

SPRING 2008 AHAA Courses

ENGL 316 Intro to Major American Writers. Instr. Graham. The goal in this course is to increase your appreciation and understanding of American writing and to gain some familiarity with selected MAJOR writers. I have chosen to focus this semester on short fiction. We will also do some formal study of poetry using the work of Kansas writer Langston Hughes. Because poetry is making a comeback in America, a series of special dialogs are planned using videotaped poetry performances on Fridays, called "video Fridays." In this course, you will learn a certain amount of literary language, i.e. how to talk about writers and writing; how to write a literary essay; and, most of all, how to read between the lines. You will be graded on the quality of your work on two major exams, a final project, your participation in a group activity, and your general class readiness. You should **not** expect to miss classes and you **should** expect to attend lectures and readings outside of class for extra credit. The main function of this class is learning through dialog and discussion. You will be strongly encouraged to share different points of view and tolerance of difference is a must. I do give pop reading quizzes (no-make-ups) on a regular basis to keep everyone on target! You might want to pick up a used copy of Hughes' *Selected Poems* since it is a frequent item in local bookstores. For further details, consult instructor. This course fulfills the English 322 or equivalent requirement for the English major.

ENGL 320 American Literature I. Instr. Mielke. This course surveys what many identify as the foundational works of "American literature" from the pre-Columbian era through the Civil War, all of which record the continual tensions between and among the peoples and institutions vying for power in what Europeans called the New World. Taking a chronological approach to works produced in this period, and placing those works in their social and cultural contexts, we will consider the variety of ways in which residents of the Americas, and later the United States, used texts: to express communal identity, to worship and proselytize, to promote and direct settlement, to categorize and control those in the minority (especially through the category of "race"), to uphold or challenge political authority, to shape governments and social institutions, to contemplate the beautiful, to pursue human perfection, and to shape national culture. Special attention will be given to literature of New England Puritanism, the American Enlightenment, and American Romanticism. Graded work will include two exams, two essays, and multiple reading quizzes. This course fulfills the English 320 or equivalent requirement for the English major.

ENGL 322 American Literature II. Instr. Tidwell. Welcome to this survey of American Literature, 1865 to the present. Given the enormous proliferation of writing in this period, students should expect only a suggestive survey, not a comprehensive one. Nevertheless, our course expands the canon of "traditionally" anthologized texts and authors to include those whose earlier significance has been rediscovered and reaffirmed. Instead of looking only at a handful of familiar names or the canonical figures who, for political reasons, have come to constitute a standard by which all other writers should be measured, students can expect to examine a few others that help us see conceptually an American literature that is broader in scope and more inclusive in theme, subject, and style. Our course will be organized in three parts and address issues of gender, race, and class as interpretive categories. As we encounter this new, richly diverse collection of writers and texts, we shall be guided not only by an attention to formal qualities but by historical contexts too. In the time we have together, we shall also work to sharpen skills in critical reading, thinking and writing. This course fulfills the English 322 or equivalent requirement for the English major.

ENGL 322 American Literature II. Instr. M. Caminero-Santangelo. "The Multicultural Canon" This course is a survey of American literature from 1865 (the end of the Civil War) to the present, including a diversity of voices that make up "American" (U.S.) writing. We'll read works by writers who have received wide critical recognition in U.S. literary scholarship, including a selection drawn from the following: Chesnut, Twain, Chopin, Ruiz de Burton, Hemingway, Faulkner, Stevens, Pound, Eliot, Wright, Miller, Anzaldúa, Erdrich, Morrison, and so on. We will look at the historical context of the works we are reading, and the ways in which those works seem to deal with pressing issues from their own periods--in other words, with how historical concerns have shaped literary ones. We will question how these writers imagined the meanings of concepts like "freedom," "American," "literature," "artist," and even "person," as

well as how they imagined categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality intersecting with these concepts. We will also try to grasp critical terms and literary movements such as local color and regionalism; realism, naturalism, and magical realism; modernism and postmodernism; stream of consciousness; imagism; the Harlem Renaissance; etc. And we will try to make connections between literary styles or movements and their historical situations, as well. In the process of this discussion, we will of course be working on further developing skills associated with the study of literature: close reading, analysis, and the development and support of oral and written arguments. This course will be discussion-oriented rather than lecture-based; attendance and class participation will count towards the final grade. This course fulfills the English 322 or equivalent requirement for the major.

English 334: Major Authors: Richard Wright and Toni Morrison . Instr. Maryemma Graham. The course will examine selected (but not ALL) works by two American writers of singular importance. One could say that 20th century literature as we know it would not be the same had it not been for Richard Wright, the central figure in African American literature for the first half of the century and Toni Morrison, who continues to be the most important African American writer well into the twenty first century. Our purpose, therefore, is to read, study, compare, and contrast these writers, each in relationship to their own milieu, and in relationship to our understanding of what literature is and what it does, in terms of “affect” and “effect.” We will be guided by a series of questions about the culture of reading, about writing, and about the vision that these writers impart. Has the role of literature changed over the course of the two centuries in question? What challenges did each writer face? What challenges do readers face then and now? How were/are these writers perceived by their peers within their generations and across generations? How does narrative (the process of telling a story) transform under modernism (when Wright came of age) and in our own era of postmodernism (with which Morrison is most identified)? Should we put a disclaimer on the word “political” when discussing the work of socially conscious writers? Perhaps most importantly, who are “these people” who appear in the authors’ books? What do they tell us about ourselves? Both Wright and Morrison wrote/have written provocative and widely read social and literary criticism as well as fiction, so we will also have a chance to do a kind of “autobiography of the mind” as we move through the reading. Four major works by each author will be the primary reading—yes, that’s eight ENTIRE books, not all of them long, however. Two mid-terms and one case study (to be submitted as part of your **portfolio**), along with pop quizzes to keep you on your reading toes, are the major requirements. The reading is rigorous, not to be taken lightly, and everyone is expected to be part of the discussion. If you like to sit back and hear what others have to say and simply absorb, I wouldn’t recommend you take this course. This is a class for actively engaged readers, those with strongly held opinions (be prepared to be challenged), and those who simply find reading the best work by our best writers a wonderful way to spend the equivalent of a semester. A very special opportunity exists this semester to be part of the first group of readers for Wright’s newly released book, *A Father’s Law* (Harper Collins, 2008), published to coincide with the Wright centennial. Thus, we will have a mandate from the publisher, Harper Collins to consider this new *A Father’s Law* in relation to the other works in the traditional Wright canon. With any luck, we might also be privy to Morrison’s new book, *Mercy*, from which she is already reading (but no publication date as yet). Opening up a dialogue between publisher, the writer (or his/her representative), and the reader will deepen our understanding of reading as a cultural act, by unpacking the mysteries surrounding it. For starters, *Uncle Tom’s Children* and *Bluest Eye* and any background materials you can put your hands on for both Wright and Morrison.

ENGL 338 Intro to African-American Lit. Instr. Anatol. (Edwards Campus). This course is designed as an intensive survey of African American literature, introducing students to a few of the central themes in this body of work, such as slavery and its legacies; the oral tradition; establishing “Americanness”; movement and migration. The literature will include a wide variety of genres, such as slave narratives, folklore, short stories, novels, essays, drama, and poetry; it will be drawn from major periods in African American history: slavery and emancipation, reconstruction, the Harlem Renaissance, the time between the wars, the Black Arts Era, the post-Civil Rights Era. The central text will be *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (2nd edition). Students can expect 3 analytical papers, a midterm exam, and a final exam. This course fulfills the English 322 or equivalent requirement for the English major.

ENGL 479 The Literature of: Transcendentalism. Instr. Mielke. In the antebellum period, when U.S. citizens in large numbers embraced such collective causes as abolition, temperance, and prison reform, the Transcendentalists sought first and foremost to reform the individual. If one would only trust intuition, seek a direct relationship with the Divinity, and recognize the divinity of one's own soul, revelation and revolution—including the eradication of slavery and other evils—would follow. Transcendentalism was more than a philosophical or social movement, however. It inspired a generation of New England writers to develop a new literary style and to promulgate an American idealism rooted in the natural world. In this course, we will read classic works of Transcendentalism—including (but not limited to) Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* and "Self-Reliance," Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* and "Resistance to Civil Government," and Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*—as well as critical and historical articles exploring the cultural contexts of the movement. In addition, we will read fiction by Louisa May Alcott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allan Poe, all of whom expose the less-than-ideal nature of the Transcendentalists' utopian vision. **Requirements:** Students in this course will contribute to lively class discussions, write two papers, keep a reading journal, and take a final exam, as well as complete occasional homework and in-class assignments. This course fulfills the English 320 or equivalent requirement of the major.

ENGL 498 Honors Proseminar: Repression and Testimony: Or, the Literature of Social Justice. Instr. M. Caminero-Santangelo. This class will examine literature, including first-person autobiographical accounts, journalistic accounts, and novels, which has addressed situations of political oppression or repression with the potential function of enlisting readers in a project of social justice. This aim was quite clear in the antebellum slave narratives, as well as in novels like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. More recently, it has also been clear in the Latin American genre known as "*testimonio*," in which people wrote of their first-hand experiences with death squads, disappearances, and totalitarian dictatorships. This class will read selections from these and other examples (including an autobiography about Jim Crow-era segregation, a recent novel about a Sudanese refugee, and a non-fictional account of fourteen men who died in the Arizona desert in 2001 while trying to cross the border) as a way of discussing questions about literature that overtly attempts to participate in a social justice project. We will address vexed debates surrounding cultural authority and authenticity, identity politics, attempts to represent the voice of the "oppressed," revision of strategies used in slave narrative or in *testimonio*, ethical and rhetorical appeals to an assumed readership, etc. Books may include the following: Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*; Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; Wright, *Black Boy*; Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*; Menchu, *I, Rigoberta Menchu*; Argueta, *One Day of Life*; Tobar, *The Tattooed Soldier*; Urrea, *The Devil's Highway*; Eggers, *What is the What?*; Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies*; Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*. This course fulfills the English 322 or equivalent requirement for the English major.

ENGL 570 Topics in American Literature: Borderlands. Instr. Anatol. (Edwards Campus). In this course, we will examine literary representations of journeys across the borders of U.S. society. On the most basic level, our project will be to investigate the experiences of subjects who cross geo-political boundaries and immigrate to and/or travel through the "land of opportunity" in search of a better life. We will contrast these experiences with those of members of the population who "belong" as a result of forced migrations. In addition to these literal border crossings, we will also consider metaphorical traversals, including ways in which the categories of race, ethnicity, class, and gender are escaped, troubled, and revealed as less immutable than at first appears. Course materials focus on, but are not exclusive to, the African-American experience. Texts may include: Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*; Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw*; Octavia Butler, *Kindred*; Julie Dash, *Daughters of the Dust* [film]; Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine*; Randall Kenan, *A Visitation of Spirits*; Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*; Nella Larsen, *Passing*; N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*; Toni Morrison, *Beloved*; John Sayles, *Lone Star* [film]. Supplemental critical readings will also be assigned. This course fulfills the English 322 or equivalent requirement for the English major.

ENGL 574 African American Literature: Hughes and Parks. Instr. Tidwell. Langston Hughes and Gordon Parks emerged from inauspicious beginnings, in which de jure and de facto racism attempted to suppress their creative energies, to claim their rightful places as two of the most important voices in American and African American literature and culture. Often praised as "the poet laureate of African

American art," Hughes, in more than fifty books, plays, and other forms of art, left an enduring commentary on the role Black folk and vernacular traditions played in African American identity formation. Touted as a "renaissance man," Parks equally distinguished himself as an autobiographer, novelist, poet, film director, composer of opera, and, most importantly, as a photographer. Our course will interrogate the humanistic value that derives from the creative output of these two authors. We shall look to their works for what might cause us to ask who we are, revise our relationships with others, and rethink the way we live. In so doing, we shall explore the implications of their humanistic pursuits for defining a tradition or history of African American art and letters. These and other such issues form the bases of this course and will be answered in the context of poetry, essays, short fiction, novels, autobiographies, drama, film, and photography inspired by these two major creative voices. For a more complete description, please request details from Professor Tidwell at tidwelje@ku.edu. [This course fulfills the English 322 or equivalent requirement for the English major.](#)

ENGL 575 Literature of American South. Instr. Fowler. Arguably, wars are fought to decide who will represent what Toni Morrison calls "the dominant cultural body," and who will be recognized as the marginalized other. When the South lost the Civil War, an entire region experienced the loss of the subject position. English 575, Literature of the American South, will focus on how white and black and male and female writers of the American South struggled with the shadowy role of "the other." Assigned texts will include works by Frederick Douglass, Mark Twain, William Faulkner, Richard Wright, Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor, Tennessee Williams, and Walker Percy. Course requirements will include one paper (approximately 10 typewritten pages), one journal article review, response papers, a midterm, and a final exam. Class participation also is a requirement. [This course fulfills the English 322 or equivalent requirement for the English major.](#)

ENGL 590 Studies In: The Transnational Experience in American Literature: 1880-1920 and 1980-2007. Instr. S. Harris. Crosslisted with HNRS 492. *Please Note: This course is restricted to juniors and seniors.* This course will use stories, novels, memoirs, and essays to compare and contrast the experiences of "immigration" and of "transnationalism" in the United States—including asking whether those two terms point towards similar or different experiences. We will focus on two periods. The first few weeks of the course, covering works written between 1880-1920, will begin with nonfiction by writers such as Randolph Bourne, whose essay "Trans-National America" articulated many of the issues that have haunted U.S. immigration debates from the early 20th century to the present. In this first section we will also read classic fiction by Jewish-American writer Abraham Cahan, in order to see how the parameters of the debate were set at the turn into the 20th century. The second two-thirds of the semester will jump to the late 20th century, working with a broad array of materials such as memoirs by Iranian-American Tara Bahrapour's *To See and See Again: A Life in Iran and America*, and fiction such as Indian-American Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, Mexican-American Sandra Cisneros's *Caramelo*, and Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*. We will use a variety of lenses to peruse these writings, including historical and social environments, gender, and race. We will also discuss the impact of technology, especially communications technologies, on the experience of crossing borders. We will supplement our primary readings with historical and theoretical articles written across several disciplinary areas, such as selections from Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Throughout, our interest will be to explore the differences between "assimilationist," "transnational," and "diasporic" models of immigrant experience and the ways that these models are displayed in the creative output of immigrants/transnationals themselves.

ENGL 908 Seminar in Literary Criticism: Different Shades of Green: Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism. Instr. B. Caminero-Santangelo. If pressing environmental crises have spurred the development of environmental criticism in literary studies, the increasing awareness of how such crises have been and will continue to disproportionately impact the vulnerable populations of the postcolonial world have made the nexus of postcolonialism and ecocriticism a particularly urgent area of study. Yet, this intersection is fraught. Ecocriticism has been developed primarily from the perspective of Western critics using Anglo-American literature and has often worked from assumptions, common in Western environmental movements, which are extremely problematic in postcolonial contexts. One only needs to explore the connections between "conservation" and imperialism, both in the past and present, to begin recognizing the limitations to what Lawrence Buell refers to as "first wave" ecocriticism for the exploration

of postcolonial literatures. This course will focus on both the tensions between postcolonialism and ecocriticism, as well as the ways they might be productively brought together. Along the way, the course will survey the major concepts, debates, and voices in both environmental and postcolonial criticism, in addition to the critical work already done which has tried to bridge them. We will also be reading and discussing some African literary texts as a means to explore the issues at stake. However, the focus will remain on the broader theoretical concerns, and the final project will allow students to examine colonial or postcolonial text(s) of their choosing in terms of those concerns. The course will coincide with a colloquium (in late March) focused on the intersection of literary and environmental studies in the context of Africa. This colloquium should add significantly to our explorations of the issues mentioned above, especially since all the presenters will be prominent scholars in African/Postcolonial studies. Students need not have any extensive background in postcolonial theory or environmental criticism, but they should have experience with critical theory more generally. Potential Texts: Bill Ashcroft *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, Karen Blixen *Out of Africa*, Lawrence Buell *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, J. M. Coetzee *Disgrace*, Laurence Coupe *The Green Studies Reader*, Nurrudin Farah *Secrets*, Neil Lazarus *Postcolonial Literary Studies*, Zakes Mda *Heart of Redness*, Niyi Osundare *Selected Poems*, Ken Saro-Wiwa *Selected Writings*.