for. This junior/senior seminar will focus on the Romantic movement through a particular angle: literature's relationship to idealistic (radical) politics. This seminar will strictly focus on five related figures, who we can consider as comprising an "extended family." Each of these figures stood outside of the mainstream and together pushed the notion that the arts—particularly, the literary imagination—can change the world. (1) **Mary Wollstonecraft**, talented novelist and memoirist and author of arguably the first feminist treatise in English, the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792); (2) Wollstonecraft's husband **William Godwin**, controversial atheist and anarchist philosopher and suspense novelist ; (3) their daughter, who would take the name **Mary Shelley**, the author of *Frankenstein* (1818); (4) her husband the poet **Percy Shelley**, who would alter the trajectory of English poetry and author the manifesto, *A Defense of Poetry* (written in 1821); and (5) the Shelleys' close friend, the inimitable poet and personality, **Lord Byron**. This intensive seminar will allow a deep-dive in the thought and work of each respective figure. Further, it will give us occasion to think with them about the broader question about literature in relationship to social and political change.

ENGL 400: Reading Like a Feminist (Snaza)

Reading Like a Feminist is a junior/senior seminar in English on the history of feminist literary criticism, focusing on work produced between the 1950s and 1990s. We will explore how a feminist politics, and therefore a feminist standpoint, intersects with other currents in the history of literary criticism. We will necessarily ask what "feminist" means across this history, partly in relation to wider political struggles and intellectual currents beyond literary studies. We will also consider what "criticism" itself means, how it works, and what it can accomplish. For the most part, we will read the literary texts the feminist critics engage, and many of those are what would be considered "canonical" English literature. In so doing, we ask what happens when new perspectives–like feminism–offer us new questions for older texts, unsettling received ideas about what matters in those texts and what meanings they generate.

Likely literary authors include William Shakespeare, Mary Shelley, Charlotte Brontë, Nella Larsen, and Gwendolyn Brooks. Feminist critics may include Carolyn Heilbrun, Hélène Cixous, Laura Mulvey, Hortense Spillers, Sandra Gilman and Susan Gubar, Barbara Johnson, Gayatri Spivak, Susan Stryker, Sylvia Wynter, and Judith Butler.

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***FMST 397 (2): ST Lights, Camera, Virginia! Curating Virginia's Film History (Cheever)**

"*Lights, Camera, Virginia!* Curating Virginia's Film History" will provide students with first-hand experience helping to curate a museum exhibit at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, a key cultural institution in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In collaboration with the exhibit's curators, students will learn how to conceptualize, research, and develop a museum exhibit exploring Virginia's multifaceted interactions with American cinema cultures. Through research at the Library of Virginia and in other key archives, students will uncover Virginia's exhibition history—from the movie palaces and main street theaters of the 1920s and 1930s to the suburban multiplexes of the 1980s and 1990s and the IMAX and 3-D experiences of today. They will analyze screened representation of Virginia's history, selecting among noteworthy films and programs for inclusion in the exhibit, such as Griffith's *America* (1924), Disney's *Pocohontas* (1995), Affleck's *Argo* (2012), Spielberg's *Lincoln* (2015), and Strong's *Dopesick* (2021). And students will document Virginia's developing expertise in film production, examining films produced in the state and interviewing the location scouts, lighting experts, costume designers, and script analysts whose work shapes audience experiences far beyond the Commonwealth. Coursework will be project-based and develop students' skills in archival research, historical analysis, and project design. The course will introduce students to work in the public humanities, provide opportunities to share Virginia's film history with a broader audience, foster connections with a larger community, and contribute to a shared understanding of how movies and moviemaking shape our world. In addition, students will have the opportunity to apply for summer research funding to continue working on the exhibit.

(* This course counts toward the English Major)

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CRWR 300: Introduction to Creative Writing (Harlan)

An introduction to general principles. Students' fiction and poetry receive critical evaluation through workshops and conferences. The course is designed to improve students' creative and critical faculties through exposure to a variety of styles and genres in contemporary literature, e.g., poetry, fiction, drama, creative nonfiction, and hybrid forms. The course emphasizes the finished product as well as the writing process, which includes not only putting words on paper, but also reading, analysis, and revision. Students examine forms and structures, word choice, line lengths and line breaks, sentences, paragraphs, beginnings and endings, rhetorical strategies, cadences and music, tone and voice, and syntax and diction. Class sessions include variations of the following: writing exercises, craft talks, discussion about the assigned readings, and discussion of student work.

CRWR 312: Poetry Writing (Henry)

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

CRWR 319: Literary Editing/Publishing (Henry)

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