

English Course Level Overview

Literary Study Course Levels

200-level survey courses are designed to provide a broad introduction to the study of literature by tracing the national or transnational development of cultures and literary forms. Where possible, these courses should strive to include texts from multiple literary genres (poetry, narrative, nonfiction, drama, film, etc.), should (where relevant) familiarize students with the major logics of periodization (e.g. Realism, Modernism, Postmodernism) as well as relevant formal vocabulary (epic, sonnet; diction, metaphor; first/third-person narration, etc.). While these courses need not require a formal paper, they should always at least involve exercises and/or test questions that ask students to practice close reading and analytical writing. Examples include: reading response assignments, short answer questions on exams, longer close-reading questions on exams, etc.

English 299 is a course designed for the English major that prepares students for advanced coursework in English. ENG 299 has two aims: 1) to provide an undergraduate introduction to the discipline, and 2) to develop the analytical and writing skills specific to literary study. Readings and assignments should provide opportunities to develop a literary-critical vocabulary and to become familiar with the major genre categories—drama, poetry and prose fiction—as well as nonfiction prose, film, graphic narrative, and other genres, according to the instructor’s expertise and learning goals. In addition to focusing on close reading, ENG 299 should introduce students to examples of literary scholarship and critical debates as well as the conventions of the critical essay and rules for citing sources.

300-level courses are narrower “introductory,” “survey” and “studies in” courses that provide a more focused critical inquiry into texts organized around a single literary movement, period, cultural tradition, genre, or critical theme. If the 200-level survey course provides students with an overview of the literary networks comprising our national and transnational histories and canons, the 300-level courses aim to expand on (i.e. elaborate and complicate) one node or thread constituting those larger networks. These courses may incorporate secondary critical material, but will be focused mainly on the reading of primary texts.

400-level courses are advanced-study “special topics” courses that offer in-depth consideration of a literary topic, and will typically be organized around a central critical question or set of questions. In addition to reading primary texts, these courses will include secondary readings intended to help students engage with literary critical approaches to the material. Ideally, these courses will be designed to challenge students not only to develop critical responses to individual texts, but to use their close reading skills to begin to build more theoretical arguments that develop across their readings of multiple texts.

400-level capstone courses are seminar-style classes that require students to produce a substantial research project addressing a question related to the seminar’s topic. The capstone is a research-driven class, in which students conduct independent research under the close supervision of the faculty member. Close supervision of research may include: review of research methodologies (e.g. a library visit, discussion and practice with relevant databases in class, the creation of assignments using relevant databases); the creation of annotated bibliographies for the research project; short written assignments in which students compare sources; etc. It also includes student revision of at least one draft of the project based on feedback from the professor.

Creative Writing Course Levels

English 300: Introduction to Creative Writing aims to introduce terms and techniques of creative writing and provide a framework with which one can begin to discuss, critique, and create original works of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction.

The other 300-level creative writing courses allow students to narrow their focus to one genre and delve further into creative writing pedagogy. These courses may forgo the use of a creative writing textbook such as the one used in ENG 300 and rely instead on single-author collections of poetry, short stories, or essays as primary texts, as well as incorporate secondary critical material.

400-level creative writing courses aim to expand and deepen the range of the students' thinking concerning methods of creating and revising original works. These 400-level courses will challenge students not only to become better writers but also better, more thoughtful readers, and to use their close reading skills to build theoretical arguments that they can apply to literature classes throughout the department.