

Department of English

Graduate Course

Descriptions

Spring 2020

Eng 522:01 **Special Topics in English: Teaching Poetry as Critical Thinking**
C. Ellis **W 4:30-7:00 pm**
 ceellis@olemiss.edu

Designed for graduate students in education, this course will offer an introduction to the reading and teaching of poetry as a site of (and for) critical thinking. Designed not only for those who already love poetry, but equally for those who find poetry opaque and intimidating, this class will focus on the core skills involved in thinking critically with poems, from close reading and working with textual evidence to building an interpretive thesis. Instruction will foreground both directly developing students' skills in these areas, and developing methods for breaking down and teaching these skills to primary and secondary school learners. This will be a writing intensive course with regular short writing assignments and pedagogical exercises, working up towards longer writing and teaching projects at the end of the semester.

Eng 681:01 **Graduate Fiction Workshop II**
C. Offutt **T 3:00-5:30 pm**
 offutt@olemiss.edu

This is a graduate course in fiction writing. Students are expected to write two or more manuscripts, 15 pages minimum length apiece, during the semester. There is no limitation for maximum length. These manuscripts can be a short story or part of a novel. The format of the class is peer review, followed by a conference with the instructor. There are no restrictions on content of manuscript. This is an intensive class with the goal of improving work through learning advanced techniques of revision. No cell phones, computers, or other electronic devices in class.

Updated 10/14/19

Eng 682:01 **Graduate Poetry Workshop**
A. Nezhukumatathil **M 3:00-5:30**
 acnezhuk@olemiss.edu

In this graduate poetry workshop, we will investigate the craft and close, critical reading of a variety of contemporary poetry collections while studying and maintaining an artistic practice of keeping each of our own 'Commonplace Books.' Most days we will spend part of the time MAKING (from the Greek origins of the word poet=maker), discussion of a text or poetics essay, and spending time in an un-silenced workshop. The class will provide students with a fun, intense, and critical discussion of student work and dynamic readings in contemporary poetry. The orientation of the course hopes to push students past their creative norms, and by semester's end, students will have created and arranged the foundation a new suite of poems or for a larger creative project. Other writing art-projects include abecedarian poems and visual poems. You will also complete a poetics critical essay investigating the texts for this semester and have at least one conference with me.

Eng 683:01 **Form, Craft, and Influence: Fiction: Canceled: Black American Satire in the 21st Century**
K. Laymon **TH 3:00-5:30 pm**
 kmlaymon@olemiss.edu

This course is a graduate literature course for writers and students of fiction, emphasizing style and technique. Content varies; may be repeated one time for credit.

Eng 711:01 **Studies in Shakespeare**
K. Raber **W 6:00-8:30 pm**
 kraber@olemiss.edu

Back in 1999, Harold Bloom asserted that it was Shakespeare who "invented the human" we are familiar with today. That claim is controversial for many reasons; but at a minimum, we should acknowledge that Shakespeare's "human" is delineated via the representation of myriad non-human objects, creatures, and elements that populate his plays. In this course we will consider those non-human presences. We will read a selection of posthumanist theory and related work in animal studies, ecocriticism, and other relevant areas to ground us; we'll then bring this knowledge to individual works and the recent criticism on them. Our possible list of Shakespeare texts includes (provisionally) *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Coriolanus*, *Venus and Adonis*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Richard III*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. Students will write weekly responses

to the readings, at least one short essay and a final paper.

Eng 717:01 **18th Century Studies: A Plague O' Both Your Households: Economies and Ecologies of Scarcity**
S. Mackenzie **T 3:00-5:00 pm**
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During the eighteenth century, as emergent capitalism transformed social relations in Britain (and elsewhere), a strange thing happened to scarcity. It changed from a kind of event that happened occasionally when crops failed or supply was disrupted (and was usually explained by divine providence) to the organizing condition of economic and cultural life. “Where production and distribution are arranged through the behavior of prices,” Marshall Sahlins observes, “and all livelihoods depend on getting and spending, insufficiency of material means becomes the explicit, calculable starting point of all economic activity”; “Inadequacy of economic means is the first principle of the world's wealthiest peoples.” All human activity under the law of scarcity is governed by the need to choose what we can afford and give up what is foreclosed by our choices. For Karl Marx, the law of scarcity defines a key contradiction of capitalism:

superabundance/overproduction leads to “an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity.... Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence.” Unlimited productive capacity is the cause of dearth and impoverishment.

That kind of scarcity has often been called artificial or socially-produced scarcity. Natural scarcity, by most accounts, has been around longer, but began accelerating with the rise of capitalist industrialism and its resource depletions. But the *eco* (from the Greek *oikos* — household) in economics and the *eco* in ecology suggest a conjunction between the two fields of study that troubles the natural/social distinction. Indeed the earliest ecologists (Linnaeus, Gilbert White) thought of themselves as economists of nature. In a wide-ranging set of readings, we will investigate the complex interrelations between political and natural economy in the eighteenth century and consider their applicability to more recent eco-critical discussions. We will attend to the ways in which literary and non-literary discourse reacts to, resists, or helps to naturalize the new order of things, and the ways in which nature itself is drawn into and reshaped by the new politics of shortfall and allocation. Our reading will pursue the development of the politico-economic system in which socially produced insufficiency, resource exhaustion, and speciecide can be defined as natural occurrences.

Eng 725:01 **Studies in Modern British Literature: Modernism, Media, Information**
I. Whittington **T 6:00-8:30 pm**
 iwhittin@olemiss.edu

This course offers an introduction to modern literature, mostly British fiction, in the context of the radically altered media ecology of the early twentieth century. This new ecology—of telegraphs and telephones, phonographs and tape reels—forced writers to consider questions of human autonomy and technological determinism, mass culture and elite aesthetics, and the persistent claims of the body against a backdrop of increasing disembodiment. Among the matters we will concern ourselves with is whether what we call “modernism” represents a conscious aesthetic response to technological modernity, or a reflex action, a kind of symptom. (There will also be car chases, bomb plots, and murder.) Readings will be drawn from a list including Bram Stoker, Joseph Conrad, Elizabeth Bowen, Muriel Spark, Samuel Beckett, Henry Green, and others.

Eng 740:01 **Studies in Critical Theory: The Literature of Identity**
R. Eubanks **TH 6:00-8:30 pm**
 wreubanks@olemiss.edu

The inner voice of identity is a part of literature, whether it is literary theory, fiction, poetry, or memoir and creative nonfiction. This course will explore various conceptions of personal identity, with an emphasis on 20th century and contemporary literature. We'll read philosophical and critical texts from writers such as Anthony Appiah, bell hooks, and Fred Moten alongside the work of poets, novelists, and essayists. This course will also explore the idea of identity as performance, particularly in how it functions in the work of writers such as Nella Larsen and Jean Toomer.

Eng 743:01 **Studies in Literature & the Environment: Southern Environmental Writing, 1970-2017**
J. Watson **W 3:00-5:30**
 jwatson@olemiss.edu

A graduate seminar for MA, MFA, and PhD students in English and Southern Studies. The course doubles as an intensive introduction to key texts and concepts in environmental literary studies and an attempt to explore a growing body of twentieth- and twenty-first century creative works that confront environmental questions and challenges on (more or less) explicitly southern ground. The idea is to use the creative works as case studies in weighing the merit and utility of the theoretical reading, while using the theory to unpack and illuminate the primary texts in an

applied manner. Accordingly, the reading schedule will consist primarily of two-week “clusters” pairing readings in ecotheory, ecocriticism, and environmental history with creative texts (fiction, life writing, film, digital media) that explore the landscapes and cultures of the U.S. South. Though I reserve the right to tweak a bit between now and January, the primary reading will consist of most if not all of the following: James Dickey, *Deliverance*, Janisse Ray, *Drifting into Darien*; Behn Zeitlin, dir., *Beasts of the Southern Wild*; Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones*; Linda Hogan, *Power*; Marya Montero, *In the Palm of Darkness*; Brian Reed, *S-Town* (serial podcast); and Jeff Vander Meer, *Area X: The Southern Reach Trilogy*. These texts will be “clustered” with readings from, among others, William Cronon, Lawrence Buell, Gary Snyder, Aldo Leopold, Steven Mentz, Dana Phillips, Daniel Botkin, Robert Bullard, Rob Nixon, Susan Scott Parrish, Val Plumwood, Monique Allewaert, Donna Haraway, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Shepard Krech, Richard Grove, Nancy Stepan, Catriona Sandilands, Timothy Morton, Ursula Heise, and others, along with selected secondary criticism on the primary works. Other course requirements include weekly online reader-response journals, in-class presentations and “sparking” work, and a 15-25-page research project. N.B. Over the break there will be both recommended prereading in southern environmental history and reading assignments for the first class meeting on January 22.

Eng 776:01 Studies in Southern Literature: Speculative Souths
D. Barker M 3:00-5:30 pm
dbarker@olemiss.edu

Speculative fiction is an umbrella term for works that contain non-realist elements in terms of setting, alternative histories, supernatural elements, etc. This includes futuristic fictions, science fiction, fantasy, utopias and dystopias, horror, climate fiction, and southern gothic. In this class we will explore the boundaries and variations of this encompassing term and how the South is situated in both the past, present, and future. Possible texts include: Charles Chesnutt’s *The Conjure Stories*, Pauline Hopkins’s *Of One Blood: Or, the Hidden Self*, Octavia Butler’s *Kindred* (and the graphic novel adaptation), Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Michael Farris Smith’s *Rivers*, *Rivers Solomon’s*, *An Unkindness of Ghosts*, Jeff VanderMeer’s *Annihilation*, Kiese Laymon’s *Long Division*, Colson Whitehead’s *Underground Railroad*, Jesmyn Ward’s *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, Justina Ireland’s YA novel, *Dread Nation*, selections from N.K. Jemisin’s *How Long ‘til Black Future Month*, Ta-Nehisi Coates’s *The Water Dancer*, along with a variety of critical texts



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