

LITERATURE SUBJECTS

Course 21L Supplement to the Bulletin



FALL 2024

“Who are you, reader, reading my poems an hundred years hence? I cannot send you one single flower from this wealth of the spring, one single streak of gold from yonder clouds. Open your doors and look abroad.

From your blossoming garden gather fragrant memories of the vanished flowers of an hundred years before. In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy that sang one spring morning, sending its glad voice across an hundred years.”

— *The Gardener* 85 by Rabindranath Tagore

Images: Octavia Butler, “Reading” (1979) & John Henry Dearle for Morris & Co. “Tapestry: Greenery” (1892, MFA Boston)



LITERATURE SECTION

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

FALL 2024

21L	UNITS	SUBJECT TITLE	INSTRUCTOR	DAY	TIME	ROOM	PRE-1900
INTRODUCTORY							
21L.000/ 21W.041	3-0-9 CI-HW	Let's Play Writing about Literature and Loving It [Writing about Literature]	Doyle, Caitlyn	MW	1-2:30P	56-167	
21L.001	3-0-9 H CI-H	Foundations of Western Literature: Homer to Dante	Buzard, James	TR	3:30-5P	4-253	Yes
21L.003	3-0-9 H CI-H	Reading Fiction	Kelley, Wyn	MW	1-2:30P	56-180	
21L.004	3-0-9 H CI-H	Reading Poetry, Section 1	Jackson, Noel	MW	1:30-3P	2-103	Yes
21L.004	3-0-9 H CI-H	Reading Poetry, Section 2	Bahr, Arthur	MW	11-12:30P	4-253	
21L.010/ 21W.042	3-0-9 CI-HW	Writing with Shakespeare	Henderson, Diana	TR	2:30-4P	14E-310	Yes
21L.011	3-3-6 CI-H	Introduction to Film Studies (Lecture)	Ruffin, Jessica	T	3:30-5P	3-270	
		Introduction to Film Studies (Screening)		M	7-10P	3-270	
		Introduction to Film Studies (Recitation 1)		R	4-5P	1-277	
		Introduction to Film Studies (Recitation 2)		R	3-4P	1-277	
21L.012	3-0-9 H CI-H	Time, Media, and Identity [Forms of Western Narrative]	Ruffin, Jessica	MW	1-2:30P	4-257	
21L.017	3-0-9 H CI-H	The Art of the Probable	Raman, Shankar	TR	9:30-11A	14N-325	Yes
21L.020/ WGS.145	3-0-9 H CI-H	Globalization: The Good, the Bad, and the Inbetween	Resnick, Margery	TR	3-4:30P	14N-325	
21L.021	3-0-9 H CI-H	Modern Times [Comedy]	Mangrum, Ben	MW	9:30-11A	4-253	
21L.024	3-0-9 H CI-H	Literature and Existentialism	Brinkema, Eugenie	TR	2:30-4P	5-217	
21L.032/ WGS.130	3-0-9 H CI-H	Afrofuturism, Magical Realism, and Other Otherwise Worlds	Terrones, Joaquín	TR	3:30-5P	56-167	
21L.040/ 21G.041	3-0-9 CI-H	Foundations of East Asian Literature and Culture: From Confucius to the Beats	Denecke, Wiebke	MW	9:30-11A	2-103	Yes
SAMPLINGS							
21L.310	2-0-4 1/2 HASS	Contemporary Literature [Bestsellers] (Full Term)	Finch, Laura	T	11-12:30P	56-191	
21L.320	2-0-4 1/2 HASS	Reading <i>Paradise Lost</i> [Big Books] (Full Term)	Fuller, Mary	M	2:30-4P	4-253	Yes
21L.325	2-0-4 1/2 HASS	How to be a Person: First Person and the Lyric Voice [Small Wonders] (First Half: Ends Oct 18)	Tapscott, Stephen	W	7-10P	14N-112	
21L.350	2-0-4 1/2 HASS	Science Fiction [Science and Literature] (Full Term)	Finch, Laura	T	12:30-2P	56-191	
INTERMEDIATE including subjects taught in Global Languages							
21G.342	3-0-9 H	French Popular Music (Taught in French)	Perreau, Bruno	R	7-10 pm	14N-313	
21L.437	3-0-9 H	Social and Literary Trends in Contemporary Short French Fiction (Taught in French)	Perreau, Bruno	T	7-10P	14N-313	
21L.433	3-0-9 H	G.O.A.T: Classic Film Genres & Why We Love Them [Film Styles & Genres]	Doyle, Caitlyn	MW	11-12:30P	4-144	
21L.434	3-0-9 H	The Science Fiction of Freedom [Science Fiction & Fantasy]	Mangrum, Ben	MW	1-2:30P	66-154	
21L.438/ 21W.738 /WGS238	3-0-9-H	Intersectional Feminist Memoir	Williams, Brianna	TR	9:30-11	4-146	
21L.481/ WGS.250	3-3-9 H	HIV/AIDS in American Culture	Terrones, Joaquin	TR	9:30-11A	56-167	
21L.487	3-0-9 H	Modern Poetry	Tapscott, Stephen	T	7-10P	2-103	
21L.494/ 21G.044/ WGS.235	3-0-9 H	Classics of Chinese Literature in Translation	Denecke, Wiebke	MW	11-12:30P	2-103	Yes
21L.501	3-0-9 H	The American Novel	Kelley, Wyn	MW	11-12:30P	1-135	Yes
21L.601/ 24.916	3-0-9 H	Old English & <i>Beowulf</i>	Bahr, Arthur	MW	1-2:30P	4-265	Yes
21L.607	3-0-3	Greek I (Ends Oct 18)	Driscoll, Eric	MW	2:30-4P	56-169	Yes
21L.608	3-0-3	Greek II (Begins Oct 21)	Driscoll, Eric	MW	2:30-4P	56-169	Yes
21L.613	2-0-4	Aesop's <i>Fables</i> [Latin Readings] (First Half: Ends Oct 18)	Frampton, Stephanie	MW	1-2:30P	4-146	Yes
21L.614	2-0-4	Aesop's <i>Fables</i> [Advanced Latin Readings] (First Half: Ends Oct 18)	Frampton, Stephanie	MW	1-2:30P	4-146	Yes
21L.639/ 21G.639	3-0-9 H	Globalization and Its Discontents: Spanish Speaking Nations	Terrones, Joaquin	TR	1-2:30P	1-136	
SEMINAR							
21L.702	3-0-9 CI-M H	Toni Morrison [Studies in Fiction]	Alexandre, Sandy	M	7-10P	56-167	
21L.704	3-0-9 CI-M H	Pretending [Studies in Poetry]	Bennett, Joshua	M	2-5P	5-231	
21L.705	3-0-9 CI-M H	James Joyce [Major Authors]	Buzard, James	TR	7-8:30P	4-253	
21L.706	3-3-6 CI-M H	Hitchcock: Film, Theory, Murder [Studies in Film] (Lecture)	Brinkema, Genie	W	7-10P	4-146	
		Hitchcock: Film, Theory, Murder [Studies in Film] (Lab)		W	10-1P	56-169	

INTRODUCTORY

21L.000 (CI-HW) Writing about Literature Let's Play... Writing about Literature and Loving It

Same Subject as 21W.041[J]

Caitlyn Doyle

MW

1:00-2:30P

56-167

This course offers an engaging journey through key literary and artistic texts that embrace play at the level of both content and form. From Lewis Carroll's children's books for adults to André Breton's surreal games with the unconscious, students will analyze the status, function, and possibilities of play. We will also consider works, from Shakespeare to Zelda, that require active play to be fully realized. Through critical analysis and creative exploration students will learn to understand, analyze, and write about artistic texts, building confidence and enjoyment in their own writing. By the end of the course, students will emerge with a nuanced understanding of how play intertwines with artistic expression, as well as refined skills in critical analysis and scholarly writing. Beyond academic exploration, this course seeks to ignite a passion for playful inquiry and intellectual curiosity, empowering students to engage artistic texts with newfound depth and appreciation.

21L.001 (H, CI-H) Foundations of Western Literature: Homer to Dante

James Buzard

TR

3:30-5:00P

4-253

Pre-1900

This course examines foundational literary works from the Ancient Greeks and Romans to Medieval Europe. We'll consider these works as sources of some very long-lasting traditions in the representation of love, desire, conflict, justice, the quest for knowledge, the scope or limits of human action, and human relations with the divine and animal realms. Works to be considered will most likely include: Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; Aeschylus's *Oresteia*; Sophocles's *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*; Euripides's *The Bacchae*; Virgil's *Aeneid*; and Dante's *Inferno*.

INTRODUCTORY

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

Wyn Kelley

MW 1:00-2:30P

56-180

Samples prose narrative from different traditions, examining texts that feature distinctive styles and formal rhythms in their social and historical contexts. May include European and US classics, alongside global and contemporary authors. Considers writing and reading as forms of social engagement, with special attention to the ways that authors borrow from and innovate on the past. Enrollment limited.

21L.004 (H, CI-H) Reading Poetry, Section 1

Noel Jackson

MW 1:30-3:00P

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” 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.

21L.004 (H, CI-H) Reading Poetry, Section 2

Arthur Bahr

MW 11:00-12:30P

4-253

In this class we will read and discuss a lot of poems. We will also consider why so many people, going all the way back to Plato, have distrusted poets and despised their work. Among other activities, students will translate poetry into prose to see if there is something distinctive about poetic language; explore the many meanings that common words have gained and lost over the centuries, and think about how that matters; and find a poem they love (or hate, or otherwise feel inspired to share), assign it to the class, and lead a discussion of it. Opportunities for writing will be many and varied.

INTRODUCTORY

21L.010 (CI-HW) Writing with Shakespeare

Same subject as 21W.042

Diana Henderson

TR

2:30-4P

14E-310

Pre-1900

William Shakespeare didn't go to college. If he could time-travel like Dr. Who, he would be stunned to find his words on a university syllabus. But he would not be surprised at the way we will be using those words in this class, because the study of rhetoric was essential to all education in his day. We too will focus on communication using words, with Shakespeare as a capacious model and inspiration for dialogue, self-presentation, and writing. By writing 'with' Shakespeare—critically, creatively, in groups, and in a variety of media—you will have ample opportunity to explore the elements and occasions that shape effective, meaningful communication. We will consider how his plays have in turn been reinterpreted across the globe: in addition to reciting famous speeches, we will analyze both text and film versions of the comedy *Much Ado About Nothing* and the tragedy *Othello*, and you will explore an online MITx module as preparation to perform dramatic scenes from what is now a 'problem play,' *The Merchant of Venice*. Finally, we will look at how Shakespeare revises his stories and style in the late 'romance' *A Winter's Tale*. In the process, you will get to 'play' a Shakespeare scholar, and debate the reasons for the playwright's enduring power. Nevertheless, our aim is less to appreciate his works as an end in themselves than to draw on his remarkable drama (including its vocabulary, variety, verve, and verbal command) in order to help you improve your own writing, speaking, analytic thinking, use of resources, and understanding of media today.

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

Jessica Ruffin

Screening

M 7:00-10:00P

3-270

Lecture

T 3:30-5:00P

3-270

Recitation 1 R 4:00-5:00P

1-277

Recitation 2 R 3:00-4:00P

1-277

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.012 (H, CI-H) Form of Western Narrative Time, Media, and Identity

Jessica Ruffin

MW

11:00-12:30P

4-257

How has “the West” been formed by narratives and shaped narrative forms? How do various media—from the epic, to cinema, and networked environments—shape our perceptions of time, space, and ourselves? In this course, we address these questions across major narrative genres of the Western canon. We will also engage seminal theories of history, time, and identity—examining how they have structured and sought to critique Western narratives. Particular emphasis will be placed on analyzing how historical developments of media technologies have afforded novel configurations of identity and self-narration.

21L.017 (H, CI-H) The Art of the Probable

Shankar Raman

TR

9:30-11:00A

14N-325

Pre-1900

“The Art of the Probable” addresses the history of scientific ideas, in particular the emergence and development of mathematical probability. But it is neither meant to be a history of the exact sciences per se nor an annex to, say, the Course 6 curriculum in probability and statistics. Rather, we will focus on the formal, thematic, and rhetorical features that imaginative literature shares with texts in the history of probability. These shared issues include (but are not limited to): the attempt to quantify or otherwise explain the presence of chance, risk, and contingency in everyday life; the deduction of causes for phenomena that are knowable only in their effects; and, above all, the question of what it means to think and act rationally in an uncertain world. Readings include work by Aristotle, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Dostoevsky, Darwin, H.G. Wells, Thomas Pynchon, Tom Stoppard, and more.

INTRODUCTORY

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

Same subject as WGS.145[J]

Margery Resnick TR 3-4:30P

14N-325

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.

21L.021 (H, CI-H) Comedy Modern Times

Ben Mangrum

MW 9:30-11:00A

4-253

What's so funny about being modern? This subject will consider how films, novels, and graphic memoirs imagine the pursuit of happiness despite the varied and vast forms of alienation that characterize modern life. Students will consider work by Charlie Chaplin, Samuel Beckett, Percival Everett, Mohsin Hamid, Alison Bechdel, and many others.

INTRODUCTORY

21L.024 (H, CI-H) Literature and Existentialism

Eugenie Brinkema TR 2:30-4P 5-217

Introduction to literary works associated with existentialism, a nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophical movement known for its exploration of fundamental questions about the individual in modernity. Existentialist writers, artists, and philosophers focused on what it means that human beings exist finitely, oriented towards their own death; to what extent free will and reason are or are not governing principles of existence and action; how an individual might live a meaningful life in a society that itself is sick, illogical, absurd or without meaning; how catastrophes and the devastations of war upend understandings of ethics; and what forms of sensation adequately describe the contemporary human experience—waiting, disgust, nausea, anguish, anxiety, estrangement and alienation, confusion or boredom, or perhaps radical doubt? This course explores the aesthetic languages that existentialist writers and artists deployed to think through these fundamental questions, ones with which twenty-first-century thinkers are still grappling.

Works include Sartre, *Nausea* and *No Exit*; Camus, *The Stranger* and *The Myth of Sisyphus*; Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*; Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*; Kafka, *The Trial* and *Metamorphosis*; Hesse, *Steppenwolf*; Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*; short stories by Kate Chopin; aphorisms by Nietzsche; and selected contemporary novels and films.

21L.032 (H, CI-H) Afrofuturism, Magical Realism, and Other Otherwise Worlds

Same subject as WGS.130

Joaquín Terrones TR 3:30-5:00P 56-167

Is this the only possible world? Or are there others free of white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and ecological devastation? What might it mean not just to imagine these possibilities but to listen for other worlds that already exist alongside our own? In this course, we will examine how Afrofuturism, magical realism, and other forms of the fantastic in North and Latin America not only envision alternatives to the current order but also identify existing ways of being otherwise in the world. In addition to analyzing texts and films, we will incorporate theoretical insights from black studies, latinx studies, queer studies, and feminism into our discussions. Some of the authors we will read include Octavia Butler, N.K. Jemisin, Samuel Delany, Gabriel García Márquez, José María Arguedas, and Alejo Carpentier; films we will watch include *Candyman*, *Nope*, *The Devil's Knot*, and *Embrace of the Serpent*; and pop culture narratives we will study include Janelle Monáe's *Dirty Computer*, Ta-Nehisi Coates' *The Intergalactic Empire of Wakanda*, Barry Jenkins' *The Underground Railroad*, Disney's *Encanto* and Beyoncé's *Black is King*.

INTRODUCTORY

21L.040 (CI-H) Foundations of East Asian Literature: From Confucius to the Beats

Same subject as 21G.041

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’unbyang*.

SAMPLINGS

21L.310 Bestsellers Contemporary Literature

Full Term

Laura Finch

T

11-12:30P

56-191

This 6-credit class will take you through a sampling of 21st-century speculative fiction. The ability to up-end what we consider possible and to allow us to imagine differently is the hallmark of science fiction. In this class we will read novels that make use of this radical capacity in order to challenge the oppressive structures of race, gender, 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. Assessment (presentations, short written responses, and leading group projects) is based on consistent participation and engagement throughout the semester, rather than being heavily weighted towards a final assignment.

21L.320 Big Books Reading *Paradise Lost*

Full Term

Mary Fuller

M

2:30-4P

4-253

Pre-1900

Overturn the government. Invent your own belief system. Go blind. Then rewrite “Genesis,” and reimagine the origins of everything: culture, knowledge, gender, human beings, and the universe. That’s the story behind John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*: arguably the greatest epic poem written in English.

The focus of the class will be on reading and discussion of Milton’s text. Work will include frequent, informal writing, leading discussions, one or two short quizzes, and a final reflection paper.

SAMPLINGS

21L.325 Small Wonders: How to be a Person: First Person and the Lyric Voice

First Half Term: Ends October 18th

Stephen Tapscott

W

7:00-10:00P

14N-112

In this six-unit Samplings subject, we read poems (chiefly lyrics, all in English) written the “first person” and voiced as “I” (and sometimes as “we.”) We start with the Romantic egotistical sublime (chiefly John Clare, William Wordsworth) and wonder how this tradition is grounded in the grand subjective negativity of Satan in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*; then we move through 19th century attempts to broaden or refine they position (Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning), then modernist assertions that poetry is “impersonal“ anyway (T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Langston Hughes, Ravindranath Tagore, Ezra Pound’s translations of Chinese poems.) We move through the confessional poets (Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton), and their reliance on existentialist self-assertion., then conclude with recent work (Elizabeth Bishop, Florence Anthony, Joy Harjo) that joins the personal with social-group identification and collective identities. Along the way, we look at parallel descriptions of “identity” formation from other discourse: Freudian psychology, ego psychology, narrative theory, liberationist ideologies, and questions of situated knowledge. Discussions, several short papers.

21L.350 Science and Literature Science Fiction

Full Term

Laura Finch

T

11-12:30P

56-191

This 6-credit class will take you through a sampling of bestselling 21st-century fiction and science fiction, where we will cover topics such as climate crisis, public health, and social and economic inequity. We will read novels, short stories, and poetry that not only represent the current moment, but that also use fiction as a way to imagine better worlds. Assessment (presentations, short written responses, and group projects) is based on consistent participation and engagement throughout the semester, rather than a final paper.

INTERMEDIATE

21G.347 (H) Social & Literature Trends in Contemporary Short French Fiction

Bruno Perreau

T

7-10 pm

14N-313

This course examines social and literary trends in France since 1990. It studies the impact of the dominant social, political, economic, and cultural events of the past 20 years on fiction and writing. Themes include the legacy of France's colonial experience, the re-examination of its wartime past, memory and the Holocaust, the specter of AIDS, changing gender relationships, new families, the economic crisis, the quest for personal identity, and immigration narratives.

21G.432 (H) French Pop Music

Bruno Perreau

R

7-10 pm

14N-313

This course explores the literary, political and social traditions of “la chanson française” from the early twentieth century until now. It also discusses the influence of world music, including American and British pop and rock music.

Students will investigate individual careers, as well as generational phenomenon, such as cabaret songs, yéyés, French rap, symphonic songs, etc. They will analyze the impact of social media on the music industry in France, the relations between “la chanson française” and French cinema, the richness of francophone music (Rai, Zouk, Mbalax, Belgian realism, and Québécois lyricism), the influence of musicals and living art, and the political role of “la chanson française.”

INTERMEDIATE

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

Caitlyn Doyle

MW 11--0012:30P

4-144

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: The Science Fiction of Freedom

Ben Mangrum

MW 1-2:30P

66-154

What does it mean to be free? Is freedom a state of mind? An inalienable property of the self? The absence of coercive or oppressive structures?

Such questions often inspire philosophers to develop thought experiments about alternative worlds. These same questions also lie at the heart of many major works in science fiction. This subject will put the two together—philosophy and science fiction—to consider speculative techniques for imagining freedom. Students will consider work by Philip K. Dick, Ursula K. Le Guin, Octavia Butler, Kazuo Ishiguro, Isaiah Berlin, Robert Nozick, Saidiya Hartman, and many others.

INTERMEDIATE

21L.481 (H) HIV/AIDS in American Culture

Same subject as WGS.250

Joaquín Terrones

MW 1-2:30P

66-154

During the first years of the HIV/AIDS crisis, in the eighties and early nineties, activists protested across major cities demanding government action, some of them still hooked up to IV drips and oxygen tanks; alongside them, writers, visual artists, and filmmakers continued creating, many up until their last breath. This course examines the relationship between different forms of cultural expression—from art to activism—during those first fifteen years of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, prior to the advent of highly active antiretroviral therapy. In particular, we will analyze the way in which mainstream narratives about the disease associated it with Blackness and queerness. With a focus on the work of Black queer and trans creators and activists, we will also study how literature, film, and visual art were mobilized against these mainstream narratives in order to effect changes in public consciousness and even policy. Finally, we will discuss the legacy of these cultural responses, particularly as it pertains to communities of color. We will do so through close readings across a variety of genres and media: fiction, poetry, film, theater, television, journalism, popular music, painting, sculpture, performance, and installation art. Some of the works we will analyze include: Samuel Delany's *The Tale of Plagues and Carnival*; Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*; Jamaica Kincaid's *My Brother*; Sapphire's *Push* and its screen adaptation *Precious*; the films of Marlon Riggs; and the latest season of the television series *Pose*.

21L.487 (H) Modern Poetry

Stephen Tapscott

T

7-10 pm

2-103

We will read major poems by the most important poets in English in the twentieth century, from the period post-WW I disillusionment, through WW II 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.

INTERMEDIATE

21L.494 (H) Classics of Chinese Literature in Translation

Same subject as 21G.044 and WGS.235

Wiebke Denecke

MW

1:00-2:30P

56-167

Pre-1900

This course offers a panoramic overview of classical Chinese literature—the world’s oldest continuous literary tradition still alive. As we read texts from a breath-taking span of three thousand years (some originally inscribed on turtle shells and bamboo strips!) we will learn how to appreciate the interventions writers made in their own time and cultural context, while also grasping their significance, comparatively, in the broader context of literary traditions from around the world.

While focusing on first-hand encounters with original works in English translation (we will examine poetry, philosophy, history, rhapsodies, drama, short stories and several great classical novels), we will ask questions such as: what distinctive role did writing and literature come to play in Chinese society over the course of China’s many dynasties? How did the genres Chinese authors developed shape the content of their works and help articulate their desires, fears, hopes, creative fancies, and their ideas about life and death, virtue and violence, love, belief and knowledge, and the human condition? What does classical Chinese literature have to offer to readers and writers in today’s global world?

As we read across three millennia, we will have the unique privilege to witness in fast-forward motion, like in a historical laboratory, how Chinese authors increasingly adapted, satirized, rewrote or resisted earlier literary themes and models as their literary tradition grew older and ever more diverse. All texts are in translation. No language skills are required.

INTERMEDIATE

21L.501 (H) The American Novel

Wyn Kelley

MW 11-12:30P 1-135

Pre-1900

Works by major American novelists, beginning with the late 18th century and concluding with a contemporary novelist. Major emphasis on reading novels as literary texts, but attention paid to historical, intellectual, and political contexts as well. Syllabus varies from term to term, but many of the following writers are represented: Rowson, Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, Wharton, James, and Toni Morrison. Previously taught topics include The American Revolution and Makeovers (i.e. adaptations and reinterpretation of novels traditionally considered as American “Classics”). May be repeated for credit with instructor’s permission so long as the content differs.

21L.601 Old English & Beowulf

Same subject as 24.916

Arthur Bahr

MW 1-2:30P 4-265

Pre-1900

hpæt pe gardena in geardagum þeodcyninga þrym 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.

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.

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.

INTERMEDIATE

21L.607 Greek I

First Half Term: Ends October 18th

Eric Driscoll

MW

2:30-4P

56-169

Pre-1900

Introduces rudiments of ancient Greek – the language of Plato, Sophocles, Thucydides, and Euclid, and the basis for that of the New Testament – to students with little or no prior knowledge of the subject. Aimed at laying a foundation to begin reading ancient and/or medieval texts. Greek I and Greek II may be combined (after completion of both) to count as a single HASS-H.

21L.608 Greek II

First Half Term: Begins October 21

Eric Driscoll

MW

2:30-4P

56-169

Pre-1900

Introductory Greek 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 Greek I with permission of instructor. Greek I and Greek II may be combined (after completion of both) to count as a single HASS-H.

21L.613 Latin Readings: *Aesop's Fables*

First Half Term: Ends October 18th

Stephanie Ann Frampton

MW

1-2:30P

4-146

Pre-1900

Introduction to reading Latin literature in the original language. Provides a bridge between the study of Latin grammar and the reading of Latin authors. Improves knowledge of the language through careful examination of literary texts, focusing on prose and poetry in alternate years. Builds proficiency in reading Latin and develops appreciation for basic features of style and genre.

21L.614 Advanced Latin Readings: *Aesop's Fables*

First Half Term: Ends October 18th

Stephanie Ann Frampton

MW

1-2:30P

4-146

Pre-1900

Building on 21L.613, this course develops students' ability to read and analyze Latin literary texts, focusing on prose and poetry in alternate years. Increases fluency in reading comprehension and recognition of stylistic, generic, and grammatical features. May be repeated once for credit if content differs. 21L.613 and 21L.614, or two terms of 21L.614, may be combined by petition (after completion of both) to count as a single HASS-H.

INTERMEDIATE

21L.639 Globalization and Its Discontents: Spanish Speaking Nations

Joaquín Terrones

TR

1-2:30P

1-136

What do we actually mean by “Latin America”? Is it possible to talk meaningfully about a common identity in a region with such enormous racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity? We will tackle these questions by studying contemporary film, literature, popular music, television, and visual art. In particular, we will study cultural exchanges between Latin America and the rest of the world. How do Latin Americans consume (or resist) foreign goods, ideas, and influences? How do Latin American writers, directors, and artists create work that speaks to both local and international audiences?

Course materials will include a focus on work produced by Black and Indigenous authors, filmmakers, artists, and performers from the region. Taught in Spanish.

SEMINAR

21L.702 (H) Studies in Fiction Toni Morrison

Sandy Alexandre

M

7-10P

56-167

This subject provides a comprehensive and critical overview of the literary and scholarly work of the inimitable writer Toni Morrison. Morrison’s novels are well known for being stylistically dense and sometimes emotionally difficult to read and understand. But to borrow Morrison’s own words, from *The Bluest Eye*, the semester-long exercise of reading, thinking, and writing about her work promises to be “productive and fructifying.” As we allow ourselves the opportunity to meditate on her writings, during the course of the semester, we will open ourselves to the possibility of growing more intellectually conscious not only as readers, writers, and thinkers in the classroom, but also as compassionate citizens out in the world. We will read most of her novels, some of her speeches, her short story “Recitatif,” and critical essays about her work.

21L.704 (H) Studies in Poetry Pretending

Joshua Bennett

M

2-5P

5-231

For the purposes of this course, we will explore what it means to pretend—borrowing in part from J.L. Austin’s sense of the term, i.e., to “disguise reality”—with a special emphasis on poems within the black expressive tradition. In conversation with writers like Toni Morrison, Herman Melville, Gwendolyn Brooks, Harriet Jacobs, Paul Laurence Dunbar and others, we will engage this issue as it appears in both literary works and the historical record via a discrete set of social and political practices: the use of invisible protagonists; a 19th-century school taking place in a hole in the ground; the fugitive enslaved on the run, re-working the written word to become someone else, or else teleport themselves many miles away. Together, we will engage with a range of approaches to thinking about the uses of opacity in everyday life, the value of sincerity vs. authenticity, and the relationship between the masks we wear and the desire to preserve what we believe to be most valuable, vulnerable, and true.

SEMINAR

21L.705 (H) Major Authors James Joyce

James Buzard

Lecture

TR

7-8:30 pm

4-243

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 *Finnegans 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*.

21L.706 (H) Studies in Film Hitchcock: Film, Theory, Murder

Eugenie Brinkema

Lecture

W 7-10P

4-146

Lab

W 10-1P

56-169

There are many things one can do with Alfred Hitchcock. The first English-language director to turn his name into a brand, marking each film with a cameo and his famous silhouette, Hitchcock insisted on the recognition of the director as auteur or author. At the same time, he was a notoriously untrustworthy author who loved to taunt the public with contradictory statements about himself and his films—(one of his most famous adages was “torture the audience”). He made immensely popular films in the 1950s and 1960s, which brought him fame and box office success, but he was also known for a small-budget, quirky television series; his films are taught in every introductory film course in the world as examples of artistic virtuosity in the medium, but he also made horror films and screwball comedies. His films are examples of cruel, methodical directorial control, but they are also often very funny; they weave through meditations on compulsion, obsession, aggression, paranoia, guilt, and desire, but they are also durably entertaining. One might read the director’s films as allegories in relation to politics, nationalism, ethics, and the social versus the individual, or turn him into a critic of the ideology of marriage and heterosexuality. In this seminar, we will do all of these things with Alfred Hitchcock and more, examining a broad range of paradoxical films from this most complex director. We will closely study over 15 of Hitchcock’s films, from his early silent pictures of the 1920s to his studio productions of the 1960s to his dark, violent later work. Readings from film theory will help us understand Hitchcock through psychoanalytic, feminist and formalist lenses, and will present major concepts analytically useful for many of his works (suspense, guilt, disguise, desire, the wrong man, the MacGuffin, the blonde, and the blot or stain). At least one previous course in film analysis is required. Required work will involve a mix of theoretical readings and film screenings (on plex), asynchronous listening and writing, and one weekly synchronous meeting. Scholarly output will include a long essay engaging theory and films, and a portfolio mixed-media project.

Date: Mondays (except holidays)
during the semester

Time: 4:15pm - 5:45pm

Location: Building 14, 14N-417



**Come by for snacks & tea with
Literature Section friends,
instructors, & students.**

LIT & TEA

FOR MORE INFO: LIT@MIT.EDU

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.

The requirements for a Literature concentration are three subjects, including one subject from the intermediate tier and one subject from the seminar tier. 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 minor, with a focus either in film and literature, requires six subjects. Students wishing to minor must meet the designated advisor to plan out their course of study.

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. The full or double major in Literature has the following requirements: at least ten subjects in Literature, from which no more than three subjects may be introductory, at least three must be intermediate subjects, and at least three must be seminars. Both the joint and full/double major require a minimum of 3 subjects that focus on pre-1900 texts. 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.