

# Graduate Course Descriptions

## Fall 2013

**600:01      Introduction to Graduate Study**  
P. Reed      W 6:00-8:30  
[preed@olemiss.edu](mailto:preed@olemiss.edu)

English 600 is required of all graduate students in English. This course introduces theoretical frameworks for writing and teaching in English as a discipline while also engaging practical challenges graduate students will encounter in their intellectual and professional development. Readings will address the history of the profession, its theoretical and institutional contours, and the various past and present methodologies and critical approaches to literary studies. We will also concern ourselves with the pragmatic matters of course selection, research techniques, conferencegoing, publication, grant- and fellowship-winning, professional service and eventual employment. Independent research and writing will aim (first) to foster a broader sense of “English” as a professional field and a discipline, and (second) to encourage students to articulate a sense of their own evolving relationship to these ideas.

**606:01      Chaucer**  
S. Justice      M 3:00-5:30  
[sjustice@berkeley.edu](mailto:sjustice@berkeley.edu)

Three aims specific to this course: (1) deep study of Chaucer's two greatest works, the *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Canterbury Tales*; (2) development of skills broadly philological--relating to the forms of language, their stylistic and narrative resources, and their role in creating literary possibility; and (3) grasp of the Chaucer criticism's substance, shape, and trajectory over the last fifty years. Two further aims generic to graduate seminars as such: (4) skill in reading the lay of the scholarly terrain, in discerning what questions have, and what questions have not, been

addressed; (5) practice in the argumentative and rhetorical form of the scholarly essay.

For reasons of mere utility, we will approach these works in reverse chronological order. The three weeks will use some of the *Canterbury Tales* as an occasion to sharpen (or to acquire) skills in reading Middle English and using the scholarly resources important in studying it. In the rest of the first half of the semester, we will read much (though not all) of the *Tales*, considering, among other questions, what property of the work allows such cavalier excerption for the purposes of a graduate seminar. The rest of the semester will bring intensive study of the *Troilus and Criseyde*, in relation to its literary predecessors, earlier works in Chaucer's oeuvre, and those parts of the Canterbury Tales that he had already written or conceived when at work on the *Troilus*. Readings in Chaucer criticism will offer, over the course of the semester, an outline of the field's history.

Each student will prepare a presentation on some stage of the history of Chaucer criticism, and submit an essay of c. 25 pages at the end of the semester. This course fulfills the department's pre-1800 requirement.

**619:01      Studies in African and Diasporic Literature**  
A. Alabi      T 6:00-8:30  
[aalabi@olemiss.edu](mailto:aalabi@olemiss.edu)

This course will focus on how contemporary critical theory can aid our understanding of major developments in African literature. We will start by reviewing aspects of recent literary theories, especially globalization, ecocriticism, postcolonial, and feminist theories that can illuminate our interpretation of African literature. We will then examine the representation of orality, language, culture, patriarchy, ecology, colonialism, and postcolonialism in African literature. The texts for our discussion, selected from various genres and parts of Africa, will include Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Matigari*, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, and Naguib Mahfouz's *Miramar*.

**633:01      17<sup>th</sup> Century Studies**  
K. Raber      R 3:00-5:30  
[kraber@olemiss.edu](mailto:kraber@olemiss.edu)

Ecocriticism has finally conquered early modern studies, with an outpouring in the last several years of books and articles focusing on all the many dimensions of the period's conception of, and relation to “nature.” Or has it? What are we doing when we do “early modern ecocriticism”—what are the payoffs, what are the limitations of such work? This class will create a baseline understanding of the various ways early modern texts

represent and engage with the environment, mainly (although not exclusively) through readings of a group of Shakespeare's plays; we will move from that baseline to consider how theoretical models derived from social systems theory, cognitive science, body studies, actor network theory, thing theory, and other philosophical developments might influence the kind of ecocriticism we do. Students will write weekly responses to the readings, to be shared with their peers for discussion; they will complete a short essay, an annotated bibliography, and a longer critical research essay. This course fulfills the department's pre-1800 requirement.

**659:02**                   **Contemporary Literature**  
**P. Alexander**              **T 3:00-5:30**  
**pealexan@olemiss.edu**

Responding to African American literary criticism's recent engagements with contemporary imprisonment, this course examines the representation of prisons and the imprisoned in African American literature over the past five decades. We will be particularly attentive to how contemporary African American fiction, epistolary writing, and autobiographical narratives anticipate and resituate recent prison studies scholarship on police intimidation, racial profiling, mass incarceration, indefinite solitary confinement, and racialized prisoner abuse. Moreover, we will explore literary criticism that considers how the African American literary text offers an illuminating lens through which the current epoch's hyper-criminalization of Black men, increasingly punitive forms of confinement, and iconizing of imprisoned writers and imprisoned intellectuals might be understood—namely, the work of H. Bruce Franklin, Michael Hames-Garcia, Brian Conniff, Doran Larson, Auli Ek, Karla Holloway, Jon Christian-Suggs, and D. Quentin Miller.

In addition to excerpts from Etheridge Knight's edited anthology *Black Voices from Prison*, our readings will likely include Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, the prison letters of Eldridge Cleaver and George Jackson, essays by death-row intellectual Mumia Abu-Jamal, novels by James Baldwin and Ernest Gaines, and autobiographical works by Malcolm X, Angela Y. Davis, Assata Shakur, Nathan McCall, asha bande, Robert Hillary King, and R. Dwayne Betts.

**676:01**                   **Studies in Southern Literature**  
**J. Harker**                 **M 6:00-8:30**  
**jharker@olemiss.edu**

The South has been depicted as a site of deviant and prolific sexual expression in the American literary imagination. This course examines one aspect of that legacy by investigating the South's gay and lesbian literary heritage in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The course will begin with early manifestations of the queer South in William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Truman Capote, Hal Thomas Phillips, and Tennessee Williams, discuss the feminist queer South through Rita Mae Brown, June Arnold, Alice Walker, Mab Segrest, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Blanche McCrary Boyd, and Dorothy Allison, and conclude with more recent manifestations by Randall Kenan and Suzan Lori-Parks. We will also read secondary material by John Howard, Gary Richards, and Michael Bibler. The course requires weekly journal responses and 20-25 page seminar paper.

**680**                       **Graduate Fiction Seminar 1**  
**M. Abbott**               **T 6:00-8:30**  
**meganabbott@gmail.com**

In this graduate fiction workshop for MFA students, writers will work on craft through close reading of one another's fiction in a workshop format. Each student will write two to three new and original pieces for the seminar and revise them substantially. Other readings will be assigned in response to student work and based on topics that emerge during class discussion. The most important requirement is careful, considerate and close reading of one another's work. Attendance is required.

**682**                       **Graduate Poetry Seminar**  
**D. Smith**                 **W 3:00-5:30**  
**djstrucker2@cs.com**

A workshop open to MFA students (and others with the permission of the instructor) for the purpose of discussing poems in progress. The premise of such discussion is to facilitate the poem's development from good to better to best accomplishment, which necessarily requires consideration of poetic standards past and present. Discussion includes, but is not limited to, poems in The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry, 3rd ed., edited by Jahan Ramazani, practices in contemporary poetics and criticism, and the roles open to the poet in 21st century literary environment. Students are asked to submit an original poem for each class, either to fulfill assignment or individually determined, to write brief responses (2-4pp) to reading texts, to

write a longer seminar essay on a subject presented during the term, and to submit a revised portfolio of all poems done for the semester and intended as part of the MFA thesis.

**686** **Studies in Genre**  
**B.A. Fennelly** **M 6:00-8:30**  
[bafennel@olemiss.edu](mailto:bafennel@olemiss.edu)

The aim of this graduate nonfiction workshop is to develop and deepen our understanding of the forms and possibilities of nonfiction prose. We'll study both classic and contemporary models, including the book-length nonfiction project. Students will write, workshop, and revise some short essays during the course of the semester and two longer pieces: a personal essay/memoir, and an essay that engages with the outside world through research. In addition to discussing craft, we will study and discuss the nonfiction market and publication opportunities. This class is only open to MFA students. Other students need professor permission to enroll. MFA candidates may repeat this course for credit.

**687** **Studies in Literature and Environment**  
**A. Fisher-Wirth** **T 3:00-5:30**  
[afwirth@olemiss.edu](mailto:afwirth@olemiss.edu)

Nature poetry is as old as poetry itself. Around 1960, however, the term "ecopoetry" entered general parlance in the United States, as poets have increasingly sought to respond in various ways to the environmental crisis. By now, ecopoetry has become a major—and thriving—field. This is a seminar in American ecopoetry, with attention paid as well to some of its important precursors. Our primary texts will be three new anthologies: *Black Nature*, edited by Camille Dungy; *The Arcadia Project: North American Postmodern Pastoral*, edited by Joshua Corey and G. C. Waldrep; and *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, edited by Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street and with an introduction by Robert Hass. We'll also read several single-author books of poems plus pertinent essays in ecocriticism and ecotheory by, for instance, Gary Snyder, Bernard Quetchenbach, Scott Bryson, and Leonard Scigaj; and Forrest Gander's and John Kinsella's *Restart: An Ecological Poetics*. The course will emphasize discussion. Requirements will include a researched oral presentation and either a seminar paper or a creative project (poetry) with accompanying (contextualizing, academically-oriented) essay.

**692** **Cultural Studies**  
**A. Gussow** **W 3:00-5:30**  
[agussow@olemiss.edu](mailto:agussow@olemiss.edu)

This course will explore the way in which African American (and selected white American) writers have translated the oral culture and social milieu of blues musicians into a range of literary forms: epigrams, poems, stories, novels, plays, folkloric interviews, autobiographies, and theoretical/prophetic writings. Since the blues tradition is firmly grounded in what David Oshinsky has called "the ordeal of Jim Crow justice," we'll devote considerable attention to the way in which adverse social conditions in the early modern South—lynching, segregation, sharecropping, and other forms of racialized exploitation—are represented and contested in blues texts. We'll cover a range of other themes: the tragicomic dialectic that underlies blues expressiveness; the shaping role played by various forms of interpersonal violence; "signifying" as a blues-textual strategy; womanist self-assertion and the sounding of desire as paradigmatic blues modes; the emergence of a mass white blues audience in the 1960s; contemporary blues performance and blues literature as scenes of interracial contact in which the legacy of Jim Crow is engaged in both productive and troubling ways. Since my own current research focuses on the devil-figure in the blues, we'll spend several weeks focusing on Robert Johnson and the fictions that encompass him. Requirements include three short (2-3 pp.) papers and a term paper.