

LITERATURE SUBJECTS

Course 21L Supplement to the Bulletin



SPRING 2024

“Of what a strange nature is knowledge! It clings to a mind when it has once seized on it like a lichen on a rock.” — Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Lovecraft Country (2020)



LITERATURE SECTION

77 Massachusetts Ave, Building 14N-407 | Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 253-3581 | litacademics@mit.edu | lit.mit.edu

SPRING 2024

21L	UNITS	CREDIT	SUBJECT TITLE	INSTRUCTOR	DAY	TIME	ROOM	PRE-1900
INTRODUCTORY								
21L.003	3-0-9	Cl-H	The Birth of the Global Short Story [Reading Fiction]	M. Terlunen	TR	1-2:30P	4-253	Yes
21L.004	3-0-9	Cl-H	Reading Poetry	N. Jackson	TR	1-2:30P	56-167	Yes
21L.005[J]	3-0-9	Cl-H Same subject as 21M.609[J]	Introduction to Drama	S. Alexandre	TR	9:30-11A	5-231	
21L.006	3-0-9	Cl-H	Thinking with Plants and Animals [American Literature]	L. Finch	TR	11-12:30P	14N-325	
21L.008[J]	3-0-9	Cl-H Same subject as 24.912[J], 21H.106[J], 21W.741[J], CMS.150[J], WGS.190[J]	Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies	D. Wood	MW	1-2:30P	14N-225	
21L.009	3-0-9	Cl-H	The Comedies [Shakespeare]	S. Raman	TR	9:30-11A	1-379	Yes
21L.011	3-3-6	Cl-H	Introduction to Film Studies	J. Ruffin				
			Screening		M	7-10P	3-270	
			Lecture		T	3:30-5P	3-270	
			Recitation1		TR	3-4P	1-273	
			Recitation2		TR	4-5P	1-273	
21L.019	3-0-9	Cl-H	Liars, Cheaters, and Thieves [Introduction to European and Latin American Literature]	J. Terrones	MW	9:30-11A	66-148	Yes
21L.040[J]	3-0-9	Cl-H Same subject as 21G.041[J]	Foundations of East Asian Literature: From Confucius to the Beats	W. Denecke	MW	11-12:30P	2-103	Yes
SPECIAL SUBJECT								
21L.S60	3-0-9	Same subject as CMS.S60[J]; Meets with CMS.S96	Rap Theory and Practice [Special Topics]	W. Jaco	W	2-5P	4-153	
SAMPLINGS (6-UNITS)								
21L.310	2-0-4		Detective Fiction [Bestsellers] (Second Half Term - Begins April 1)	S. Tapscott	W	7-10P	14N-112	Yes
21L.315	2-0-4		Reading Dante's <i>Inferno</i> and <i>Purgatorio</i> [Prizewinners and Laureates] (Full Term)	M. Fuller	M	3:30-5P	4-144	Yes
21L.325	2-0-4		Close Rereading [Small Wonders] (First Half Term - Ends March 22)	S. Tapscott	T	7-10P	14N-112	Yes
INTERMEDIATE including subject taught in Global Languages								
21L.433	3-0-9	H	G.O.A.T. Classic Film Genres and Why We Love Them [Film Styles and Genres] 21st	C. Doyle	MW	3:30-5P	4-253	
21L.434	3-0-9	H	Century Speculative Fiction [Science Fiction/Fantasy]	L. Finch	TR	1-2:30P	56-162	
21L.449	3-0-9	A	The Wilds of Literature	M. Gubar	MW	1-2:30P	66-154	Yes
21L.451	3-0-9	H	Literary Theory	S. Raman	TR	1-2:30P	5-231	
21L.456	3-0-9	H	The Hebrew Bible and Its Readers [The Bible: Old Testament]	E. Driscoll	MW	3-4:30P	56-167	Yes
21L.490[J]	3-0-9	H	Introduction to the Classics of Russian Literature	M. Khotimsky	TR	2:30-4P	14N-225	
21L.492[J]	3-0-9	H Same subject as 21G.042[J], 21H.352[J], CMS.358[J]; Meets with 21G.133	Three Kingdoms: From History to Fiction, Comic, Film, and Game	E. Teng	TR	1-2:30P	14E-304	Yes
21L.493[J]	3-0-9	H Same subject as 21G.062[J]; Meets with 21G.582	Gateway to Japanese Literature and Culture	W. Denecke	MW	9:30-11A	2-103	Yes
21L.504[J]	3-0-9	H Same subject as WGS.140[J]	Race and Horror in the Americas [Race & Identify in American Literature]	J. Terrones	MW	1-2:30P	14N-112	
21L.609	2-0-4		Plato's Symposium [Greek Readings] (First Half Term - Ends March 22)	S. Frampton	MW	12:30-1P	4-251	Yes
21L.610	2-0-4		Plato's Symposium [Advanced Greek Readings] (Second Half Term: Begins April 1)		+ F 4-5P	4-251	Yes	
21L.620[J]	3-0-9	H Same subject as 21G.320[J]	Introduction to French Literature	B. Perreau	T	7-10P	14N-313	
21L.640[J]	3-0-9	H Same subject as 21G.740[J]	The New Spain: 1977-Present	M. Resnick	T	7-10P	14N-325	
SEMINAR								
21L.701	3-0-9	H	Digital Approaches to Storytelling [Literary Methods]	M. Terlunen	TR	11-12:30P	4-146	
21L.704	3-0-9	H	The Radical Imagination [Studies in Poetry]	N. Jackson	TR	3-4:30P	4-144	Yes
21L.706	3-3-6	H Subject meets with CMS.830	Aesthetics, Ethics, and White Supremacy [Studies in Film]	J. Ruffin	MW	1-2:30P	4-253	
			Screening		W	7-10P	3-270	
21L.707	3-0-9	H	Women Readers, Women Writers—Antiquity To Today [Problems in Cultural Interpretation]	S. Frampton	MW	11-12:30P	4-251	Yes

INTRODUCTORY

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

Milan Terlunen

TR 1-2:30P

4-253

Pre-1900

There have always been stories that are short, but “the short story” has been a recognized category of literature for only about 200 years. Standalone short stories emerged in magazines and newspapers of the early 19th century. In this class you’ll learn about the first century (roughly 1800-1920) 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 class will guide you through your own research into short stories from times and places that interest you.

This class 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 Sierra Leone. The class also features numerous African American writers, who haven’t been part of the standard history of the genre. All stories will be provided in English, and students with additional language skills are encouraged to read in the original language where relevant. Your major project for this class is to explore magazine and newspaper archives for a forgotten short story that interests you, and create a digital publication to reintroduce it to the world.

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

Noel Jackson

TR 1-2:30P

56-167

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” 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

21L.005[J] (A, CI-H) Introduction to Drama

Same subject as 21M.609[J]

Sandy Alexandre

TR 9:30-11A

5-231

In her autobiographical play, *To Be Young Gifted and Black* (1969), the playwright Lorraine Hansberry wrote: “I think that virtually every human being is dramatically interesting.” In our own lives—through our own verbal and body language—we alternate between deprecating and eagerly embracing what it means to be dramatic: “Oh gosh, he is so dramatic,” we accuse! “Yes, honey! I’m absolutely a drama queen,” we might hear someone proudly profess. “Dee-rahmuh!” we drawl to diagnose a scandalous story. Drama is everywhere around us asserting itself: provoking us, amusing us, challenging us, prompting us, inspiring us, catching the conscience of Kings even—effectively acting on us in some way or another. By reading plays and watching video recordings of some of them, we will attempt to understand what drama does best and uniquely as a literary genre. Toward the end of the semester, we will also consider the various forms drama can take. Where, for example, do we situate a TikTok video, a historical reenactment, a staged protest, a walk down the runway of an underground ballroom, or a flash mob in an Introduction to Drama course? Our encounters may include, but are not limited to, plays by Samuel Beckett, Quiara Alegria Hudes, Lorraine Hansberry, August Wilson, David Henry Hwang, Suzan-Lori Parks, and Shakespeare.

21L.006 (CI-H) American Literature: Thinking with Plants and Animals

Laura Finch

TR 11-12:30P

14N-325

Climate crisis and COVID-19 are forceful reminders of the entangled lives of everyone and everything on the planet. This class turns to contemporary literature to consider ways of living together that are often ignored in contemporary American 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 center: 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 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.

INTRODUCTORY

21L.009 (H, CI-H) Shakespeare: The Comedies

Shankar Raman

TR 9:30-11A

1-379

Pre-1900

We will take our lead from Dr Johnson, a renowned 18th-century writer and composer of the first English Dictionary, who claims that Shakespeare's natural disposition is comedy, in which he "seems to repose, or to luxuriate, as in a mode of thinking congenial to his nature." In this course, we will test this statement by contextualizing Shakespeare's major comedies within a broader framework that includes his so-called "problem" plays as well as city comedies by some of Shakespeare's contemporaries. We will ground our readings in performance and so the comedies will be paired with filmic realizations that will also allow us to consider how the plays must be changed and re-interpreted so as to travel across cultural boundaries. Connections may include *Twelfth Night* and *Some Like It Hot*; *Taming of the Shrew*, *Kiss Me, Kate*, *Beware of Eve*, and *10 Things I Hate About You*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Were the World Mine*; and *Comedy of Errors* and *Bhranti Bilas*.

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

Jessica Ruffin

Screening M 7-10P 3-270
Recitation 1 R 3-4P 1-273

Lecture T 3:30-5P 3-270
Recitation 2 R 4-5P 1-273

What and why is cinema? These questions have been repeatedly asked by inventors, artists, theorists, and historians since the first photographic reproductions of movement on celluloid were produced over 130 years ago. Cinema has been called a method for scientific study; a tool for mass manipulation; documentary evidence; and a promise for liberation, to name a few. This course acts as an introduction to the ever-expanding field of cinema and media studies. We will study not only the history of moving images since their emergence but how that history was written and rewritten as a consequence of technological, cultural, and institutional conditions. Students will learn key terms for the close analysis and interpretation of media, become conversant in contemporary theoretical debates, and have opportunities to put theory into practice through essays and creative projects. Our objects of study will range from early silent cinema and classic Hollywood to independent cinema and the networked media environments of the present.

INTRODUCTORY

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

Joaquín Terrones

MW 9:30-11A

66-148

Pre-1900

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.

21L.040[J] Foundations of East Asian Literature: From Confucius to the Beats

Same subject as 21G.041[J]

Wiebke Denecke

MW 11-12:30P

2-103

Pre-1900

Today we have the luxury of reading more literatures in more languages than ever before, giving us the opportunity to explore the great diversity of what is called “literature” across the time and space of world history. This course introduces you to some of the most seminal and thought-provoking texts from East Asia (China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam), and is conceived as complementary to the Foundations of Western Literature course in the Literature curriculum. We persistently ask how “literature” looks different when viewed through the literary heritage of East Asia: what does poetry written in Chinese characters accomplish that alphabetic poetry cannot? How does Buddhist reincarnation change the way you tell stories and devise novels?

Why is Japan the world's only major literature where female authors dominated certain literary genres as early as the 11th century? How did the complex interplay in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam between high-brow literature in the cosmopolitan language of Literary Chinese, and vernacular or popular literatures expand the possibilities of literary expressivity, gender figuration, and identity play? What was it that made American avantgarde writers of the Beat generation so ecstatic about classical Chinese and Japanese poetry?

Our strategic journey through East Asian literatures and cultures will take us through philosophical master texts such as Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi; Tang poetry; China's classical novels such as *Journey to the West*; Japan's female-authored tales and diaries, such as *The Tale of Genji* and *The Pillow Book*; Korea's classical novel *The Nine Cloud Dream*, and the heart-wrenching pansori play *Song of Ch'unhyang*.

SAMPLINGS

21L.310 Bestsellers: Detective Fiction

Second Half Term - Begins April 1

Stephen Tapscott

W 7-10P

14N-112

Pre-1900

In this course we will examine detective fictions 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 for millennia (we consider Sophocles' "Oedipus" and the T'ang Chinese Judge Dee); as a literary genre it emerges in the nineteenth century (Edgar Allan Poe, Wilkie Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle), develops through classic twentieth-century and modernist and noir writers (Agatha Christie, G. K. Chesterton, Dorothy L. Sayers, Raymond Chandler) and booms through postmodern uses of the genre's structures (Jorge Louis Borges, Patricia Highsmith, Walter Mosley). We'll end with some film examples (Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock). We'll also consider some formal, ideological and philosophical aspects of detective fiction, using essays by structuralist/narratology critics (Roland Barthes, Peter Brooks) and essays by other recent critics (Jaques Lacan, Sally Munt). We'll pay special attention to the cognitive work of "detection" and to the character of the detective, in social position, gender, class, race, intelligence, language, and wit.

21L.315 Prizewinners and Laureates: Reading Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*

Full Term

Mary Fuller

M 3:30-5P

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; atop the mountain lies 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. Work for the class includes reading journals, homework groups, leading discussion, and three short reflection papers.

SAMPLINGS

21L.325 Small Wonders: Close Rereadings

First Half Term - Ends March 22

Stephen Tapscott

T 7-10P

14N-112

Pre-1900

“When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.”

— Mark Twain

We all have our landmarks, our favorite poems (and our resistances). They are often not the same choices when we are 15, 20, or 40. So what changes when they change? In this “Samplings” half-semester subject, we’ll look at what happens when we individual readers reread poems—and also, more generally, how a poem can change, in a society—so that the work the artwork does (or the intervention it makes, or the influence or ideas it represents) can change as well. Sometimes such changes significantly alter what the poem “means” or what the poem (or the poet) signifies to the society.

Poets we will read might include Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allan Poe, Oscar Wilde, Emma Lazarus, T. S. Eliot, Dr. Seuss [Theodor Geisel], L. Frank Baum, Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes, Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, Marilyn Chin... and of course poems suggested by the experience of class members. We’ll also look, tangentially, at related questions: how a literary canon changes over time; how a shift in mode [from prose-fiction to film for instance] reframes the original; how translation is a “rereading” and an alteration, in the service of “repetition”; how a poem adapts when it appears alone, or in a collection, or in an anthology. Our method is as close to close-reading as we can come, while keeping this set of questions as our lens.

SPECIAL SUBJECTS

21L.S60/CMS.S60 Special Subject: Rap Theory and Practice

Lupe Fiasco

W 2-5P

1-150

“Rap Theory & Practice,” is a dynamic and immersive course designed for aspiring rap artists and enthusiasts. This class offers a unique blend of in-class and field activities, fostering both individual creativity and group collaboration. Inside the classroom, students engage in ideation, writing, and recording sessions, enabling them to work on solo projects as well as group compositions. The course also takes a novel approach to in situ rap creation by incorporating field activities, known as “GHOTIING,” where students get the opportunity to brainstorm, write, and record in various outdoor settings, expanding their creative horizons.

Another focus of the course is preparing students for the prestigious global MC competition, End Of The Weak (EODUB), offering them intensive training in various performance modalities to hone their skills. Additionally, the course includes weekly in class freestyle training sessions, designed to enhance students’ improvisational abilities and lyrical agility. Outside of class, students are expected to create a full song weekly, pushing their creative boundaries and building a robust portfolio. The culmination of this course is a rap-based final project, allowing students to showcase their learned skills and artistic growth.

Students are expected to take part in class discussion, readings, lecture and presentations from guest speakers. Students must have an iPad or Laptop with either Logic Pro or GarageBand recording software to take this course. Also students must have Inner Ear Monitors or “IEM” style headphones. Microphones and all other relevant equipment will be provided. This course promises a comprehensive, rigorous hands-on experience in the art and practice of rap, optimal for those looking to dive deep into this music genre.

INTERMEDIATE

21L.433 (H) Film Styles and Genres: G.O.A.T. Classic Film Genres and Why We Love Them

Caitlyn Doyle

MW 3:30-5P

4-253

Timeless classic, blockbuster hit, or guilty pleasure? Genre films consistently captivate audiences and drive viewership in the film industry. In this course, students will rigorously analyze the definitive films that have shaped the cinematic imaginary of classic film genres. It provides an in-depth exploration of the concept of film genre, enhancing students' understanding of how different genres are constructed, deconstructed, and evolve over time. From Westerns to Horror, we will consider how films such as John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939) and Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017) establish, subvert, or transform film genres, paying particular attention to film style and the interplay between genre, ideology, and societal commentary. Students will become familiar with key theories and concepts related to film genre and deploy them in their own scholarly and/or creative work.

21L.434 (H) Science Fiction and Fantasy: 21st Century Speculative Fiction

Laura Finch

TR 1-2:30P

56-162

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 books 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.

This intermediate-level class is focused on issues of social justice. 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 a final paper/ project) is based on consistent participation and engagement throughout the semester, rather than being heavily weighted towards a final paper.

INTERMEDIATE

21L.449 (A) The Wilds of Literature

Marah Gubar

MW 1-2:30P

66-154

Pre-1900

Nowadays, when we think about the interaction between human beings and nature, we tend to focus on environmental damage: deforestation, pollution, climate change and the catastrophes to which it has contributed. In this course, however, we will study literature that represents the interaction between humans and the natural world as joyous, sublime, revelatory, and mutually sustaining. We will traverse the Lake District with William Wordsworth, Walden Pond with Henry David Thoreau, and the Grand Canyon with Lauret Savoy. We will trace a breathtakingly long and moving tradition of writers of color crafting stories, poems, and picture books about animals and plants, space and place, from Aesop, Phillis Wheatley, and Paul Laurence Dunbar to Lucille Clifton, Thylas Moss, and Ada Limón.

Without denying that human beings have damaged the world we inhabit—and that certain groups have been systematically barred from enjoying equal access to its beauty and bounty—we will focus on the role that wonder, ease, and joy might play in helping us to envision new modes of being with ourselves and engaging with others and an ever-changing environment. To that end, each student will contribute to a collective “Local Knowledge Project” that enjoins each of you to choose a nearby natural site to visit and revisit, research and write about as winter segues into spring. By mid-May, you will have reworked these short essays into a longer piece of creative nonfiction that chronicles your personal engagement with this locale over time, in a way that makes use of rhetorical tropes and other literary techniques that we will have identified in the work of the essayists and poets whose craft we will marvel at and puzzle over during our seminar-style class discussions.

This version of 21L.449 counts toward the pre-1900 requirement for the Literature Minor and Major. It also satisfies the HASS-A GIR and serves as an approved elective for MIT’s Environment and Sustainability Minor.

21L.451 (H) Literary Theory

Shankar Raman

TR

1-2:30P

5-231

This subject examines the ways we read. It introduces important strategies for engaging with literary texts developed in the twentieth century, paying special attention to French poststructuralist theorists — such as Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault — and their legacy. The course is organised around specific theoretical paradigms. In general, we will: (1) work through the selected readings in order to see how they construe what literary interpretation is; (2) locate the limits of each particular approach; and (3) trace the emergence of subsequent theoretical paradigms as responses to what came before. The literary texts and films accompanying the theoretical material will serve as concrete cases that allow us to see theory in action. Rather than attempting a definitive or full analysis of a literary or filmic work, we will exploit it (unashamedly — and indeed sometimes reductively) to understand better the theoretical text or paradigm it accompanies.

INTERMEDIATE

21L.456 (H) The Bible: Old Testament

The Hebrew Bible and Its Readers

Eric Driscoll

MW 3-4:30P

56-167

Pre-1900

From the creation of the world in Genesis to the rebuilding of the Temple in Ezra—from poetic wisdom literature to narratives of Israel’s history—the Hebrew Bible spans a vast range of genres, was written by innumerable people over many centuries, and is endlessly complex. In this course we will read substantial selections from each of the three divisions of the Bible: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. We will deploy different methods useful for the academic study of the Bible, considering it by turns as literature, as history, as data for the study of religion, as a collection of texts written, edited, and canonized over a long period of time. One conclusion of this investigation will be that the Bible is a dynamic, moving target; it means different things to different audiences over time—indeed, what for some readers is simply the Bible is, for others, the Old Testament. Accordingly, we will also explore a series of episodes in the history of reading, interpreting, and appropriating the Bible. This component of the course will involve reading and discussing exegetical and hermeneutic approaches to the Bible originating in several distinct religious and intellectual contexts from antiquity to the present.

No previous knowledge of the Bible is expected; all readings are in English.

21L.493[J] Gateway to Japanese Literature and Culture

Same subject as 21G.062[J]; Meets with 21G.562

Wiebke Denecke

MW 9:30-11A

2-103

Pre-1900

Surveys the nature, history, and distinctive features of Japanese literature and cultural history from the beginnings through the threshold of modernity. Examines various genres of poetry, historiography and mythological lore, prose tales and fiction, diaries, essays, Noh and puppet plays, short stories and novels; and helps students appreciate the texts’ relevance in the historical and cultural context in which authors wrote them, in the broader context of literary traditions from around the world, and for the humanistic and aesthetic powers, which makes them poignant to us today. Showcases how authors increasingly enjoyed adapting, redoing, and satirizing earlier models, while constantly developing new expressive forms suited to the urgent needs of their time. Includes an eco-literature lab, a creative writing lab, and a history-writing lab for collaborative experimentation.

INTERMEDIATE

21L.504[J] Race and Identity in American Literature: Race and Horror in the Americas

Same subject as WGS.140[J]

Joaquín Terrones

MW 1-2:30P

14N-112

This course examines the relationship between race, gender, and horror in literature, film, and television from the Americas. Although the genre has often relied on racist stereotypes and anxieties, horror has also proven a remarkably powerful means for writers and filmmakers of color to reflect on historical traumas and contemporary issues—from lynching and land dispossession to police brutality and gentrification—as well as imagine forms of survival and resistance. In order to understand how horror functions in this way, we will consider its history, tropes, forms, and subgenres while also engaging with current scholarship in the fields of Black, Indigenous, Latin American, and feminist studies.

Focusing on the work of Black and Indigenous creators, we will analyze fiction by Victor LaValle, Octavia Butler, Tananarive Due, Brenda Lozano, and Stephen Graham Jones; films such as *Candyman*, *Nanny*, *Nope*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *Blood Quantum*, *The Devil's Knot*, and *La Llorona*; and television shows like *Lovecraft Country* and *The Changeling*.

21L.609 Greek Readings / 21L.610 Advanced Greek Reading: Plato's Symposium

First Half Term - Ends March 22

Stephanie Ann Frampton

MW 1-2:30P

4-251

Pre-1900

Read ancient Greek literature in the original language! 21L.609 serves as a bridge for students with at least one semester or more of formal Greek training (Greek I/II, high school Greek, or equivalent) between the study of Greek grammar and vocabulary and the reading of Greek authors. 21L.610 offers more of a challenge for advanced readers. They run simultaneously and each may be repeated once for credit. The topic for Spring 2024 will be Plato's Symposium.

INTERMEDIATE

21L.640[J] The New Spain: 1977-Present

Same subject as 21G.740[J]

Margery Resnick

T 7-10P

14N-325

Deals with the vast changes in Spanish social, political and cultural life that have taken place since the death of Franco (1975). Topics include the transition to democracy, new freedom from censorship, the re-emergence of strong movements for regional autonomy (the Basque region and Catalonia), the new cinema including Almodóvar and Saura, educational reforms instituted by the socialist government, the changes in the role of the Catholic church, the emergence of one of the world's most progressive gender environment, and new forms of fiction. Special emphasis on the mass media as a vehicle for expression in Spain. Materials include magazines, newspapers, films, television series, fiction, and essays. Each student chooses a research project that focuses on an issue of personal interest. Taught in Spanish

21L.620[J] Introduction to French Literature

Same subject as 21G.320

Bruno Perreau

T7-10P

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: Jean-Baptiste Andrea, Neige Sinno, Gaspard Koenig, and Eric Reinhardt. Special attention is devoted to the improvement of French language skills. Taught in French.

SEMINAR

21L.701 (H) Literary Methods: Digital Approaches to Storytelling

Milan Terlunen

TR 11-12:30P

4-146

What place do stories have in the digital age? How can we understand works of literature of the past in new ways using digital tools? What new possibilities and problems do digital technologies create for storytellers and their audiences?

This class is focused on stories in the broadest sense, including novels, novellas and short stories; video games, digital video, interactive fiction, fan fiction, AI-generated narrative; non-fiction storytelling by journalists and social media users; storytelling using the human voice, whether face to face or through media like podcasts and audiobooks. You'll develop new methods for reading stories, creating stories and forming communities around stories.

Because this is a class on methods, the emphasis will be on learning to do and make, and reflecting on that process. You'll spend the semester working on four projects that involve: 1) analyzing novels using digital tools, 2) adapting stories into digital media, 3) creating storytelling communities in the digital age, 4) telling born-digital stories. We'll also read two works of literature together as a class: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, a novel about breaking down and transforming the human body that has itself been repeatedly broken down and transformed into other media, and Aaron A. Reid's *Subcutanean*, an experimental multiverse novel where no two copies are the same.

21L.704 Studies in Poetry: The Radical Imagination

Noel Jackson

TR 3-4:30P

4-144

Pre-1900

In 1790, the visual artist, poet, and printer William Blake wrote: "What is now proved, was once only imagined." The idea that imagination extends the bounds of known reality was a defining assumption of the literary period known today as Romanticism. In an era of momentous social, political and economic transformation, Romantic writers designated imagination as the site of, and possibly the most potent means of bringing about, social and political change. To write (and to read) was to be part of a world-making enterprise – as potentially efficacious in changing the world as the contemporary events to which their writing responded.

The artists at the center of this seminar are two visionary Romantic poets, Blake and Percy Shelley. Both were figures of radicalism and rebellion, and both were committed to imagination as a vehicle of sociopolitical world-making. We will read these poets alongside other Romantic texts by radicals, philosophers, and visionaries, including Anna Barbauld, S.T. Coleridge, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Shelley's immortal tale of the miscreative imagination, *Frankenstein*. Taking Romanticism not as an isolated moment of literary history but as a creative energy that reverberates through subsequent forms of radical literary and political writing, our seminar will encounter the works of this period as tools to think, contend, and create with today.

SEMINAR

21L.706 (H) Studies in Film: Aesthetics, Ethics, and White Supremacy

Jessica Ruffin

Lecture	MW 1-2:30P	4-253
Screening	W 7-10P	3-270

This course investigates white supremacy through aesthetics, or the philosophy of embodied knowledge. We approach white supremacy not only as an ideology or system but an aesthetic environment that shapes, as Sara Ahmed writes, which bodies get to “be at home.” We ask how white supremacy represents itself and engages in aesthetic world-making across Enlightenment ethico-political accounts of the “sublime” and “beautiful,” historical imaginaries, and media regimes past and present. Engaging Black thought; intersectional approaches to racialized experience, and a diverse array of cinematic works, built environments, and visual art, we will discuss and devise critical creative practices for disempowering and unmaking white supremacist futures.

21L.707 (H) Problems in Cultural Interpretation: Women Readers, Women Writers—Antiquity To Today

Stephanie Ann Frampton

MW 11-12:30P

4-251

Pre-1900

Recent years have seen an explosion of new works by women writers engaging with ancient myth. This class explores how these authors have responded to ancient epic by rethinking these stories through a feminist lens. Readings from Greek and Latin sources in translation provide background, but the focus this semester is on reading 20th and 21st century works including Ursula Le Guin’s *Lavinia*, Margaret Atwood’s *Penelopiad*, Anne Carson’s *Autobiography of Red*, Anaïs Mitchell’s *Hadestown*, and Madeline Miller’s *Circe*.



DATE: MONDAYS (EXCEPT HOLIDAYS)

DURING THE SEMESTER

TIME: 4:15PM - 5:45PM

LOCATION: BUILDING 14, 14N-417

LIT TEA

**COME BY FOR SNACKS & 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.