

# Spring 2019 English Department Graduate Courses

## **Summary:**

ENGL884: Theories of Genre (Leitch)

*Monday 12:20-3:20*

ENGL876: Accessible User Experience (AUX): Rhetorical theory, digital composing, and inclusive design (Zdenek)

*Monday 3:30-6:15*

ENGL870: Transhistorical Milton (Poole)

*Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45*

ENGL846: Ocean Cultures in the Long Nineteenth Century (Carroll)

*Tuesday/Thursday 11:00-12:15*

ENGL667: Black Activism and Print Culture in the Nineteenth Century and Digital Age (Foreman)

*Tuesday 2:00-5:00*

ENGL874: The Power of Objects in Early American Literature (Brückner)

*Wednesday 9:05-12:05*

ENGL688: Intro to Comp Theory and the Teaching of Writing (Cucciarre)

*Thursday 12:30-3:15*

ENGL872: African American Modernism (Spaulding)

*Friday 9:05-12:05*

## **ENGL884: Theories of Genre (Studies in Literary and Cultural Theory)**

**Thomas Leitch**

**Mondays, 12:20-3:20**

*Genre* is a term that remains ubiquitous in both formal and casual discussions of literature and popular culture even though no one has ever satisfactorily defined it. The primary focus of this course, as its title attests, is not to define genre once and for all but to explore the challenges Hollywood movies have mounted to traditional genre theory. The traditionalists will be represented by Aristotle, Mikhail Bakhtin, Northrop Frye, and E.D. Hirsch, Jr., the pop-cultural theorists by André Bazin, Roland Barthes, Barry Keith Grant, and Rick Altman. The syllabus will emphasize readings in genre theory, but when they take turns leading class discussions, members of the seminar will be expected to provide prooftexts of their own choosing drawn from such Hollywood genres as the Western, the romantic comedy, the film noir, the musical, and the domestic melodrama, to test, extend, challenge, and refine these theories. Other

coursework will include a series of brief response papers on specific theorists and theoretical problems, a proposal and a bibliography for a more substantial paper of 5000 words, and that paper itself, which will be due at the end of the term.

**ENGL876: Accessible User Experience (AUX): Rhetorical theory, digital composing, and inclusive design (Special Topics in Film and Media)**

**Sean Zdenek**

**Mondays, 3:30-6:15**

In this graduate course, we will explore recent developments in rhetorical theory through the prism of web accessibility, disability studies, and multimodal composition. To what extent have universal design and disability studies reframed questions of audience, meaning, affect, effect, communication, identification, and persuasion? How does/can rhetorical theory inform usability studies and the accessible user experience (AUX)? What assumptions about bodies and minds are driving and challenging multimodal composing practices?

The readings will be situated alongside several in-class workshops on usability testing (including eye tracking) and web accessibility.

**ENGL870: Transhistorical Milton (Special Topics in Literary Theory)**

**Kristen Poole**

**Tuesday/Thursdays, 9:30-10:45**

This course will be asking a pretty big question: what is history? This question in turn spins off lots of other questions: Why does history matter in thinking about literature? How does history matter? Does history matter? What is the historical “context” of a text? What is its present, its past, its future, and what is our past, our present our future? When is the “now” of a text? When are the “nows” of a text? What do we do with historical periods? What are the ethics of dealing with people who live(d) in different times? The list could go on.

We will be thinking about history and historicism(s) at two levels. First, we will be exploring the three great poems of John Milton: *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*. Milton thought widely, deeply, and creatively about time. Some of his temporal categories (political history) will seem familiar to us, while others (primeval or prophetic time) will seem strange. We will be considering Milton’s work at a particular juncture in time (his “historical context”) even as he himself imaginatively moves widely through time and portrays his experience of time as intricately layered. Second, we will use the occasion of studying Milton to also consider the current state of historical literary criticism. Having moved from Old Historicism to New Historicism and beyond, what are the dominant modes of historical work emerging now – post-new-historicism, post-historicism, eco-historicism, multi-historicism, transhistoricism? How does the globalist move in Milton studies open new ways of thinking about time? What conceptual models continue to work for our own historical moment(s)? How does historical criticism, broadly conceived, frustrate or enable the types of questions we want to ask of literature today?

The course will have a series of assignments that are geared towards honing the skills of writing an academic article. This work will culminate in a long research paper. Students are encouraged to adapt the course content to their own intellectual interests.

**ENGL846: Ocean Cultures in the Long Nineteenth Century (Special Topics in British Literature)**

**Siobhan Carroll**

**Tuesday/Thursdays, 11:00-12:15**

*Transatlantic/Transnational Track*

What would it mean to place the ocean at the center of our thinking about nineteenth-century literature? Legally constructed as the first truly global space, the ocean was arguably *the* essential site of contest, circulation, and exchange during the nineteenth century. Building on a wealth of “blue humanities” and “oceanic turn” scholarship, this seminar will consider texts from the British Empire and its imperial rivals in terms of their engagement with the inhuman (and often inhumane) space of the ocean. We will read canonical texts such as Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1787), Jane Austen’s *Persuasion* (1817) and Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1850) alongside lesser-known works from maritime print culture. Other authors likely to appear on the final syllabus include Mary Seacole, Jules Verne, and Herman Melville. Assignments will include an archival project and a final seminar paper of 18-20 pages.

**ENGL667: Black Activism and Print Culture in the Nineteenth Century and the Digital Age**

**Gabrielle Foreman**

**Tuesdays, 2:00-5:00**

*Race/Ethnicity Track*

Black activists of the nineteenth century are called abolitionists so routinely that it goes unmarked and unnoticed. Yet the anti-slavery movement dissipated as the Civil War ended, while many reformers—Henry Highland Garnet, Frances E.W. Harper, Frederick Douglass and Mary Ann Shadd Cary, for example—remained active into the 1880s and 1890s. This class re-centers Black activism in relation to the Colored Conventions Movement, whose genesis predates the antebellum abolitionist movement and continued, indeed grew, in scope and force after the Civil War. We will sometimes pair literature published in African American newspapers with conventions. David Walker’s *Appeal* will appear on our syllabus next to both inaugural 1830s conventions and gatherings in the 1840s with which the *Appeal*’s print history is connected. We will consider Harper’s *Minnie’s Sacrifice* alongside the 1873 Delaware Colored Convention for which Harper was the keynote speaker and complement. We will also be reading current criticism such as the just released *The Practice of Citizenship: Black Politics and Print Culture in the Early United States* by Derrick Spires and *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America*. By also engaging issues of digital and public histories, the class also looks forward in its consideration of the past. We will examine databases that bring maps and visualization to the study of African American history. In addition to reading articles about how the digital humanities encounters historical recovery efforts, we will discuss and revise digital exhibits on the convention movement and consider projects such as Digital Harlem, [The Race and Slavery Petitions Project](#), the [Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database](#), and [Visualizing Emancipation](#). UD’s [The Colored Conventions Project](#) will provide an important hub. Indeed, instead of final papers, students will be invited to curate their own exhibits or will have the opportunity to work with scholars to create exhibits that extend from their forthcoming essays in the first edited collection to examine this movement. This class is designed so that (novice and digitally experienced) students will leave it with critically analytical and hands-on experience with cutting-edge research methods demanded on the job market today.

**ENGL874: The Power of Objects in Early American Literature (Special Topics in Print & Material Culture)**

**Martin Brückner**

**Wednesdays, 9:05-12:05**

*Print and Material Culture Track*

This seminar explores how “objects” and material culture shaped form, function, and meaning of American literature between 1750 and 1876. Using interdisciplinary approaches that examine literature in relation to material culture, early capitalism, art history, and anthropology, seminar meetings will explore how objects registered, circulated, and signified in different literary genres. Topics to be discussed are philosophies of materiality; print culture, consumer revolution(s) and the rise of capitalism; literacy and self-representation; theatricality and performance; race, gender, and objectification; the agency of “literary things” and strategies of accumulation, alienation, and fetishization. Secondary readings will tap theory, history, and critical case studies. Primary sources include biographies, travel narratives, novels, short stories, fairy tales, drama and poetry.

**ENGL688: Intro to Comp Theory and the Teaching of Writing**

**Christine Cucciarre**

**Thursdays, 12:30-3:15**

Writing and rhetoric classes on the graduate level are often steeped in teaching and pedagogical theory. That follows a long history dating back to the Greeks who thought of rhetoric as one of the main liberal arts of education. Greek rhetoricians were the writing teachers of their time and they knew how to do it well (except that they excluded mostly everyone except for rich males). In this course, we will begin with a bit of that history to lay the foundation for discussing current composition theory.

Dispelling the idea that if one can write well one can teach writing, we will understand the importance of first-year writing as a means to enter the academy. The teaching of writing in college is best accomplished with a well-trained teacher who supports the class curriculum with a strong grounding in theory. In other words, you will learn how to teach writing, why we teach writing, what are the best practices of writing instruction, and why ENGL110 is arguably the most important class for entering freshmen. You will also think deeply about your teaching ethos, the environment of your classroom, and the reasoning for choosing and controlling all of it.

You will naturally do a lot of writing in this class. There will likely be several short essays and responses, an analysis of a writing program at another university, a brief survey of research on an issue or current theory in writing studies, and a proposal for a talk at a conference on teaching writing. All of this leads up to creating the materials you’ll need to teach your own section of ENGL110 in Fall 2018. *Required for first year students.*

**ENGL872: Afro-modernism and Black Cultural Production (Special Topics in Race and Ethnicity)**

**Asa Timothy Spaulding**

**Fridays, 9:05-12:05**

*Race/Ethnicity Track*

One of the compelling yet disturbing paradoxes of modernity (whether broadly or narrowly defined) is the fact that black culture and black subjectivity has always been both central to and marginalized by modernist aesthetics. In this course we will examine African American writers, artists, and performers who have both engaged with and transformed the discourse of modernism in their cultural texts. Although much of the course will focus on figures and texts associated with the Harlem Renaissance (Jean Toomer's *Cane*, Josephine Baker, Duke Ellington), part of our central concern will be to address the ways African American cultural performers have developed a parallel and often oppositional discourse of Afro-modernism throughout subsequent decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to literary figures like Ralph Ellison and Gwendolyn Brooks, we will also examine the work of African American visual artists (James Van Der Zee, Romare Bearden) and performers (Charles Mingus, Billie Holiday) to develop a flexible definition of Afro-modernism that accounts for the aesthetic practices of these diverse artists. Course requirements will center on student research projects that will take the form of in-class presentations and a seminar-length essay (18-20 pages).