

ENGLISH & CREATIVE WRITING COURSE OFFERINGS

❖ FALL 2025 ❖



ENGLISH

ENGL 204: Literature and Culture - 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 race 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 race and 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 in contrast to other racialized identities? 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 219: INTRODUCTION TO DRAMA AND THEATER – Browder

Introduction to basic concepts of drama and theater, including the relationship between drama as text and as spectacle and the relation of drama to other genres and art forms. Examination of significant theatrical traditions that have influenced modern drama.

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 299: ST: 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. Students will consider how their 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 and tension will center our engagement with the novels, memoirs, and criticism that we will read. Writers will include Henry James, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, James Baldwin and more.

ENGL 299: ST: Wild Metaphors: Introduction to Environmental Literature - Outka

In this course, we'll investigate literary works that engage with the environment, moving from creation stories, to classic 19th century American texts, to key works of the 20th and 21st century. Throughout the semester, we'll 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'll engage in conversations with the natural world and start to unravel the illusory borders between human and non-human nature. Alongside the literature, we'll 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 FSLT and (for rising first and second years) both the Literary and Textual Inquiry area and one of the Written Communications focus areas.

ENGL 299: ST: Food, Culture, and Narrative - Ireland

Deciding on food is a matter of preference and taste; it's also a matter of regionality, economics, and cultural context. This class will examine what we eat, why we eat it, and how we talk about it, using the University and the City of Richmond as case studies. We'll

encounter various narratives—personal, historical, theoretical-- in the process. This course incorporates field work and community-based learning as well as film, short stories, nonfiction essays and articles, and scholarly writing.

ENGL 308: The Idea of the Renaissance: Self, History, and Knowledge - Russell (Interdisciplinary Studies in the Middle Ages and Renaissance)

This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to the Renaissance. By studying developments in art, literature, philosophy, and political thought together, we will explore how the period's intellectual and artistic achievements emerged from a dynamic interplay of competing ideas rather than a seamless progression from medieval to modern worldviews. For example, analyzing Luther's *Freedom of a Christian* alongside Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, Michelangelo's *Sistine Ceiling*, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* will deepen our understanding of the complex and sometimes contradictory early modern conceptions of human nature, selfhood, and of their relation to knowledge and the divine. Similarly, examining Veronica Franco's poetry in dialogue with Titian's and Leonardo's female portraits will reveal how the "feminine" was constructed and contested across different cultural and artistic forms. By moving beyond static disciplinary boundaries, we will be better able to approach the Renaissance as a period defined by transition, innovation, and productive contradictions.

ENGL 325: 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 334: American Indian Literatures - Siebert

We will study authors representing a variety of contemporary Indigenous nations and working in different novelistic genres, from historical novels to postmodern fiction. We will consider them in the context of the United States colonial history and present, Indigenous nations' contemporary attempts to reassert or regain their political sovereignty, and the long legacy of hypervisibility of stereotyped Indians in American popular culture. Authors studied Louise Erdrich, Gordon Henry, Leanne Howe, Stephen Graham Jones, Layli Long Soldier, Tommy Orange, Tomy Pico, Mona Powers.

ENGL 346: Twentieth-Century British and Irish Literature - Outka

In this course, we will explore the radical evolution of literary form and style in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Britain and the areas it occupied. Writers in this century reimagine the structure of the novel, the poem, and the play; challenge existing norms surrounding sexuality, gender, race, and class; and find innovative ways to reimagine national identity and political systems. Over the course of the semester, we'll investigate the far-reaching impacts of British imperialism and colonial occupation, as well as the devastation wrought by two world wars and two pandemics. We'll study how these writers offer new ways to understand the role of literature and art within a society—and the role of the individual within that society. As we move from England to British occupied Ireland and Nigeria, to Roman occupied London, we'll consider how to define “British” literature and the limitations of classifying literature along national lines.

ENGL 368: History and Aesthetics of Film - Cheever

This fall ENGL 368 considers the New Hollywood era of American cinema: the films of the late 1960s and 70s that reshaped American film culture during a tumultuous decade. This period was dominated by a new generation of filmmakers who grew up watching classical Hollywood cinema, frequently attended film school, immersed themselves in the international art cinema, experimented with genre, and created indelible movies such as Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972) and Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975). Our work will investigate the economic, social, and cultural circumstances that informed the New Hollywood moment and the aesthetic and thematic preoccupations that dominate its films—from the personal cinema of Mike Nichol's *The Graduate* to the blockbuster filmmaking of George Lucas's *Star Wars*. We will also explore the rise of independent cinemas such as the L.A. Rebellion (Burnett's *Killer of Sheep*) and the New Women's cinema (Weill's *Girlfriends*) that imagined themselves in opposition to traditional Hollywood products. Our discussions consider such questions as: How did these filmmakers understand their practice relative to the film cultures that preceded them? To the dramatic cultural and social changes of the 1960s and 1970s? And how did those understandings shape the films they produced, and the aesthetic and thematic preoccupations embodied within them? Finally, we will ask: what brought about the end of the New Hollywood moment? How did that moment shape the films that followed from it—the post-studio era of the 1980s and the dramatic increase in independent productions of the 1990s?

ENGL 400: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Literature - Russell

This seminar will explore the complex and often contradictory ways love and marriage were represented (or constructed) in Early Modern literature, spanning poetry, prose, and drama from Italy, France, and England. We will examine how marriage functioned not only in the context of personal relationships but also as a social, economic, and religious institution shaped by the rise of Protestant theology, changing legal frameworks, and shifting gender

norms. Starting with selections from Petrarch's influential *Scattered Rhymes*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron*, we will examine visions of love and marriage ranging from lyric idealization to provocative and/or troubling narratives about polyamory, adultery, and female submission that often present women as both strategists and victims within patriarchal structures. We will continue to explore representations of gender, desire, and marriage in selections of poems by Wyatt, Spenser, Donne, and Louise Labé, including the sensual and defiant verse of Veronica Franco. We will also investigate these topics in a selection of dramatic works that will include Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and its subversive counterpart, Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*, Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl*, and Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, which interrogate female agency, marital power struggles, and sexual politics. The seminar will conclude with Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, which offers an irreverent take on love, marriage, and libertinism from one of the period's most significant female playwrights.

ENGL 400: Faulkner: Sound, Race, and Fury – Lurie

Winner of the 1950 Nobel Prize in literature, William Faulkner was among the most important American writers of the twentieth century. Raised in Mississippi in the Jim Crow era, his fiction attended to many of the conflicts and troubles of his native region—none more meaningful than race. Faulkner's novels are famous for their formal difficulty, but as we'll learn, their challenging use of interior monologue, fragmentation, and multiple points of view are part of his way of showing the social ills of the American South. We'll read his major novelistic accomplishments and see what Faulkner's modernism adds to our sense of American cultural history as well as literary history. In addition to novels such as *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932) and others, we'll also read several of Faulkner's short stories. The course's focus on a single author furnishes a coherent as well as encompassing approach to a key figure. We'll consider Faulkner's ongoing relevance to our contemporary political climate and the example of what a focus on any particular writer offers you as an English major.

CREATIVE WRITING

CREATIVE WRITING 300: Introduction to Creative Writing - Stevens

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.

CREATIVE WRITING 311: Fiction Writing – Harlan

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

CREATIVE WRITING 401: Creative Writing Portfolio – Stevens

An advanced creative writing course in which students pursue a semester-long project or portfolio in any genre (poetry, fiction, drama, creative nonfiction, screenwriting, multimedia, etc.) and workshop their works in progress. Appropriate for students working in traditional forms (e.g. short-story, poetry, memoir, etc.) or students working in forms not typically covered by other writing courses (e.g. graphic novel, screenplay, multimedia, etc.). May be repeated once for credit, but only one may count towards the minor in Creative Writing.