

LITERATURE SUBJECTS

COURSE 21L SUPPLEMENT TO THE BULLETIN



SPRING 2023

"Better to be in the forest, I thought. Where the dreams were shrouded in fog and cold and the group knew its order and stride by the weight of our want." — Cherie Dimaline

Back: Polychrome mosaic emblema (panel) showing fish and sea creatures, Pompeii, House of the Geometric Mosaics Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli
Left to Right: Detective silhouette; Shuri played by Letitia Wright (*Black Panther*, 2018); *Rashomon* (Director: Akira Kurosawa 1951)



LITERATURE SECTION

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21L	Units	Site/Course For	SUBJECT TITLE	INSTRUCTOR	DAY	TIME	ROOM
INTRODUCTORY							
21L.000J	3.0-9	H	CI-474W-Same Subject as 21W.041J Making Monsters [Writing About Literature]	Lutz, M.	MW	1-2:30p	56-167
21L.003	3.0-9	H	CI-H The Birth of the Global Short Story [Reading Fiction]	Terlunen, M.	TR	9:30-11a	4-253
21L.004 L1	3.0-9	H	CI-H Social Poetics [Reading Poetry]	Bennett, J.	MW	1-2:30p	66-148
21L.004 L2	3.0-9	H	CI-H Reading Poetry	Jackson, N.	TR	3:30-5p	2-103
21L.007	3.0-9	H	CI-H Thinking with Plants and Animals [World Literature]	Finch, L.	TR	1-2:30p	56-167
21L.008J	3.0-9	H/A	CI-H-Same subject as 21A.912J, 21H.356J, 21W.341J, CI-H Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies	Degraff, M.	T	2-5p	E15-335
21L.011	3-3.6	A	CI-H Introduction to Film Studies (Lecture) Introduction to Film Studies (Screening) Introduction to Film Studies (Recitation 1) Introduction to Film Studies (Recitation 2)	Svensson, A. / / /	T M R R	3:30-5p 7-10p 3-4p 4-5p	3-270 3-270 1-273 1-273
21L.014J	3.0-9	H	CI-H-Same subject as 21H.007J The Trojan War [Empire: Introduction to Ancient and Medieval Studies]	Bahr, A./Forte, A.	MW	9:30-11a	1-246
21L.019	3.0-9	H	CI-H Liars, Cheaters, and Thieves [Introduction to European and Latin American Fiction]	Terrones, J.	MW	3:30-5p	56-167
21L.020J	3.0-9	H	CI-H-Same Subject as WES.345J Globalization: The Good, the Bad and the In-Between	Resnick, M.	TR	3-4:30p	14N-325
21L.024	3.0-9	H	CI-H Life, Death, and Freedom [Literature and Existentialism]	Doyle, C.	MW	11-12:30p	56-169
SAMPLINGS (6-UNITS)							
21L.310	2-0.4		Detective Fiction [Bestsellers] (Ends March 24)	Tapscott, S.	W	7-10p	14N-112
21L.320	2-0.4		Dante's <i>Inferno</i> and <i>Purgatorio</i> [Big Books]	Fuller, M.	T	9:30-11a	4-144
INTERMEDIATE							
21L.433	3.0-9	H	Film Styles and Genres	Stevens, K.	TR	1-2:30p	5-231
21L.435	3.0-9	H	For Better or For Worse? : Fictions of Technology [Literature and Film]	Doyle, C.	MW	3:30-5p	4-253
21L.452J	3.0-9	H/SS	Same Subject as 21A.340 Literature and Philosophy	Gubar, M./Setiya, K.	MW	11-12:30p	26-328
21L.457	3.0-9	H	The New Testament in the Roman Empire [The Bible: New Testament]	Letteney, M.	TR	1-2:30p	2-105
21L.471	3.0-9	H	Novels of Mystery, Detection, and Suspense [Major Novels]	Buzard, J.	TR	3:30-5p	4-144
21L.486J	3.0-9	A	Same subject as 21M.309 Gender and Performance [Modern Drama]	Henderson, D.	TR	1-2:30p	66-156
21L.487	3.0-9	H	Modern Poetry	Tapscott, S.	M	7-10p	14N-112
21L.488	3.0-9	H	21st-Century Speculative Fiction [Contemporary Literature]	Finch, L.	TR	11-12:30p	2-103
21L.490J	3.0-9	H	Same subject as 21G.077J Introduction to the Classics of Russian Literature	Khotimsky, M.	TR	2:30-4p	14N-221
21L.491J	3.0-9	H	Same subject as 21G.066 Gateway to Korean Literature and Culture	Denecke, W.	MW	9:30-11a	2-103
21L.504J	3.0-9	H	Same subject as WES.340 Race, Gender, and Secret Identities in U.S. Superhero Comics [Race and Identity in American Literature]	Terrones, J.	MW	1-2:30p	14N-112
INTERNATIONAL LITERATURES							
21L.601J	3.0-9	H	Same Subject as 21A.355 Old English and <i>Beowulf</i>	Bahr, A.	MW	11-12:30p	4-253
21L.609	2-0.4		Greek Readings (Ends March 24)	Forte, A.	MW	1-2p	1-246
21L.610	2-0.4						
21L.611	3-0.3		Latin 1 (Ends March 24)	Alexander, G.	TR	1-2:30p	4-144
21L.612	3-0.3		Latin 2 (Begins April 3)				
21L.620J	3.0-9	H	Same Subject as 21G.330 Introduction to French Literature	Perreau, B.	T	7-10p	14N-313
SEMINAR							
21L.702	3.0-9	H	CI-M James Joyce [Studies in Fiction]	Buzard, J.	TR	7-8:30p	2-103
21L.705	3.0-9	H	CI-M Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> & Modern Speculative Fiction [Major Authors]	Fuller, M.	MW	11-12:30p	4-144
21L.706J	3-3.6	H	CI-M-Intro with CHS.305 Film Theory and Criticism [Studies in Film]	Stevens, K.	TR	3:30-5p	4-253
21L.707	3.0-9	H	CI-M Posthumanism [Problem's in Cultural Interpretations]	Mangrum, B.	TR	11-12:30p	4-251
SPECIAL SUBJECT							
21L.S88	3-3.3		School Stories [Special Subject in Literature]	Gubar, M.	MW	1:30-3p	1-135

TIME	Monday/Wednesday					
9:30 AM	21L.014J AB/AF 9:30-11a	21L.491J WD 9:30-11a				
10:00 AM						
10:30 AM						
11:00 AM	21L.024 CD 11-12:30p	21L.452J MG/KS 11-12:30p	21L.705 MF 11-12:30	21L.601J AB 11-12:30p		
11:30 AM						
12:00 PM						
12:30 PM						
1:00 PM	21L.000J ML 1-2:30p	21L.004 L1 JB 1-2:30p	21L.504J JT 1-2:30p	21L.608/609 AF 1-2:30p Ends March 24	21L.588 MG 1:30-3p	
1:30 PM						
2:00 PM						
2:30 PM						
3:00 PM						
3:30 PM	21L.019 JT 3:30-5p	21L.435 CD 3:30-5p				
4:00 PM						
4:30 PM						
7:00 PM	21L.011 AS M 7-10p Screening	21L.310 ST W 7-10p Ends March 24	21L.487 ST M 7-10p			
7:30 PM						
8:00 PM						
8:30 PM						
9:00 PM						
9:30 PM						

TIME	Tuesday/Thursday									
9:30 AM	21L.003 MT 9:30-11a			21L.320 MF T 9:30-11a						
10:00 AM										
10:30 AM										
11:00 AM			21L.488 LF 11-12:30p			21L.707 BM 11-12:30p				
11:30 AM										
12:00 PM										
12:30 PM										
1:00 PM	21L.007 LF 1-2:30p	21L.457 MLE 1-2:30p	21L.433 KS 1-2:30p	21L.486J DH 1-2:30p	21L.611 GA 1-2p Ends March 24	21L.612 GA 1-2p Begins April 3				
1:30 PM										
2:00 PM										
2:30 PM							21L.490J MK 2:30-4p	21L.008J MD T 2-5p		
3:00 PM										
3:30 PM	21L.004 L2 NJ 3:30-5p	21L.471 JB 3:30-5p	21L.020J MR 3-4:30p	21L.011 AS T 3:30-5p Lecture	21L.011 AS R 3-4p Recitation 1	21L.011 AS R 4-5p Recitation 2	21L.706J KS 3:30-5p			
4:00 PM										
4:30 PM										
7:00 PM										
7:30 PM	21L.620J BP T 7-10p	21L.702 JB 7-8:30p								
8:00 PM										
8:30 PM										
9:00 PM										
9:30 PM										

INTRODUCTORY

Same
Subject as
21W.041[J]

21L.00[J] (H, CI-HW) Writing About Literature: Making Monsters

MW 1-2:30p

Michael Lutz

56-167

(Pre-1900)

This course will look at literature centered on monstrous figures to think about two things. The first: how do monsters (like devilish magicians, mad scientists, and any number of nameless creatures) show or de-monstrate the fears, anxieties, and problems of specific cultural moments throughout history? What are the techniques authors use to fashion their monstrous characters, and what are their implications? The second: what are we to make of the fact that, while monsters are often objects of terror, they are also frequently sympathetic figures, vibrant fictional characters whose complexities seem to protest the fear they are (supposedly) meant to inspire?

Indeed, many of the monsters we will cover are, to some readers, the heroes of their stories.

By reading literature in genres ranging from 16th century English drama to the 19th century Gothic novel to contemporary American horror fiction, this course will teach you to understand and write about—through close reading, historical and contextual research, and comparative analysis of texts—literature’s rich, ongoing, and ambivalent tradition of making monsters.

TR 9:30-11a

21L.003 (H, CI-H) Reading Fiction

Milan Terlunen

4-253

There have always been stories that are short, but “the short story” has been a recognized category of literature for only about 200 years. Short stories emerged and flourished in magazines and newspapers of the early 1800s. In this course you’ll learn about the first century of short stories as they developed across the world. You’ll develop skills for analyzing their techniques of plotting, characterization and style. In addition, the course will guide you through your own research into short stories from times and places that interest you.

This course has a global scope. You’ll read stories from the US, Britain, France, Germany, and Russia that continue to be influential in the English-speaking world alongside stories from countries including Brazil, China, India, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, and Nigeria. All stories will be provided in English translation and students with relevant language skills are encouraged to read stories in the original language. The course also features numerous African American writers, who haven’t been part of the standard history of the genre. The shortness of short stories means you can broaden your horizons very quickly, before diving more deeply into the stories that interest you most. Throughout the second half of the semester, you’ll work on a final project to create a digital publication of an out-of-print short story of your choice.

INTRODUCTORY

Lecture 1

21L.004 (H, CI-H) Reading Poetry: Social Poetics

MW 1-2:30p

Joshua Bennett

66-148

The central concern of this class is the relationship between the social lives of everyday people and contemporary poetics, with a special emphasis on what June Jordan once called “the difficult miracle of Black poetry in America”. How does poetry help us to know one another? And how might we better understand the role of poetry, of poetics, for those historically barred from the very practice of reading or writing, from ownership (even of one’s own body), and various generally recognized forms of belonging? For the purposes of this course, these will be some of our animating questions.

As a group, we will read and listen to the works of Toni Morrison, Aretha Franklin, Tracy K. Smith, MF DOOM, Saul Williams, and Claudia Rankine, among others. We will compose nature poems, and meditate on the affective range of classic Motown records. We will study lyric poetry on the printed page, as well as spoken word performances that find their most vivid expression in the open air. All toward the aim of elaborating a working theory of social poetics, a poetics of sociality, made to the measure of the present day.

Lecture 2

21L.004 (H, CI-H) Reading Poetry

TR 3:30-5p

Noel Jackson

2-103

(Pre-1900)

An introduction to poetry in English, chiefly by British and American poets, spanning more than 400 years of literary history. The aim is to demystify “great,” highly canonical poetry and to analyze it collaboratively for insight and pleasure. We will explore Renaissance, eighteenth-century, Romantic, and modernist poetry in some detail. Though the organization of the subject is mostly chronological, our focus will be less on names and dates than on cultivating skills in careful reading and effective writing. Poets to be read may include William Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney, William Wordsworth, John Keats, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, T.S. Eliot, and Elizabeth Bishop.

INTRODUCTORY

TR 1-2:30p

Laura Finch

56-167

21L.007 (H, CI-H) World Literatures: Thinking with Plants and Animals

Climate crisis and COVID-19 are forceful reminders of the entangled lives of everyone and everything on the planet. This class turns to contemporary world literature to consider ways of living together that are often ignored in contemporary society. How do plant, animal, mineral, fungal, microbial, or bacterial networks think and live together? We will read novels, short stories, and poetry that place non-human characters at their centre: what does a story look like from the point of view of mushrooms, moss, trees, or a piece of plastic waste at sea? Can we learn to be kinder, more open, and more oriented to a world where we value the lives of the most vulnerable rather than the creation of wealth? We will think about these ideas through the lens of social justice, such as the profit-driven response to the current pandemic, environmental racism, and the use of Indigenous lands for nuclear mining.

This class is a CI-H subject, which means that it will provide you with a foundation in written and oral communication. Over the course of the class you will write and revise a series of short discussion board posts and essays, and share your ideas with the class through presentations. Assessment is based on consistent participation and engagement throughout the semester, rather than being heavily weighted towards a final paper.

**Same
Subject as
24.912[J]
21H.106[J]
21W.741[J]**

T 2-5p

Michel DeGraff

E15-335

21L.008[J] (A/H, CI-H) Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies

Interdisciplinary survey of people of African descent that draws on the overlapping approaches of history, literature, anthropology, legal studies, media studies, performance, linguistics, and creative writing. Connects the experiences of African-Americans and of other American minorities, focusing on social, political, and cultural histories, and on linguistic patterns. Includes lectures, discussions, workshops, and required field trips that involve minimal cost to students.

INTRODUCTORY

Lecture
T 3:30-5p
3-270

21L.011 (A, CI-H) Introduction to Film Studies

Screening
M 7-10p
3-270

Concentrates on close analysis and criticism of a wide range of films, including works from the early silent period, documentary and avant-garde films, European art cinema, Hong Kong cinema, and contemporary Hollywood fare. Through comparative reading of films from different eras and countries, students develop the skills to turn their in-depth formal analyses into interpretations and explore theoretical issues related to spectatorship. Syllabus varies from term to term, but usually includes such filmmakers as the Coppolas, Spielberg, Eisenstein, Keaton, Godard, Peele, Jenkins, Chan, Deren, Varda, the Wachowskis, and Wong.

Recitation 1
R 3-4p
1-273

Recitation 2
R 4-5p
1-273

Alexander Svensson

Same
Subject as
21H.007[J]

21L.014[J] (H, CI-H) Introduction to Ancient and Medieval Studies: The Trojan War

MW 9:30-11a

Arthur Bahr &
Alexander Forte

1-246

(Pre-1900)

The Trojan War: why does a legendary conflict that took place thousands of years ago continue to inspire contemporary literature, film media, video games, and more? This class dives into that question in order to understand the cultural richness—and surprising, continuing relevance—of the ancient and medieval world. Specific topics include the early history of archaeology in the eastern Mediterranean; ancient Greek poetic traditions associated with the clash between Achaeans and Trojans; and the late antique and medieval accounts of defeated Trojan refugees that serve as an ideological basis for concepts of nation and ethnicity.

INTRODUCTORY

MW 3:30-5p

Joaquín Terrones

56-167

21L.019 (H, CI-H) Introduction to European and Latin American Fiction: Liars, Cheaters, and Thieves

Fiction writers are masters of the art of deception. They lie all the time. It should come as no surprise, then, that some of their most enduring (and sometimes endearing) characters are themselves liars, swindlers, adulterers, rogues and criminals. This course will introduce you to European and Latin American fiction through a selection of its most memorable lowlifes. We will examine how novels, short stories, graphic novels, and films use these outsiders and their transgressions to comment on societal norms and problems. Some of the works we will analyze and discuss are the *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Voltaire's *Candide*, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Machado de Assis's *Epitaph of a Small Winner*, Jorge Luis Borges's *A Universal History of Infamy*, Gabriel García Márquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, and Clarice Lispector's *The Hour of the Star*. Class projects will include the opportunity for students to create—using various media—their own lowlife characters.

Same
Subject as
WGS.145[J]

TR 3-4:30p

Margery Resnick

14N-325

21L.020[J] (H, CI-H) Globalization: The Good, the Bad, and the In-Between

This subject examines the cultural, artistic, social, and political impact of globalization across international borders in an historical context. Novels and short stories as well as case studies on global health, human trafficking, and labor migration illuminate the shaping influence of contemporary globalization on gender, race, ethnicity, and class. Guest lecturers visit class as we examine the impact of globalization on cultural identity, the arts, the politics of language, and the media. How has migration changed notions of cultural and racial hybridity? What can we learn from specific examples of global media and expressive culture including popular music and film? In what ways has globalization affected human rights? Students develop sensitivity to other cultures and the ability to read broadly across national boundaries. Furthermore, the emphasis on the historical context gives students a foundation to continue work in literature, history, and the arts from a global perspective.

INTRODUCTORY

MW 11-12:30p

Caitlyn Doyle

56-169

21L.024 (H, CI-H) Literature & Existentialism: Life, Death and Freedom

Are we free? Do we live authentically? What is the meaning of life? What does it mean to die? This course examines the principal ideas regarding the human condition developed through existential philosophy, literature, and film. Death, absurdity, alienation, freedom, and authenticity are some of the key concepts that we will grapple with as we engage with works by foundational figures of existential thought such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Beauvoir, Sartre, and Camus. We will also consider films that explore and challenge existential themes by directors such as Kurosawa, Resnais, and Bergman. In addition to exploring the affinity between existential philosophy and art, students will investigate the different capacities of various media as they compare existential themes across philosophical, political, literary, and filmic texts.

SAMPLINGS

(Ends March 24)

21L.310 Bestsellers: Detective Fiction

W 7-10p

Stephen Tapscott

14N-112

In this course, we will examine detective fiction as both a mode of thinking (we ask questions about our lives) and as a literary genre. As a mode of thinking it's been around since Sophocles (we read the *Oedipus Rex*); as a literary genre it emerges in the nineteenth century (Edgar Allen Poe, Wilkie Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle), develops through classic twentieth-century and modernist and noir-ish texts (Agatha Christie, G. K. Chesterton, Raymond Chandler) and booms through postmodern uses of the genre's structures (Jorge Louis Borges, Patricia Highsmith, and others). We'll end with some film examples (Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock.) We'll also consider formal, ideological, and philosophical aspects of detective fiction, using essays by structuralist/narratology critics (Barthes, Peter Brooks) and essays by other recent critics including Jaques Lacan and Sally Munt. We'll pay special attention to the cognitive work of "detection" and to the character of the detective: his or her social position, gender, intelligence, and wit.

T 9:30-11a

21L.320 Big Books: Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*

Mary Fuller

4-144

(Pre-1900)

Dante's long narrative poem, *The Divine Comedy*, opens with the poet-narrator, midway through his life, lost in a dark wood. There he is found by Roman poet Virgil, sent from the afterlife by a woman Dante had loved who has reached down from Heaven to set him back on the right path by showing him what waits for human beings after death. The first two parts of the *Comedy* tell the story of Dante and Virgil's journey together through hell to the mountain of Purgatory, a lost Eden where Dante will meet Beatrice once more.

The Comedy, itself a kind of response to Virgil's own epic poem the *Aeneid*, has generated a rich tradition of commentary, illustration, translation, and allusion that date back to the poem's completion in 1320. As well as making use of this tradition, we will continue and add to it through practices of active reading and annotation. Work for the class includes reading journals, homework groups, leading discussion, and after-class reports. If possible and desired, one class may be held in the Boston Public Library's Special Collections room to work with early editions. A final reflection essay on the materials and course design will be due in the last week of the semester.

INTERMEDIATE

TR 1-2:30p

21L.433 (H) Film Styles & Genres

Kyle Stevens

5-231

When we refer to a film as a “horror movie” or a “musical”, we classify it according to genre. Typically, we don’t need to be taught these categories; we simply absorb them as we grow up. This makes them a potentially dangerous kind of knowledge, so it is important that we examine their conventions and parameters. Moreover, studying popular cycles of a genre at any given moment can tell us quite a lot about that moment in cultural history—metaphors of what audiences were scared of, what they were hoping for, and what they were anxious about. The course will also include a unit on the concept of style, in which we will determine what exactly is, and is not, Camp.

MW 3:30-5p

21L.435 (H) Literature and Film: For Better or For Worse?: Fictions of Technology

Caitlyn Doyle

4-253

This course examines films and novels that grapple with the role of technology in constructing, disrupting, and transforming human reality. Whether envisioned as the means of averting disaster or precipitating it, enhancing human capacities or diminishing them, technology has come to permeate, not only our daily lives, but also our imaginations. Such fictions of technology extend far beyond the genre of science fiction. From weaponry to food preparation, from fashion photography to advanced surveillance, technology is central to films and novels exploring a remarkable variety of themes. Closely examining films such as *My Uncle* (1958), *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), and *Melancholia* (2011), as well as novels such as *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) and *The Marrow Thieves* (2017), we will examine the dystopic, utopic, and banal possibilities of technological innovation, and its pivotal role in imagining our world and its future. We will further consider the disparate capacities of film and literature—insofar as they are themselves technologies—and the effects that their form has on the meanings that they create and convey.

INTERMEDIATE

Same
Subject as
24.140

21L.452[J] (H/SS) Literature and Philosophy

MW 11-12:30p

Marah Gubar &
Kieran Setiya

26-328

How do we know what we know? That's the central question that animates the philosophical field known as epistemology. It's also a problem that creative writers regularly ponder in their poetry and prose. Reading literary and philosophical texts side by side, we will discuss the nature of empirical, scientific, and poetic ways of knowing, as well as considering what it means to achieve self-knowledge and knowledge of other minds. Ought we to conceive of knowledge as perspectival or situated? If so, how might that affect how we try to obtain it? To enrich our discussion of these and other puzzling philosophical questions, we'll read everything from a raucous eighteenth-century comic novel to a Modernist masterpiece to pulp horror stories, children's fiction, and contemporary poems. Meanwhile, we will ask: does literature merely illustrate philosophical ideas or does it do philosophy in its own right?

TR 1-2:30p

Mark Letteney

2-105

(Pre-1900)

21L.457 (H) The Bible: The New Testament in the Roman Empire

Who was Jesus as a historical figure and how did his earliest followers interpret his life in Judaea and his execution at the hands of Rome? What kind of religious world did his early followers inhabit, and what did their communal spaces look, sound, and smell like? In this class, we will use archaeology and literature to explore the early Christian movement as a Jewish sect in the Roman empire. We will examine texts composed by the earliest followers of Jesus that are now part of the New Testament, alongside other material to help us understand the startling diversity of the early Jesus movement — lost gospels, Dead Sea Scrolls, early Christian amulets and magical spells, demon-repelling inscriptions, and legendary accounts of Christian heroes and villains.

Readings and lectures presuppose no knowledge of early Christian texts. Together we will use the tools of historical investigation to understand the New Testament in its material context.

INTERMEDIATE

TR 3:30-5p

James Buzard

4-144

(Pre-1900)

21L.471 (H) Major Novels: Novels of Mystery, Detection, and Suspense

This class will examine several major works by two founders of the mystery novel. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) and Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) were friends and sometimes collaborators who became among the most famous authors of their time and their works remain exciting and compelling today. They created complex plots and immersive fictional worlds that not only kept readers guessing, but raised critical questions about identity, social values, and class, gender, and race relations.

By Dickens, we will (most likely) read his masterpiece *Bleak House*, his novel of the French Revolution, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and his final, incomplete novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. By Collins, we will (most likely) read his fascinating “sensation” novels *Armadale* and *The Moonstone*.

The class will help students develop skills in close reading and interpretation. Students will write short response papers to help stimulate class discussion. There may be occasional short quizzes to focus attention on parts of the reading. Students will also be asked to create a final project (creative or analytical) that reflects back on topics covered in the class.

Same
Subject as
21M.709

TR 1-2:30p

Diana Henderson

66-156

21L.486 (A) Modern Drama: Gender and Performance

“Words fail.” — Samuel Beckett

What does it mean to stage a play in a world where talk is cheap but also incendiary, where screens have come to dominate our lives and we are deluged with multimedia entertainments? Is “liveness” still special, and if so, what does that mean? At a time when gender has become newly fluid and its performativity both a given and a source of political conflict, how does theater imagine the gendered world differently? How do race and class factor into gender’s meanings? We will consider the reasons playwrights still write drama, attending to the different possibilities that theater affords those whose voices are ignored or marginalized; those who want to challenge the dominant culture; and those who delight in the legacies of literary drama, community rituals, and language as an essential part of performed storytelling. Playwrights will include Caryl Churchill, Tony Kushner, Tom Stoppard, Suzan-Lori Parks, and—of course—the master of failure, Samuel Beckett. And you. First and foremost, we will be considering and experiencing modern drama as performance art, technologies and embodiment, and, for lack of a better word, gender.

INTERMEDIATE

M 7-10p

21L.487 (H) Modern Poetry

Stephen Tapscott

14N-112

We will read major poems by the most important poets in English in the twentieth century, from the period post WWI disillusionment, through WWII internationalism and beyond. Our special focus this term will be on how the concept of “the Image” evolved during this period. The War had undercut beliefs in master-narratives of nationalism and empire and the language-systems that supported them (religious transcendence, rationalism, and formalism). Retrieving energies from the Symbolist movements of the preceding century and from turn-of-the-century technologies of vision, early twentieth-century poets began to rethink how images carry information and in what ways the visual, visionary, and verbal image can take the place of transcendent beliefs. New theories of linguistics and anthropology helped to advance this interest in the artistic/religious/social image. So did Freud. So did Charlie Chaplin. So did the invention of the snapshot. We will read poems that pay attention both to this disillusionment and to the compensatory joyous attention to the image: to ideas of the poet as language priest, aesthetic experience as displaced religious impulse, to poems as faith, ritual, and cultural form-- and to poems as witness of the ordinary, the joyous, the goofy, the strange. Poets whose work we will read include: W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, Sylvia Plath, Elizabeth Bishop. Several short papers, class presentations, no final exam. Several visiting poets, slams, readings, and performances.

TR 11-12:30p

21L.488 (H) Contemporary Literature: 21st-Century Speculative Fiction

Laura Finch

2-103

The American author Octavia E. Butler once wrote: “There is nothing new under the sun; but there are new suns.” This ability to up-end what we consider possible and to allow us to imagine differently is the hallmark of speculative fiction. In this class we will read contemporary literature that makes use of this radical capacity in order to challenge the oppressive structures of race, gender, colonialism/settler colonialism, and capitalism that we currently live under. By tackling the social injustices of the present, the writers we will read invite us to imagine our futures differently.

We will read 21st- century science fiction and speculative fiction (including short stories, novels, and films), as well as theoretical and critical texts. Assessment (presentations, short written responses, and group projects) is based on consistent participation and engagement throughout the semester, rather than being heavily weighted towards a final paper.

INTERMEDIATE

Same
Subject as
21G.077[J]

21L.490[J] (H) Introduction to the Classics of Russian Literature

TR 2:30-4p

Maria
Khotimsky

14N-221

Explores the works of classical Russian writers of the 19th and 20th centuries, including stories and novels by Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Bunin, Nabokov, Platonov, and others. Focuses on their approaches to portraying self and society, and on literary responses to fundamental ethical and philosophical questions about justice, freedom, free will, fate, love, loyalty, betrayal, and forgiveness. Taught in English; students interested in completing some readings and a short writing project in Russian should register for 21G.618.

Same
Subject as
21G.066

21L.491[J] (H) Gateway to Korean Literature and Culture

MW 9:30-11a

Wiebke Denecke

2-103

This course is a comprehensive introduction to two millennia of Korean literature and culture from the beginnings to our current moment. We will sample texts, art, and films from and about one of the world's oldest continuous literary traditions, putting particular emphasis on placing them in their cultural context and considering their significance today from a comparative global perspective. While overall following a chronological trajectory that allows you to experience the gradual unfolding of Korean culture from a *longue-durée* perspective, we will explore poetry; various genres of historiography, story-telling, and fiction; philosophical and religious texts and related social practices; art, artifacts, and films. Along the way we will focus on origin stories and questions of cultural heritage; gender differences between male and female literary cultures; queens, women writers & heroines; and the impact of Korea's colonial legacy and the post-war economic miracle on Korean literature and culture today. The course includes creative exercises to help you develop your own Korean wave and K-drama passions with a critically informed eye.

INTERMEDIATE

Same
Subject as
WGS.140

MW 1-2:30p

Joaquín Terrones

14N-112

21L.504[J] (H) Race and Identity in American Literature: Race, Gender, & Secret Identities in U.S. Superhero Comics

This course examines the role of race and gender in the U.S. superhero tradition through comic books, graphic novels, film, and television. How do these modern myths reflect on and challenge racism, policing, and nationalism? What acts of radical imagination become possible in the world of the impossible? How do these fantasies reimagine what it means to be (super)human?

Focusing on Black, Latinx, and Indigenous characters and creators, we will read comic books and graphic novels from the Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Modern Ages published by DC, Marvel, Milestone, and Image Comics. Authors will include N.K. Jemisin, Dwayne McDuffie, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Vita Ayala, Gabby Rivera, and Nnedi Okorafor. We will also analyze films such as *Black Panther*, *Blade*, *Spawn*, *Eternals*, and *Shang-Chi*; and television shows such as *Watchmen*, *Batwoman*, and *Ms. Marvel*.

INTERNATIONAL

Same
Subject as
24.916

21L.601[J] (H) Old English and *Beowulf*

MW 11-12:30p

hƿæt ƿe gārdena in geardagum ƿeodcyninga ƿrym gefrunon hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon...

Those are the first words of the Old English epic *Beowulf*, and in this class you will learn to read them.

Arthur Bahr

4-253

Besides being the language of Rohan in the novels of Tolkien, Old English (also called Anglo-Saxon) is a language of long, cold, and lonely winters; of haunting beauty found in unexpected places; and of unshakable resolve in the face of insurmountable odds. It is, in short, the perfect language for MIT students.

(Pre-1900)

We will read greatest hits from the epic *Beowulf* as well as moving laments (*The Wanderer*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament*), the personified Cross's psychedelic and poignant account of the Crucifixion (*The Dream of the Rood*), and riddles whose solutions range from the sacred to the obscene but are always ingenious.

(Ends March 24)

21L.609 Greek Readings

MW 1-2p

Introduction to reading ancient Greek literature in the original language. Provides a bridge between the study of Greek grammar and the reading of Greek authors.

Alexander Forte

1-246

Improves knowledge of the language through careful examination of literary texts, both prose and poetry. Builds proficiency in reading Greek and develops appreciation for basic features of style and genre. Texts vary from term to term. May be repeated once for credit if content differs. 21L.609 and 21L.610, or two terms of 21L.609, may be combined by petition (after completion of both) to count as a single HASS-H.

(Ends March 24)

21L.610 Advanced Greek Readings

MW 1-2p

Building on 21L.609, develops the ability to read and analyze ancient Greek literary texts, both prose and poetry. Focuses on increasing fluency in reading comprehension and recognition of stylistic, generic, and grammatical features.

Alexander Forte

1-246

Texts vary from term to term. May be repeated once for credit if content differs. 21L.610 and 21L.609, or two terms of 21L.610, may be combined by petition (after completion of both) to count as a single HASS-H.

INTERNATIONAL

(Ends March 24)

21L.611 Latin I

TR 1-2:30p

Gray Alexander

4-144

Introduces rudiments of Latin to students with little or no prior knowledge of the subject. Aimed at laying a foundation to begin reading ancient and/or medieval literary and historical texts. Latin I and Latin II may be combined by petition (after completion of both) to count as a single HASS-H.

(Begins April 3)

21L.612 Latin II

TR 1-2:30p

Gray Alexander

4-144

Introductory Latin subject for students with some prior knowledge of basic grammar and vocabulary. Intended to refresh and enrich ability to read ancient and/or medieval literary and historical texts. May be taken independently of Latin I with permission of instructor. Latin I and Latin II may be combined by petition (after completion of both) to count as a single HASS-H.

Same
Subject as
21G.320

21L.620[J](H) Introduction to French Literature

T 7-10p

Bruno Perreau

14N-313

A study of major French literary genres and an introduction to methods of literary analysis. This semester students will be part of the jury for the Goncourt Prize USA. "Le Goncourt" is the most prestigious literary prize in France. Students will study and rank books from the Goncourt shortlist. They will elect a representative to present their selection at the Villa Albertine in New York and choose the winner along with students from Princeton, Duke, Yale, Harvard, Columbia, and the University of Virginia. Meanwhile, the other students will prepare a press article to present their experience as a jury! Authors studied: Grégoire Bouillier, Nathan Devers, Guiliano da Empoli, Brigitte Giraud, Cloé Korman, Makenzy Orcel, Pascale Robert-Diard, and Monica Sabolo. Special attention is devoted to the improvement of French language skills. Taught in French.

SEMINAR

TR 7-8:30p

21L.702 (H, CI-M) Studies in Fiction: James Joyce

James Buzard

2-103

This seminar will examine three major works by the great modernist writer James Joyce (1882-1941): the short-story collection *Dubliners* (1914), the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and the colossal modern (mock-) epic *Ulysses* (1922). Time permitting, we may also consider a brief sample of *Finnegan's Wake* (1939). Through oral reports and other means, students will learn about the historical context in which Joyce lived and created his work, though our main focus will be the increasingly complex and marvelous texts themselves. Student work will include oral reports, frequent short reading-response papers, and a final creative or critical project on some aspect of *Ulysses*.

MW 11-12:30p

21L.705 (H, CI-M) Major Authors: Milton's *Paradise Lost* & Modern Speculative Fiction

Mary Fuller

4-144

(Pre-1900)

A world created good has turned dark: suffering and injustice pervade it at every level, from bodily and emotional experience through the macro-systems of climate and social hierarchy. "Whose fault?" The poet John Milton posed this question at a time of tremendous personal and political difficulty. Blind and endangered by the fall of the republican government he served and the restoration of a monarchy, he turned to the Genesis story of origins as the seed of *Paradise Lost*, an epic poem instantly seen—even in a hostile political environment—as a classic.

One fate of a classic is to be rewritten, both by admirers and by antagonists. We will read *Paradise Lost* alongside works of twentieth-century fantasy and science fiction which rethink both Milton's text and its source: *Perelandra* (C. S. Lewis), *Dawn* (Octavia Butler), and the trilogy *His Dark Materials* (Philip Pullman). Not only arguing with or elaborating on Milton's story, these texts make us aware that *Paradise Lost* is itself a work of world-building speculative fiction. Imagining not only radically different human conditions, but also the cognitive, emotional, and sensory experiences of non-human actors.

SEMINAR

Meets with
CMS.830

21L.706[J] (H, CI-M) Studies in Film: Film Theory and Criticism

TR 3:30-5p

Kyle Stevens

4-253

This course will introduce you to the development of film theory, exploring the major questions, concepts, and movements in its history. It begins with the notion that cinema plays a profound role in modern culture, and that it continues not only to reflect, but also to shape our world. For this reason, we too must reflect upon and be confident in our methods of interpretation, theorization, and explanation. Spanning writing from the medium's birth to the present, we will discuss such topics as cinema's relationship to other arts, to entertainment, to reality, to politics, to nationhood, to fantasy, to philosophy, and to the construction of a range of values, beliefs, and social identities.

TR 11-12:30p

Benjamin Mangrum

4-251

(Pre-1900)

21L.707 (H, CI-M) Problems in Cultural Interpretation: Posthumanism

What does it mean to be human? How have new ideas in philosophy, science, technology, and literature shaped the way we answer this question?

This seminar will examine modern challenges and revisions to the idea of being "human." To understand both the history of being "human" and the objections raised by the idea's critics, students in this seminar will encounter arguments from a wide variety of disciplines and national literatures. Students will study modern and contemporary narratives that probe assumptions about race, gender, and nationality underlying modern humanism. Students will also investigate the porous borders between humans and technology and evaluate post-apocalyptic scenarios in which the natural become "uncanny" and technology becomes "natural."

SPECIAL SUBJECT

MW 1:30-3p

21L.S88 Special Subject in Literature: School Stories

Marah Gubar

1-135

What's in a school? In this course, we will analyze various kinds of school stories, from children's and young adult novels set in and around schools, to historical and sociological accounts of how educational practices have evolved over time, to teacher memoirs and pedagogical theory by pioneering educator-activists such as Maria Montessori, Paolo Freire, June Jordan, and Sandy Grande. In the process, we will study not just how schools function as positively transformative sites that enable emancipatory learning, but also as highly disciplinary and potentially oppressive spaces where equity issues related to class, gender, race and ethnicity, and (dis)ability often play out in disabling ways that must be recognized to be disrupted. Each week, we will meet together for seminar-style conversations that will focus not just on the fictional and nonfictional narratives about schooling we will be reading, but also on your experiences completing the required weekly lab component of this course, which offers you the opportunity to be matched up with a variety of MIT- or community-based youth outreach program, in order to work directly with young people and reflect on what that process adds to our shared understanding of what education is, what it's for, and how it works.



LIT TEA

EVERY MONDAY (during the semester except holidays)

@ 4:15pm - 5:45pm

Where: Room 14N-417

Come by for snacks, and tea with Literature Section friends, instructors, students, etc.



CONCENTRATION

Students come to Literature to fulfill their Concentrations for many reasons. Some love to read great books, plays, or poems, or want to explore film and media studies. Some wish to hone their skills in thinking and writing about literary questions. Others enjoy participating in lively discussion in small classes. Many have favorite authors or periods they want to know better.

Concentrations may be organized by genre (poetry, drama, fiction, film), historical period and/or national literature (Renaissance, nineteenth-century British and American literatures, modern American literature), subject of study (popular culture, media studies, literature and aesthetic theory), or theme (race and imperialism, literature and the city, etc.).

MINOR

A Literature Minor lays the foundation for advanced study by enhancing the student's appreciation of major narrative, poetic and dramatic texts in relation to the cultures that produced them. In addition, it allows the student to develop a familiarity with interdisciplinary approaches, and encourages engagement with a film and newer media.

The Literature Focus or Film Focus Minor is designed to allow a student to make a smooth transition from a prior Concentration in Literature, as well as to progress smoothly towards a Major in Literature (should the student so desire).

MAJOR

Majoring in Literature at MIT combines a broad coverage of a range of different literary and cultural fields with the in-depth exploration of particular domains. To ensure coverage, students organize their restricted electives in Literature according to one of two rubrics: Historical Periods or Thematic Complexes. More sustained exploration of specific domains is achieved by taking Seminars in areas of interest. In addition, students contemplating graduate work in Literature or a related field are encouraged to consider completing a Literature Thesis.

Students considering majoring in Literature should first see our Undergraduate Academic Administrator to declare interest and to arrange a Major Advisor.