

## SPECIAL TOPICS COURSE PROPOSALS

### POOL A (2000- AND 3000-LEVEL)

#### **ENGL 2950/ENGL 3212/ENGL 4950: The South on Film (proposed by Atkinson)**

In this course, we will study how the American South has been represented in film from the earliest days of cinema in the United States to the present. As we learn about the formal properties of film and trace historical developments in American cinema, we will consider how film has shaped and been shaped by attitudes and ideas about the South. We will screen and discuss a combination of clips from selected films as well as watching at least a few films in their entirety. *Potential films: The Birth of a Nation (1915), Gone with the Wind (1939), The Southerner (1945), God's Little Acre (1958), Inherit the Wind (1960), To Kill a Mockingbird (1962), In the Heat of the Night (1967), Deliverance (1972), Nashville (1975), The Color Purple (1985), Driving Miss Daisy (1989), Mississippi Burning (1989), Mississippi Masala (1991), Ghosts of Mississippi (1996), Sling Blade (1996), Rosewood (1997), Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil (1997), George Washington (2000), O, Brother, Where Art Thou? (2000), Junebug (2005)*

#### **ENGLISH 2950/4950: Dreaming the Middle Ages Through Arthurian Legend (proposed by Heckman)**

Course Description: In this course, we will study textual, artistic, and cinematic representations of Arthurian legend, considering them within historical and cultural context. We will examine works of the medieval period, the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century to pursue the following questions: why do these authors, artists, and filmmakers choose to re-envision Arthurian legend? How does it help them investigate important issues of their own times, such as heroism, slavery, war, imperialism, and nationalism? Course readings may include Umberto Eco's "Dreaming the Middle Ages," Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*; Sir Thomas Malory, *Morte D'Arthur*; Alfred Lord Tennyson, "The Holy Grail" and "Sir Galahad" from *Idylls of the King*; and Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. We will also examine paintings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron. Films may include *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*; *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*; or Eric Rohmer's *Perceval le Gallois*.

#### **ENGL 2950/4950: Tolkien and Epic Tradition (proposed by Heckman)**

Smaug, the Ring, the once and future King, the treasure hoard, the glorious city ... all of these found their way into the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien through his lifelong dedication to the literature of the Middle Ages. As a twentieth-century writer, Tolkien reworked medieval themes in order to redefine the epic for the modern age. In this seminar, we will read both Tolkien's own works and the medieval texts which influenced him as he created Middle Earth and constructed the mythology of *The Lord of the Rings*. Readings early in the semester will include *Beowulf*, the great Anglo-Saxon epic, and the *Saga of the Volsungs*, one of the most important texts from Norse mythology. We will examine the legacy of these texts in Tolkien's own writings, from his fairy tales to the *Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*. In these texts, we will discover the ways in which Tolkien encourages us to learn from the past, adopting the lessons of our predecessors for our own time.

### **ENGL 2950/4950: Tolkien and the World Wars (proposed by Heckman)**

By 1918," J.R.R. Tolkien wrote, "all but one of my close friends were dead." Tolkien's mythology was conceived in the context of devastating loss, from the trenches of the Somme to the "darkness" of the Second World War and beyond. In this course, examine Tolkien's works in two contexts: that of the World Wars, the endurance of which shaped his generation; and that of heroic literature, which helped to shape his imagination. Tolkien's own essay, "On Fairy Tales," will provide us with a critical paradigm through which to approach subsequent readings, which will include John Garth's *Tolkien and the Great War* as well as writings of Tolkien including *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and the complete *Lord of the Rings*. In Tolkien's mythology and fiction, we will discover the ways in which he encourages us to learn from the past, adopting the lessons of our predecessors for our own time and developing an ethical framework appropriate for the challenges of the modern world.

### **ENGL 2950/4950: Stanley Kubrick and the Novels His Movies Are Based On (proposed by Hoffman)**

Stanley Kubrick was one of the most innovative and controversial filmmakers of his generation. His contribution to film—from both a technical and aesthetic view—is second to none. However, despite his unique vision, his consistently inventive narrative style, and his pioneering technical achievements, every movie Kubrick filmed was based on a novel. His screenplays were always adaptations of other works and never original stories. At times the novel was already established as a masterpiece of fiction; other times, it was Kubrick's astounding representation of the novel on screen—he always adapted the novels into screenplays himself or in conjunction with others—that drew the eye of the literary critic. While most movies tend to do a disservice to the novel in transforming it to screen, Kubrick was one of the rare few who managed to equal if not better the novels he transcribed.

This course will explore the movies of Stanley Kubrick through an examination of the texts upon which the movies are based. As such, the course will be an eclectic analysis of literature, for we will represent virtually every major genre of fiction: science fiction, modernist literature, political satire, war fiction, horror and the historical novel. However, despite the seemingly disconnected nature of these widely divergent novels, we will locate various common threads through all of them via Kubrick's inimitable style in capturing them on screen.

In particular, the course will introduce the student to basic concepts of deconstruction, particularly in the way Kubrick takes apart fundamental binaries of the human condition: reason/madness, civilization/ savagery, enlightenment/ignorance, order/chaos, love/hate, humor/seriousness. We will consider the nature of genre, the difference in literary and film narrative, how film and literature are each limited in their respective methods, and the approach of transcribing prose to the visual medium.

#### **Readings:**

Timothy Corrigan: *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*

William Makepeace Thackeray: *Barry Lyndon*

Arthur C. Clarke: *2001: A Space Odyssey*

Anthony Burgess: *A Clockwork Orange*

Peter George: *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*

Arthur Schnitzler: *Dream Story*

Gustav Hasford: *The Short Timers*

Stephen King: *The Shining*

Vladimir Nabokov: *Lolita*

Irvin S. Cobb: *Paths of Glory*

Assignments:

2 critical analysis papers

4 quizzes

midterm

final exam

### **POOL B (4000- AND 6000-LEVEL)**

#### **ENGL 4100: Studies in American Literature/ENGL 6450: Topics in American Literature: Multi-ethnic Literature in the United States (proposed by Atkinson)**

The “melting pot” has long been employed metaphorically to describe America’s cultural diversity. The diversity of the American experience is certainly reflected in the nation’s literary history. This course will focus on works of American literature, primarily in the contemporary period, to explore how writers from a range of ethnicities have used literature as a means of representing and exploring issues of cultural heritage, immigration and assimilation, generational conflict, and national identity, among others. What makes the communities that these writers depict unique? What threads of commonality can be found in these literary representations? How do the selected authors and the communities they represent attempt to reconcile the hyphenated identity often assigned to ethnic communities in America? These questions will frame our examination of selected novels and stories. *Potential works:* Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*, Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior*, John Okada, *No-No Boy*, Gish Jen, *Mona in the Promised Land*, Sherman Alexie, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, Edward P. Jones, *The Known World*, Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*, Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

#### **ENGL 4200: Studies in Genre/ENGL 6110: Special Topics in Genre: The Modernist Novel**

(NOTE: This course proposal is for faculty consideration. The language of the course description will change for the students)

The purpose of this course is two-fold. First, it will explore a range of literary works that employ experimental techniques as a means of rebelling against the realist and romantic traditions in literature. While the course will

supply an overview of such movements as Vorticism, Dadaism and surrealism, futurism and cubism (to name a few), the primary focus will be on how the form of the novel changed in response to shifting conceptions of art, the individual, racial and ethnic identities, and the role of women in society. Thus, themes to be *considered* will be the alienated protagonist, the modernist notions of the hero, new modes of characterization, understanding experimental plot structures such as the use of epiphany in place of the climax, the decreasing power of the individual in a highly bureaucratized social world, the loss of nature as a source of spiritual renewal, the loss of religion as a moral compass, the systems of coercion in constructing docile subjects, the use of intertextuality in structuring the novel, the nature of human relationships and the human condition in the modernist universe and the effects of technology on and between various characters.

The second purpose will be to place these various attempts at creating a unique form of literature within the context of the quickly changing world of industrial capitalism at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Urbanization, the factory system, World War I, women's suffrage, the encroachment of industry on nature, colonialism, psychoanalysis, science, and the erosion of tradition through the expansion of technocracy are various themes that will be explored.

**Books to be considered:**

Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane: *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*

James Joyce: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Franz Kafka: *The Castle* or *The Trial*

Ernest Hemingway: *A Farewell to Arms*

Virginia Woolf: *Mrs. Dalloway* or *The Waves*

Jean-Paul Sartre: *Nausea*

Alfred Döblin: *Berlin Alexanderplatz*

Jean Toomer: *Cane*

Joseph Conrad: *Nostramo*

William Faulkner: *Light in August*

Edith Wharton: *The Age of Innocence*

Henry James: *The Ambassadors*

**ENGL 4000: Writing Women in the English Renaissance (proposed by Kisting)**

This course will investigate representations of womanhood and anxieties about female authorship in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>-century England. We will consider literary depictions of femininity in poetry, drama, and prose; societal views about femininity that circulated in the gender tracts; and works by such female authors as Mary Wroth, Elizabeth I, and Margaret Cavendish. We will begin with Castiglione's discussion of the ideal woman in *The Courtier*, Joseph Swetnam's aggressive attack on the female gender in the gender tracts, and representations of femininity in major canonical texts such as *Astrophil and Stella* (Sidney), Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, *Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare), *The Changeling* (Middleton and Rowley), and *Comus* (Milton). While contemplating the cultural assumptions and anxieties that underlie literary depictions of ideal or unruly women, we will consider the alternative representations of women offered in works such as *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (Wroth), *Urania* (Wroth), Rachel Speght's reply to Swetnam's pamphlet, Elizabeth I's writings, and *The Blazing World*

(Cavendish). We will also attend to some of the prefatory materials and contemporary remarks that attended these works to consider how female authorship was constructed and perceived.

This course could be cross-listed with Women's Studies and offered as a graduate-level Special Topics course.

#### **ENGL 4000: Religion, Science, and Magic in the Renaissance (proposed by Kisting)**

This course will consider the pervasive cultural confusion of religion, science, and magic in Renaissance England. Most early modern individuals found it difficult or impossible to separate these matters into distinct disciplines the way we do today, and some literary authors deliberately blended or blurred them for purposes of subversive critique. First, we will examine popular beliefs about witchcraft and alchemy. Reading *The Witch of Edmonton* (Dekker), *The Alchemist* (Jonson), and *Doctor Faustus* (Marlowe), we will consider how these forms of magic reflected cultural anxieties about gender (female sexuality and depravity), religious belief (the "popish charms" of Catholicism), and social mobility (the ability to "transmutate" oneself from low to high social status). We will also consider the skeptical, quasi-scientific response to magic represented in Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Next, we will turn to more overtly religious, metaphysical works, such as 17<sup>th</sup>-century religious poetry and Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* to consider how emergent scientific discourses—including the study of magnetism, the proliferation of the compass, the invention of the telescope, and the discovery of the circulatory system—played a shaping role in the imagination of the believer's relationship to the divine. Students in this course will also have the rare opportunity to familiarize themselves with Renaissance non-fiction prose (a genre too often neglected in Renaissance studies).

This course could be cross-listed as a graduate-level Special Topics course.

#### **ENGL 4440: Spenser, Milton, and the Epic (proposed by Kisting)**

In this course, we will read *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*, considering how Spenser and Milton borrowed, revised, and in some cases rejected the conventions of the martial-heroic epic. In the process, through a series of "historicization exercises" utilizing primary materials from *Early English Books Online*, we will investigate early modern ideas about gender, romance, chivalry, tyranny, sin, the individual conscience, and the origins and passions of human nature—a broad sampling of aesthetic, cultural, and religious values informing these texts. Finally, we will attempt to situate Milton in dialogue with Spenser, considering the ways in which *Paradise Lost* mirrors *The Faerie Queene* at the same time that it rejects some of *The Faerie Queene's* structural and ideological features. Texts will include *The Faerie Queene* (ed. Hamilton), *Paradise Lost* (ed. Fowler), and a packet of supplementary readings on reserve at the library or available electronically through EEBO. Reserve readings will include excerpts from other primary texts (Sidney's *Defense of Poesy*, Castiglione's *The Courtier*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Charles I's *Eikon Basilike*, Milton's *Areopagitica*, etc.) as well as selections from contemporary literary and historical scholarship.

This course would also be suitable for an ENGL 6550 Major Authors seminar.