

ENGLISH & CREATIVE WRITING COURSES

SPRING 2025

English

ENGL 206: Readings in American Literature - Lurie

This course introduces students to the main tenets and figures of American literature across three centuries. We orient our discussion with Frederick Douglass's 1845 *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave*, a foundational work in the ongoing struggle for equity in our country. We will consider several other writers from the middle 19th century such as Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, and Poe, most of whom address the concerns over race that inform Douglass's memoir. We'll then read key 20th century poets and fiction writers who helped shape our literature as distinctly modern such as Robert Frost, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, and William Faulkner. Like our earlier readings, these authors' works will be shorter: stories or poems. After Faulkner we consider his influence on a towering figure in American literature, Toni Morrison, and her 1987, *Beloved* as well as Jesmyn Ward, a contemporary novelist whose 2017 *Sing, Unburied Sing* extends several writers' legacy and their urgent social plea into the 21st century.

ENGL 220/FMST 201: Introduction to Film Studies - Cheever

Alternatively called "pictures," "talkies," "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 social issues 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 Western invite us to think about US expansion and the nature of colonization, the relations between different races, and the uses of violence? 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

ENGL 224: GREAT NOVELS - Manganaro

What are novels? How do we read novels? Why do we read novels? In this course, we will take up these three questions by carefully reading **five** or **six** very different (all highly acclaimed) novels from the 19th century to the 21st century. By taking on a collection of very different works, we will learn about the different capacities of the novel form and also a bit about its history and evolution in the last few centuries. This is a class that is all about immersing ourselves in the very different worlds of these novels. It is structured around class discussion with the expectation that students will do the assigned reading for the day and will come to class prepared with things to say.

ENGL 234: Shakespeare - Russell

This course introduces students to a selection of Shakespeare's comedies, histories, tragedies, and romances, works that have 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*.

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

Six historical novels by U.S. American writers published in the last two 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 via 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: 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 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.

ENGL 299: Food and Literature - Ireland

Representations of food in literature spanning the premodern to the present. Authors include John Keats, Nora Ephron, Anthony Bourdain, and M.F.K. Fisher.

ENGL 299: 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 walks, 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 return us to the wild and 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.

ENGL 304: Shakespeare Then and Now: Desire, Gender, and Identities - Russell

In this course, we will engage with plays by Shakespeare that investigate and often question how identity is constructed or performed in the context of cultural norms about race, religion, sexuality, gender, and gender roles. As we will see, female characters play a crucial role in defining or provoking the comic, tragic, or mixed perspectives of these works. In important ways, these characters (who were played by young male actors!) often undermine and sometimes actively resist patriarchally circumscribed roles, destabilizing traditional systems of meaning. During the course, we will also consider Shakespeare's uniquely ongoing "presence" in Western culture. Now well into the 21st Century, we continue to perform, adapt, and allude to Shakespeare in our daily lives, in our literature, media, film, and television. Shakespeare has become a kind of shared "language" that we

(and increasingly across the rest of the globe as well) turn to consistently to address problems and make meaning. Investigating Shakespeare, therefore, also requires we explore this phenomenon. We will examine some films, one television series (*Breaking Bad*, which can be read as adapting *Macbeth*), and a contemporary novel to study different ways in which his work is being "translated" or appropriated.

ENGL 330: ORIGINS OF THE NOVEL - Manganaro

The novel may be the most important and prestigious Western art form of the last 200 years. But it could not have been easily identified or defined prior to 1800, and it did not exist at all prior to the 1670s. Where did it come from? How did this all-important literary form come into being?

In this class, we will look at the origins of the novel form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We will learn about how and why prose narratives in books for individual readers took on a newly important status in Europe in these years, especially in the 1700s. We will also think about what made these fictional prose narratives different from earlier dominant narrative forms (the epic, the chivalric romance, the courtly romance, the spiritual autobiography) and what about them allowed the potential for wild experimentation in representations of reality. These works will surprise for their inventiveness and formal instabilities prior to the established conventions of "the novel form"—for instance, prior to the accomplished works of Jane Austen in the 1810s. We will focus especially on the notion of "realism" as well as on the idea that

fictional narratives should provide “moral instruction.” Texts we will consider include *Don Quixote* (1615) by Miguel de Cervantes, *The Princess de Clèves* (1678) by Madame de Lafayette, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe, *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) by Daniel Defoe, *Fantomina* (1725) by Eliza Haywood, *Pamela* (1740) by Samuel Richardson, and *The Life of Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1767) by Laurence Sterne. Learning what “the novel” grew out of will greatly defamiliarize “the novel” as we know it today and will help us look anew at this form we thought we knew.

ENGL 330: Chaucer - Ireland

Surveys works from fourteenth-century poet Geoffrey Chaucer in the original Middle English. Texts will include selections from *The Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and shorter works such as *The Legend of Good Women*.

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, seeing live productions (including *Fat Ham* at the Virginia Rep), and analyzing recorded clips. New this year: 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 379: Film Directors: Alfred Hitchcock and his Heirs - Cheever

In spring 2025, ENGL 379 will focus on the cinema of Alfred Hitchcock, studying his aesthetic concerns, thematic preoccupations, and considerable impact on late-twentieth century filmmaking. Together we will investigate what makes a Hitchcock film *Hitchcockian*: the characteristics and concepts unifying the work of one of the twentieth century’s most prolific and influential directors. Our discussions will focus on how Hitchcock’s films engage with the 20th century’s dominant aesthetic traditions and cultural ideologies—both British and American, and concerning class and modernity, gender and sexual orientation, and state and nation. Given recent allegations about Hitchcock’s on-set behavior, we will also explore whether and how such accusations might shape our understanding of his films. Lastly, we will investigate the ways more recent filmmakers are grappling cinematically with Hitchcock’s complicated legacy. The course will conclude with a selection of films and filmmakers who either explicitly or implicitly

deploy Hitchcockian styles and motifs within their own cinemas. Examining films by Pedro Almodóvar, Kathryn Bigelow, Jane Campion, Boon Jong-Ho, and Jordan Peele, we will consider how a new generation of filmmakers working out of different national and cultural traditions engages with Hitchcock's creative legacy. By the end of the semester, students will have learned the theory and practice of director-focused film criticism, cultivated their skills in close and sustained visual and cultural analysis, and further developed their talents for critical thinking, nuanced evaluation, and persuasive argumentation.

ENGL 399: Outlaws – Ireland

A transhistorical study of the character of the outlaw from the Middle Ages to the twenty-first century. Course materials include poetry, fiction, film, and music.

ENGL 399: Faulkner: Before and After - Lurie

This course focuses on the significance of William Faulkner. We will read a number of his major novels and representative stories; in so doing we will come to understand his centrality to the American literary canon as well as learn to navigate his well-known formal challenges and their role in shaping literary Modernism. Importantly, we will also consider several influences on Faulkner and, after his life, his own impact on later artists. Faulkner's influences include earlier writers as well as filmmakers, some of whom Faulkner's work critiqued indirectly if not outright. Later and contemporary authors who responded to Faulkner such as Toni Morrison or, in cinema, the Coen brothers allow us to see how literary history and the idea of "influence" can work productively and as an ongoing dynamic, one in which the critical intervention is important and ongoing and that attends to the author's – and earlier scholars' – own limitations or blind spots.

English 400 Jr/Sr seminar: Victorian Experiments in Fictional Form – Gruner

Victorian writers are (in)famous for their long books. While most were not, as the stereotype goes, paid by the word, nonetheless their productions can be dauntingly long for the modern reader. In this course we'll take the time to explore what length (and other formal considerations) can do for us as readers, and for the tales Victorian writers told. We will tackle three hefty, engaging, innovative fictions: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's novel-in-verse, *Aurora Leigh*, Wilkie Collins's epistolary detective novel, *The Moonstone*, and George Eliot's "study of provincial life," *Middlemarch*. We will endeavor to read these texts slowly and immersively, exploring both the ways they innovated over 150 years ago, and what they mean to readers today. The course will involve both a substantial reading load and frequent writing, both formal and informal, and will culminate in a research paper and presentation.

ENGL 400: John Milton – Schwartz

Milton was a writer of tremendous (and tremendously self-conscious) ambition who produced over the course of a long career a set of texts (poems, plays, polemics, and works of scholarship) that suggests one of the most powerfully coherent examples in the English literary tradition of what Michel Foucault called the “author-function.” The “Miltonic” work presents not only a persona, but a narrative as well: the drama of one human being trying to present what he calls in one of his sonnets, “his account,” a tale that is also an “accounting for,” a justifying explanation of how and why things are the way they are (and how they might be improved, especially when it comes to the importance of human liberty). In this course, we will read a selection of his shorter poems along with *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes*, and selections from his political and scholarly prose (including all of *Areopagitica*), paying close attention to the ways in which he conceived of and then reconceived of himself as an author in response to the sometimes rapidly changing personal and historical circumstances that he confronted (in particular, the upheaval of the English Civil War, the execution of Charles I, which Milton defended, the subsequent Interregnum, in whose government Milton served, and finally the restoration of the English monarchy, which led to Milton’s arrest and almost to his execution—he narrowly escaped that fate). Because he was also a deeply learned writer, we will spend a good deal of time thinking about the literary and intellectual backgrounds relevant to his work as we examine the ways in which he absorbed and rethought, resisted and rewrote what he understood to be his cultural inheritance, and how he did so in accordance with a set of strongly-held and often highly idiosyncratic religious and political views. Finally, because his achievement and its abiding influence ultimately rest on his technical mastery of the craft of writing, as well as the content and effects of his works, we will pay a good deal of attention to the structure and style of his verse and prose. Above all, our task will be to establish a flexible, open-ended (and open-minded) relationship with this writer, whose work still has an uncanny power to make us think more carefully and intensely about the human condition, overwhelming the “vast abrupt” that separates us from the time and place in which it was written.

Creative Writing

CRWR 300: Introduction to Creative Writing – Stevens

This is the gateway course to the University of Richmond’s upper-level creative writing courses. It introduces students to the theoretical and practical elements of crafting imaginative work in various genres, including fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. Students will produce original manuscripts, critique peer manuscripts, respond to professional writing samples, complete exercises to hone their craft, and participate in regular conversations about the writing process.

This course does not assume any previous experience in creative writing. However, it does assume that all students are active, interested readers whose experience with texts—both inside and outside the classroom—fuels a desire to write creatively. Students who do not read on a

voluntary basis may have difficulty with the discipline. This course satisfies the Written Communication IFA in the new General Education Curriculum.

CRWR 312: Poetry Writing – Henry

Students will write poems, workshop poems, and read and discuss recently published poetry books.

CRWR 319: Literary Editing/Publishing – Henry

This course provides a multi-faceted view of literary editing and publishing and is designed to give students the opportunity to serve as an editor, work with an editor, and submit work to editors.

Students will explore the various aesthetic, practical, and ethical issues of editing and publishing while learning about contemporary literary culture and evaluating unpublished work for potential publication. Students' final project is creating their own online literary magazine. Many students who've taken the course have gone on to work in book and magazine publishing, to work as literary agents, or to become published writers.