

Counter-Canons and Critical Issues Requirement

Many, if not most, English courses acknowledge that inherited literary canons evolve and reflect past and present power structures; expose students to texts that have not historically been (or are still not today) widely considered canonical; and encourage students to approach texts in ways that expose the power dynamics (eg. of race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, species belonging, etc.) at work within the text, a period, a field, and/or the larger world. While wholly consistent with these larger critical orientations now prevalent in many subdisciplines in literary studies, the counter-canon and critical issues requirement is designed to identify classes which programmatically center these questions and which focalize them in specific ways.

Courses that satisfy this requirement primarily focus on:

1. introducing students to work by authors from groups that have been historically marginalized (by virtue of, for instance, race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, etc.)

and

2. exposing students to critical frameworks (such as critical race or ethnicity studies, postcolonial studies, gender and sexuality studies, disability studies, studies of class, and ecocritical or nonhumanist studies) that foreground the political, economic, and social dynamics by which literary value has historically been interpreted.