

Course Descriptions – Fall 2009

ENGL 509 Shakespeare Studies: Comedies

N. Liebler, Wednesdays 5:30 – 8:00 PM

This course examines Shakespeare's major comedies in the light of comic theory and practice from Ancient Greek and Roman satire to the present. We study various modes and patterns of Shakespearean comedy: festive, city, satirical, as well as his use of Commedia dell'Arte traditions, the figures of Clown and Fool, comedy as social and political corrective, and as the genre of accommodation. Among the questions we address that may of particular interest to students are: why isn't Shakespearean comedy funny? Why is *The Merchant of Venice* considered a comedy? Why does Shakespeare offer scenes of domestic violence in his comedies? Why does Shakespearean comedy require marriage at the end of the play? What is the difference between Shakespearean comedy and tragedy, and between Shakespeare's comedies and those of his contemporaries? These and similar inquiries form the core of our study; students are welcome to bring in any enduring and/or vexing questions they may have.

ENGL 555 American Romanticism

M. Elbert

Tuesday 8:15 – 10:45 PM

Objective: To discuss literary works of American Romantics, more specifically, of American Transcendentalists, in relationship to social, cultural, and political movements of the mid-nineteenth century. Obviously, issues of gender, race, and class will be important to our analysis. In addition, we will discuss the aesthetics of Transcendentalism—what kind of audience were these Idealist writers hoping for, and how did they define the American literary scene? How did spiritual ideas implicit in the Transcendentalist movement challenge the materialistic values of the emerging industrial nation? What was the relationship between and among the three major writers we are studying? What was so new and innovative about the ideas expressed by Transcendentalists? Why did Emerson seem to become the center of the Transcendentalist circle; why did he become the sage of Concord—and Thoreau the hermit of Concord? And why were so many intellectuals afraid of Margaret Fuller? We will also analyze how these thinkers helped redefine the political landscape, through their social activism (as abolitionists and, in general, as crusaders for justice). The focus will be on Emerson, Thoreau, and Fuller, though other Transcendentalists will be discussed or read as well.

ENGL 590 Rhetorical Theories & Teaching of Writing

B. Whitney

Tuesday 5:30 – 8:00 PM

Rhetorical Theories and the Teaching of Writing. An inquiry into the rhetorical and theoretical roots of current questions, methods and practices of writing instruction--to investigate the possibility that both teaching writing and writing itself are deeply constructed endeavors, rooted in structures of language, perception, knowing and being that are often discussed in theoretical discourse.

ENGL 601 Seminar in American Literature: Contemporary American Drama

R. Jacobs

Mondays 5:30-8:00 PM

The focus of this graduate seminar is American Drama written since 1960. We will pay particular attention to the way in which thematic and stylistic approaches to drama in

America have evolved over the course of the past half-century. Readings include works by playwrights such as Edward Albee, David Mamet, Sam Shepard, Beth Henley, Marsha Norman, Suzan-Lori Parks, John Guare, August Wilson, Tony Kushner and other contemporary dramatists. Students will be expected to write critically about the works, develop individual research projects and present their work to the seminar over the course of the semester.

ENGL 605 Seminar: Literary Research

P. Matthew

Mondays 5:30 – 8:00PM

ENLT 602-02: Seminar in International Literature: Latin American Novel

J. Lorenz Wednesdays 5:30 – 8:00 PM

This course will focus on the Latin American Novel in the 20th Century, but we will begin with the great Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis who wrote most of his fiction in the late 19th Century. His novel *POSTHUMOUS MEMOIRS* is a scathing critique of the Brazilian elite, a critique told from the point of view of a dead man. From there we will explore the fiction of Jorge Luis Borges, best known for his short stories; his fantastic and philosophical speculations and his self-reflexive narratives have influenced writers across the globe. We will read *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, exploring such issues as "magical realism" and literature as national allegory. We will read *KISS OF THE SPIDERWOMAN* by Manuel Puig, which addresses the "dirty war" of Argentina and retells stories based on filmic texts in order to address themes of sexuality, violence and interrogation. We most likely will return to Brazilian literature with the innovative work of Clarice Lispector, whose novels explore existentialist questions within a middle-class feminist perspective. We will finish the semester with a more recent novel, perhaps by Roberto Bolano. Students can expect to write two formal papers, along with short responses to our readings throughout the semester. Regular class participation by students is absolutely essential!

ENLT 602: Seminar in International Literature: Science Fiction

W. Nielsen Sec 02 W 8:15-10:45 PM

This course investigates science fiction and genre-defining works from varying time periods, making this an excellent class for first-time sci-fi readers and enthusiasts alike. We will focus on those qualities that distinguish science fiction ("fiction of the future that speculates and extrapolates from the physical and social sciences") and its history. Discussion topics include utopias/dystopias, the limits of being human, gender and class relations, and the uncanny. These ideas will lead us to better understand the role SF plays in modern ecocriticism, as well as woman writers' contributions to these conversations. Readings will range from novels and/or novellas from authors such as E.T.A. Hoffmann (*The Sandman*), Zamyatin (*We*), Octavia Butler (*Parable of the Talents*), and R. Sawyer (*Hominids*); short stories by Francis Bacon (*New Atlantis*) Margaret Atwood, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Philip K. Dick (of *Minority Report* and *Total Recall*/fame); and polemical texts.