

# Department of English

# Graduate Course Descriptions

## *Spring 2022*

Required hours	Category	Courses offered <i>during Spring 2022</i> that fulfill each category
6	Post-1800	Eng 725, 735, 743, 776
6	Pre-1800	Eng 703, 717
12	Creative Writing Workshops (MFA/PhD-CWC only)	Eng 681, 682

**Eng 522:01**            **Special Topics in English**  
**C. Ellis**                **T 4:30-7:00**  
[ceellis@olemiss.edu](mailto:ceellis@olemiss.edu)

Only for graduate students in education.

**Eng 681:01**            **Graduate Fiction Workshop**  
**R. Leilani**            **TH 3-5:30**  
[engl@olemiss.edu](mailto:engl@olemiss.edu)

Taught by Raven Leilani, Grisham Visiting Writer for Spring 2022.

**Eng 682:01**            **Graduate Poetry Workshop**  
**A. Nezhukmatathil** **T 3:00-5:30pm**  
[anezhuk@olemiss.edu](mailto:anezhuk@olemiss.edu)

Taking cues from June Jordan, I hope to have this workshop “become, in fact, a place where students learned about the world and then resolved, collectively and creatively, to change it!”

To that end, this class will most definitely not follow traditional workshop format, so if you are looking for that, alas, you will need to look elsewhere. This semester, we will go back to the roots of the word poet, which translate from the Greek as TO MAKE. Most days we will spend part of the time making, dreaming, experimenting, learning names of flora and fauna where you write, and most of all—how to make this art into a sustainable practice for our lives. For our whole lives. To feel whole in our lives. That’s plural, emphasis most intentional— to build a community during a time when so much is working towards making us feel more alone. This workshop will provide us with a fun, intense discovering that can only happen with loads of grace and elbow grease. From all of us. There will be nourishment. We will learn how to nourish ourselves. And each other. The orientation of the course hopes to push students past their creative and pedagogical norms, and by semester’s end, students will have created and arranged the foundation a new suite of poems or the cornerstones of a larger creative project. Other writing art-projects include abecedarian poems and wearable poems

and poetry comics, etc. You will also complete a poetics craft essay for possible publication, investigating texts (TBD) and discoveries for this semester, and oh yes, you'll have conferences with me to discuss your poems

and if you like, talk about what sets your hair on fire in the poetry world. Spring in Mississippi—there's no better place on the planet to be a writer with a superlative capacity for metaphor. In other words, there's no better place to be YOU!

**Eng 683:01**            **Form, Craft, and Influence: Fiction**  
**C. Offutt**            **M 6-8:30**  
                                 [Offutt@olemiss.edu](mailto:Offutt@olemiss.edu)

This class will focus on the professional life of a writer. Subjects will include, but are not limited to, the following: Writing process. Submission practices. Seeking an agent, and working with an agent. Working with editors—book, literary journal, and popular magazines. Contests and conferences. Record-keeping such as submissions, taxes, and maintaining a personal archive for a future library. Where to live, how to live, how to get by when things are tight. Screenwriting—TV pilot, short film, feature film, animated film. Seeking a Hollywood agent. Working with producers, studio executives, and networks. A portion of each class will be set aside for “mini-lectures” on subjects suggested by members of the class. I've been a working writer for over 30 years. I've made many mistakes and learned a great deal. My goal is to impart as much as my accrued knowledge as possible to the students in the class.

**Eng 703:01**            **Studies in Early English Literature**  
**M. Hayes**            **TH 6:00-8:30 pm**  
                                 [hayes@olemiss.edu](mailto:hayes@olemiss.edu)

The pandemic popularly known as the Black Death killed more than a third of the European population in just four years (1347-51). Caused by a particularly fast-moving strain of plague bacillus (*Y. pestis medievalis*), the “Great Mortality” has served as a limit in modern models of disaster preparedness. The Black Death and the Birth of English Vernacular Literature is based in a couple of literary questions inherent in “pandemic literature”: How can words register such immense devastation? And what literary genre and aesthetic forms transpire from it? In tackling these questions, we will account for the Black Death's coincidence with the development of written European vernaculars, which were not only developing robust literary traditions but also coming to replace Latin as documentary languages.

This course is comprised of two literary clusters. In “Fourteenth-Century Pandemic Literature,” we will begin with Boccaccio’s Decameron (1352), an early work of Italian vernacular prose (which we will read in translation). Set in a posh quarantine outside of Florence in early 1348, the Decameron will serve as “ground zero” for our reading of an adjacent tradition, fourteenth-century pandemic literature in the English vernacular by Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-98), the anonymous Pearl-poet, and the mystic Julian of Norwich (b. 1343). While these texts don’t take the plague as their direct subject, we will contemplate how they are haunted by it via deferred language and displaced topics. In “Fifteenth-Century Post-Apocalyptic Literature,” we will study literary and aesthetic forms that arose subsequent to the Black Death, such as the danse macabre (“skeleton dance”) motif and ars moriendi bene (“art of dying well”) tradition, to discern how early fifteenth-century citizens—for whom the Great Mortality was part of the common cultural memory—were encouraged to attend to their “lives after death” while they still could.

Students will read Chaucer in Middle English (with copious notes and glosses). Other works will be read in translation, with original-language versions available for students who want to work with them. The course is oriented around a research paper (ca. 20 pages), in which students may address a post-medieval topic relevant to the course’s rubric. This course counts toward the pre-1800 requirement for the English graduate students. Additionally, it counts toward the graduate certificate in Medieval Studies.

**Eng 717:01**            **Eighteenth Century Studies:**  
**J. Solinger**           **W 6:00-8:30 pm**  
   [solinger@olemiss.edu](mailto:solinger@olemiss.edu)

This seminar will examine the history of the anxious response to novel reading, from the rise of the novel to the present. Jane Austen, the only early novelist who continues to be widely read outside the academy, will be our tour guide through an offbeat study of the novel, one that focuses on “escapism,” a too often overlooked critical term in the entangled histories of the novel and pop culture. From Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* (1752) to Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1799/1817), some of the most popular early novels incorporated characters and scenes of reading that dramatized what happens when a person gets lost in a book. In fact, one of the origins of novel criticism is the novel itself, a genre whose efforts to define and defend its mass appeal inevitably addressed the ethics of escapist reading. To its various detractors, reading novels contributed to the growth of delinquency and anti-social behavior, including becoming dangerously aroused as well as becoming desensitized to violence. Defenses of the novel—both within the novels themselves and in the critical reviews that emerged alongside the upstart genre—presented novel reading as a necessary substitute for experience, alluring readers with competing visions of reality and hopes for a better world. And so, from the very beginning, reading novels was understood as an escapist affair often prompting calls to police reading through the vehicle of criticism. Tracing escapist reading’s legacy into the twentieth century and beyond, we’ll consider how later generations of Austen’s readers have continued to spook academics, critics, and even politicians. We’ll address such questions as: what’s the difference

between an escapist reader and an escapist writer? Under what conditions is escapism tolerated by so-called serious people? What's the difference between critical and uncritical reading? To what extent is the prospect of escape an enabling condition of criticism and fiction? In addition to Austen, novelists on the syllabus may include Charlotte Lennox, Maria Edgeworth, and Sir Walter Scott.

**Eng 725**                      **Studies in Modern British Literature**  
**I. Whittington**            **M 3-5:30**  
[iwhittin@olemiss.edu](mailto:iwhittin@olemiss.edu)

Ireland has always enjoyed a position at once central and tangential to the stories we tell about English-language modernism. Irish writers, from W.B. Yeats and James Joyce to Samuel Beckett, occupy a hallowed place in conventional narratives of the period, and yet the concerns and themes taken up by Irish writers were often far from what we consider “typically” modernist: rural life, national struggle, and religion don't fit easily into the idea of modernism as cosmopolitan, autonomous, and godless. Moreover, the legacies of modernism in Ireland have, as elsewhere, been varied and fitful. This course seeks to thread the big names of Irish modernism together with those that don't fit the pattern, in order to trace connections across both time and genre. Our focus will be on fiction and drama of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. We will devote four weeks to Joyce's prose epic *Ulysses*; prospective students may want to spend some of the break getting a head start there. (We'll be using the Hans Gabler edition.) Other texts will be chosen from a list of authors including Oscar Wilde, Yeats and Lady Gregory, J.M. Synge, Sean O'Casey, Elizabeth Bowen, Flann O'Brien, Beckett, Brian Friel, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, Eimar McBride, Anne Enright, Mike McCormack, and Anna Burns.

**Eng 731**                      **Studies in Literary Genres**  
**D. Kreisel**                    **W 3-5:30**  
[dkk@olemiss.edu](mailto:dkk@olemiss.edu)

Thomas More's coinage “utopia” in 1516 inaugurated two meanings of the word—the initial meaning of More's title U-topia, no place, is complicated by Utopia's “poet laureate,” who argues that the island should be called Eu-topia, or good place. The inheritors of this tension are two major strains within the utopian tradition. The first is properly Utopian writing, or place-building speculative fiction that sets about constructing ideal physical worlds. The second strain, “utopianist” writing, includes political philosophy in the socialist and Marxist traditions that makes implicit claims about the potential abstraction of exemplary human behavior across geographical and temporal boundaries. In the earliest Utopian writing, these strains co-existed within the same literary works. Later these strains became disarticulated into separate genres. In this course we will read a wide range of literary u/dystopias, beginning with Thomas More and ending with recent dystopian CliFi (climate change fiction), in order to trace the tensions between these various meanings of “utopia.” We will contextualize these literary texts with a robust program of historical and theoretical reading. Texts may include: More, *Utopia*; Cavendish, *The Blazing World*; Bellamy, *Looking Backward*; Morris, *News from Nowhere*; Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming*

Race; Hudson, *A Crystal Age*; Trollope, *The Fixed Period*; Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*; Butler, *Parable of the Sower*; Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future*; and theory and criticism by Fredric Jameson, Ernst Bloch, Ruth Levitas, Herbert Marcuse, and others.

**Eng 735:01            Studies in the Novel:**  
**M. Bhagat-Kennedy T 6-8:30**  
[mbk@olemiss.edu](mailto:mbk@olemiss.edu)

This seminar constellates a range of historical novels to analyze the relationship between history and literature, with a focus on how fiction (re)interprets pivotal events in a particular community or nation's past and consolidates collective identities. Beginning in nineteenth-century Britain, we will travel across a number of world regions to examine how authors adapted and departed from established models of the historical novel to reinvent the genre in light of their own sociocultural and political contexts. Categories to be explored will include historical romances, alternate histories, revisionist histories, and historical metafiction. We will examine works by Maria Edgeworth, Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper, Sol Plaatje, Gabriel García Márquez, Octavia Butler, and Yaa Gyasi, among others.

**Eng 743                Studies in Literature and the Environment**  
**A. Fisher-Wirth     T 3-5:30**  
[afwirth@olemiss.edu](mailto:afwirth@olemiss.edu)

ENG 743, Literature and the Environment, will be taught as a seminar in ecopoetry, mostly American, mostly contemporary, but with works also from 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and from around the world. Poets have always written about nature, of course. Ecopoetry, too, has in some sense always existed, but it is now in floodtide. This course can offer only the tiniest glimpse at what is an enormous, worldwide outpouring of work as poets have responded—and are responding—to the rapidly intensifying environmental crisis. But I hope it will suggest some major areas of concern, artistic approaches, and avenues to pursue.

Works read will include some of these: Nickole Brown, *To Those Who Were Our First Gods*; Adam Dickinson, *Anatomic*; Camille Dungy, *Trophic Cascade*; Forrest Gander and John Kinsella, *Redstart: An Ecological Poetics*; Brenda Hillman, *Extra Hidden Life Among the Days*; Layli Long Soldier, *Whereas*; Craig Santos Perez, *Habitat Threshold*; Ed Roberson, *To See the Earth Before the End of the World*; Brian Teare, *Doomstead Days*; selections from Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street, *The Ecopoetry Anthology*; selections from poetry from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania, all forthcoming in *Global South*, edited by Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street. The class will combine lecture and discussion. It will include reading journals, a nature journal, and a final project—academic, creative, or hybrid.

**Eng 776:01 Studies in Southern Literature: Southern Environmental Representation, 1970-2019**

**J. Watson TH 3:00-5:30 pm**

[jwatson@olemiss.edu](mailto: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 concepts in environmental studies and an attempt to explore a growing body of post-Earth Day creative works that confront environmental questions and challenges on southern ground(s). 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 environmental studies with creative texts that explore the landscapes and cultures of the U.S. South. Topics and theoretical frameworks to be covered include: bioregionalism, disturbance ecology, environmental justice, postcolonial ecocriticism, extinction studies, multispecies ecology, queer ecology, the Anthropocene, and eco-speculative fiction. Primary texts are likely to include most (but not all) of the following: James Dickey, *Deliverance*, Behn Zeitlin, dir., *Beasts of the Southern Wild*; Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones*; Ann Pancake, *Strange As This Weather Has Been*; Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden* (Book); Mayra Montero, *In the Palm of Darkness*; Linda Hogan, *Power*; Madeline ffitch, *Stay and Fight*; Brian Reed, *S-Town* (serial podcast); Jeff VanderMeer, *Area X: The Southern Reach Trilogy*. Other course requirements include weekly online reader-response journals, in-class “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 required reading assignments for the first class meeting on Thursday, January 20.



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