

# LITERATURE SUBJECTS

Course 21L Supplement to the Bulletin



“I was an undergraduate before thought and experience revealed to me that these were not divergent interests – opposite poles of science and romance – but integrally related.” — J.R.R. Tolkien

Images: “Bliss, or Bucolic Green Hills” by Charles O’Rear, 1998; and Japanese swordswoman in a duel, 1845 via Wikimedia Commons



## LITERATURE SECTION

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# SPRING 2025

21L	UNITS		SUBJECT TITLE	INSTRUCTOR	DA	TIME	ROOM
<b>INTRODUCTORY</b>							
21L.000	3-0-9 Cl-HW, H		<b>A Random Walk Through Literature and Film</b> [Writing about Literature]	Jackson, Noel	TR	1-2:30P	4-251
21L.003	3-0-9 Cl-H, H		<b>Great Novels in English</b> [Reading Fiction]	Buzard, James	TR	3:30-5P	14N-112
21L.004	3-0-9 Cl-H, H		Reading Poetry	Tapscott, Stephen	MW	7-8:30P	14N-112
21L.004	3-0-9 Cl-H, H		<b>Black Poetics</b> [Reading Poetry] - <b>CANCELLED</b>	Bennett, Joshua	M	2-5P	5-231
21L.006	3-0-9 Cl-H, H		<b>Thinking with Plants and Animals</b> [American Literature]	Finch, Laura	MW	11-	56-169
21L.007	3-0-9 Cl-H, H		<b>Contemporary Science Fiction</b> [World Literatures]	Finch, Laura	MW	1-2:30P	56-167
21L.008J	3-0-9 Cl-H, A & H	same as 24.912, 21H.106, CMS.150, WGS.190; meets with 21W.741	Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies	DeGraff, Michel; Harrell, D. Fox	T	2-5P	E15-335
21L.009	3-0-9 Cl-H, H		<b>The Comedies</b> [Shakespeare]	Raman, Shankar	TR	9:30-11A	1-379
21L.011	3-3-6 Cl-H, H		Introduction to Film Studies	Brinkema, Eugenie	T	3:30-5P	3-270
			Recitation 1		R	3-4P	4-273
			Recitation 2		R	4-5P	4-273
			Recitation 3		R	3-4P	4-246
			Screening		M	7-10P	3-270
21L.014J	3-0-9 Cl-H, H	same as 21H.007	Introduction to Ancient & Medieval Studies	Driscoll, Eric; Frampton, Stephanie Ann	MW	1-2:30P	66-160
<b>SAMPLING</b>							
21L.315	2-0-4		<b>Dante's <i>Inferno</i> and <i>Purgatorio</i></b> [Prizewinners and Laureates] [Full Term]	Fuller, Mary	M	2:30-4P	4-144
21L.320	2-0-4		<b>Infinite Jest</b> [Big Books] [Second Half Term; Starts Mar 31]	Jackson, Noel	TR	3-4:30P	4-253
21L.325	2-0-4		<b>Translations</b> [Small Wonders] [Second Half Term; Starts Mar 31]	Tapscott, Stephen	T	7-10P	2-103
<b>SPECIAL SUBJECT</b>							
21.01	Cl-H, HASS E		Compass Course: Love, Death, and Taxes: How to Think – and Talk to Others –About	Bahr, Arthur; Tsai, Lily	T	1-3P	E51-385
			Recitation		F	11-12P	TBD
21L.S60J	3-0-9	same as CMS.S60	<b>Rap Theory and Practice</b>	Jaco, Wasalu	W	2-5P	1-150
21L.S89	3-0-6 or 3-0-9		<b>Beowulf and Judith</b> [Special Topics in Literature]	Bahr, Arthur	MW	9:30-11A	2-103
<b>INTERMEDIATE including subjects taught in Global Languages</b>							
21L.324	3-0-9 H	same as 21G.325	<b>New Culture of Gender, Queer France - CANCELLED</b>				
21G.348	3-0-9 H		Global Paris: Black Paris	Songolo, Aliko	T	7-10P	14N-313
21L.430	3-0-9 H		<b>What is the Good Life?</b> [Popular Culture and Narrative]	Dovle, Caitlyn	MW	2:30-4P	56-167
21L.435	3-0-9 H		<b>Indigenous Film and Literature</b> [Literature and Film]	Dovle, Caitlyn	MW	11-	4-253
21L.438J	3-0-9 H	same as 21W.738 and WGS.238	Intersectional Feminist Memoir	Williams, Brianna	TR	9:30-11A	4-146
21L.451	3-0-9 H		Literary Theory	Raman, Shankar	TR	11:30-1P	5-232
21L.482J	3-0-9		Topics in Queer Studies	Arain, Hafsa	TR	1-2:30P	56-167
21L.490J	3-0-9 H	same as 21G.077	Introduction to Classics of Russian Literature	Kholimskiy, Maria	MW	7-8:30P	16-644
21L.491J	3-0-9 H	same as 21G.066	Gateway to Korean Culture and Literature	Noh, Yohann	TR	1-2:30P	66-154
21L.492J	3-0-9 H	same as 21G.042, 21H.352, CMS.359	Three Kingdoms: From History to Fiction, Comic, Film and Game	Teng, Emma	TR	1-2:30P	14E310
21L.493J	3-0-9 H	same as 21G.062, meets with 21G.562	Gateway to Japanese Literature and Culture	Denecke, Wiebke	MW	9:30-11A	1-135
21L.504J	3-0-9 H	same as WGS.140	<b>Black Feminist Novels</b> [Race & Identity in American Literature]	Alexandre, Sandy	T	7-10P	14E310
21L.512	3-0-9 H		<b>The Art of Autobiography</b> [American Authors - CANCELLED]	Bennett, Joshua	T	2-5P	5-231
21L.609	2-0-4		Greek Readings [First Half Term; Ends Mar 21]	Driscoll, Eric	MW	11-	4-251
21L.610	2-0-4		Advanced Greek Readings [Second Half Term; Starts Mar 31]	Driscoll, Eric	MW	11-	4-251
21L.611	3-0-3		Latin 1 [First Half Term; Ends Mar 21]	Frampton, Stephanie Ann	MW	9:30-11A	4-251
21L.612	3-0-3		Latin 2 [Second Half Term; Starts Mar 31]	Frampton, Stephanie Ann	MW	9:30-11A	4-144
21L.636J	3-0-9 H	same as 21G.716	Introduction to Contemporary Hispanic Literature & Film	Terrones, Joaquin	W	7-10P	2-103
<b>SEMINAR</b>							
21L.703	3-0-9 Cl-M, H		<b>Brave New Worlds: Making Shakespeare (and Marlowe) Modern</b> [Studies in Drama]	Henderson, Diana	TR	3-4:30P	14N-325
21L.705	3-0-9 Cl-M, H		<b>James Joyce</b> [Major Authors]	Buzard, James	TR	7-8:30P	66-148
21L.706	3-3-6 Cl-M, H	meets with CMS.830	<b>Cinema/Provocateur: Lars von Trier</b> [Studies in Film]	Ruffin, Jessica	M	1-4P	4-253
			Screening		M	7-10P	4-270
21L.707	3-0-9 Cl-M, H		<b>AI and the Literature of Consciousness</b> [Problems in Cultural Interrelation]	Mannum, Ben	TR	11-	4-253



# INTRODUCTORY

## 21L.000 (CI-HW) Writing about Literature A Random Walk Through Literature and Film

Same Subject as 21W.041[J]

Noel Jackson

TR

1-2:30P

4-251

Few activities are more central to everyday experience than walking. For those who are not living with a mobility impairment, walking may even be something we do without thinking. Our class will focus on this commonplace activity as we explore the practice and cultural history of walking. Along the way, we will consider what the humble walk can reveal about the world around us, private and public life, and the rhythms of thinking.

Our class will encounter poets, novelists, non-fiction authors, and filmmakers who make walking central to their work. We will read poems composed on the move, experiments in urban “drift,” and observe how, on a walk, one may derive pleasure, encounter peril, find love or a wilderness in one’s own neighborhood. We will explore the origins of an idea, now thoroughly absorbed into contemporary life, that walking should be undertaken daily for health (get your 10,000 steps!). And we will consider how a graphic novel and a movie separately portray a momentous act of walking in collective political protest: the civil rights marches from Selma, Alabama to the state capital of Montgomery in 1965. Classes will involve walks outside campus walls as well as discussions inside them. In various extramural rambles throughout the semester, you will explore the environment of MIT and Greater Boston as well as walk in the spirit of the texts and films we encounter.

## 21L.003 (CI-H, H) Reading Fiction Great Novels in English

James Buzard

TR

3:30-5P

14N-112

Pre-1900

A handful of great novels from a golden age in English fiction, 1815-1890. We’ll study Jane Austen’s *Emma* (1815), Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1831 edition), Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1860-61), and Thomas Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886). Topics will include: women’s place and power in society; social class relations and conflicts; the evolution of realism in fiction; the novel of character development (Bildungsroman). Some attention will be paid to the historical context in which these works were written, but the main emphasis will be on learning to read some classic texts with insight and appreciation.

In keeping with its CI-H designation, this class will include substantial writing and will feature at least one student oral presentation.

# INTRODUCTORY

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

Stephen Tapscott

MW 7-8:30P

14N-112

Pre-1900

An introduction to poetry in English. We will explore poems written during several periods and in several genres (nature-poems, narratives, the epic, sonnets, odes, experimental forms). Focus will be less on names and dates than on tactics of analytic reading. Poets whose work we'll read include William Shakespeare, John Milton, John Keats, Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Frost, Sylvia Plath, Elizabeth Bishop, Langston Hughes, June Jordan, Seamus Heaney, Derek Walcott, Li-young Lee, Marilyn Chin, and others. Special course-related events (readings, lectures, film screenings) will take place on selected evenings throughout the term. Regular classroom hours will be reduced in the weeks for which a special event is scheduled.

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

Joshua Bennett

M 2-5P

5-231

**CANCELLED**

The central concern of this class is the historical relationship between the social lives of everyday people and U.S. African American poetics, with a special emphasis on what June Jordan once termed the "difficult practice of Black poetry in America." How does the practice of writing and reading poetry help us to know ourselves, as well as one another? And how might we better understand the particular role of poetry, of poesis, 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 study the works of Phillis Wheatley, Toni Morrison, Tongo Eisen-Martin, Lucille Clifton, Sun Ra, Hortense Spillers, Stevie Wonder, Harryette Mullen, and Fred Moten, among others. All toward the end of elaborating in concert a working theory of black poetics, a poetics of black sociality, a new way for us to be together in a cultural moment marked by distance, as well as the disintegration of the public commons. In the midst of ongoing catastrophe, a state of emergency and emergence, this course will seek to chart a way forward using the instruments left to us by luminaries both dead and living, a cloud of witnesses beckoning us toward a future with room enough for all of us to flourish.

# INTRODUCTORY

## **21L.006 (CI-H, H) American Literature Thinking about Plants & Animals**

Laura Finch

MW 11A-12:30P

56-169

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.

## **21L.012 (H, CI-H) World Literatures Contemporary Science Fiction**

Laura Finch

MW 1-2:30P

56-167

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 make 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 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

This subject contextualizes Shakespeare's major comedies within a broader framework that includes so-called "problem" plays as well as city comedies by one or more 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 temporal, geographical, and cultural boundaries. Works studied include *Twelfth Night* (and *Some Like It Hot*); *Taming of the Shrew* (and *10 Things I Hate About You*); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *A Comedy of Errors*.

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

Eugenie Brinkema

Lecture

T 3:30-5P 3-270

Recitation 1 R 4-5P 1-273

Screening M 7-10P 3-270

Recitation 2 R 3-4P 1-273

Recitation 3 R 3-4P 1-246

Films are familiar to you; this course should make them strange again.

The Film Experience serves as an introduction to film studies, concentrating on close analysis and criticism. Students will learn the technical vocabulary for analyzing cinematic narrative, framing, editing, color, sound, and lighting; develop the critical means for turning close analysis into interpretations and comparative readings of films; and explore theoretical issues related to spectatorship, reflexivity, and ideology. We will look beyond the surface pleasures of cinema to ask how films are put together; what choices are made formally, narratively, and politically in the constructions of different types of films; and how films have changed historically and in different production and national contexts. We will study a wide example of works made between 1895 and 2023 and heralding from over a dozen countries, ranging from early silent experiments, documentary and avant-garde films, and canonical European art cinema, to contemporary Hollywood blockbusters, Hong Kong melodrama, and Iranian cinema. Directors include Ana Lily Amirpour, Maya Deren, Sergei Eisenstein, Jean-Luc Godard, Greta Gerwig, Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Akira Kurosawa, David Lynch, Roberto Rossellini, Quentin Tarantino, Orson Welles, and Wong Kar-wai.

Format: one required 90-minute lecture, one required evening screening, and one discussion hour per week.

# INTRODUCTORY

## 21L.014[J] (H, CI-H) Introduction to Ancient & Medieval Studies

Same Subject as 21H.007[J]

Eric Driscoll & Stephanie Ann Frampton

MW

1-2:30P

66-160

Pre-1900

Explores the fascinating history, culture, and society of the ancient and medieval worlds and the different methodologies scholars use to interpret them. Wrestles with big questions about the diversity of life and thought in pre-modern societies, the best ways to study the distant past, and the nature (and limitations) of knowledge about long-ago eras. Considers a wide range of scholarly subjects such as the rise and fall of the Roman empire, the triumph of Christianity and Islam, barbarian invasions and holy wars, courts and castles, philosophy and religion, and the diversity of art, literature, and politics. Ponders different types of evidence, reads across a variety of disciplines, and develops skills to identify continuities and changes in ancient and medieval societies.

# SAMPLINGS

## 21L.315 Prizewinners and Laureate Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*

Full Term

Mary Fuller

M

2:30-4P

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.

## 21L.320 Big Books *Infinite Jest*

Second Half Term: Starts Mar 31

Noel Jackson

TR

3-4:30P

4-253

David Foster Wallace's 1996 novel *Infinite Jest* is a "Big Book" in a number of senses. One of the masterpieces of postmodern American fiction, the novel is regularly found on best-of lists for the last half century. A novel of colossal proportions and equally massive ambitions, with a large cast of characters and frequently shifting chronology and perspectives, *Infinite Jest* is a novel whose maximalism, overwhelming at times, reflects the chaotic enormity of the world it describes. Both clear-eyed and fabulist, probing and problematic, the novel addresses geopolitical conflict, ecological crisis, information overload, postirony, addiction and recovery, and more.

*IJ* is placed in a number of settings, but much of its action takes place in the greater Boston area. Some of the local sites Wallace describes are now gone, some are imaginary, but most are still around, including some landmarks on the MIT campus. Students will have the opportunity to generate site-specific readings through exploratory trips into the community, virtual mapping of the novel, or both.



# SAMPLINGS

## 21L.325 Small Wonders Translations

Second Half Term: Starts Mar 31

Stephen Tapscott

T

7-10P

2-103

Pre-1900

In this subject we'll work with literary texts, chiefly poems. We will read theories of translation (Is it possible? Is it necessary-but-undesirable? Is it even ethical? Is it imperialistic or politically-charged? Is it more like paraphrase or transformation or musical-performance?). We will do comparisons of texts-in-their-original languages and texts-in-translation, and will try some translations and "versions" ourselves. We will consider whether transferring from one medium or genre (e.g., a poem or a novel) to another (e.g., film, opera) is a mode of "translation"—and also what to do when a text is considered sacred (what happens when we translate the Bible?) Or when a machine does the work? Or when a language is historically compromised (how does a Jewish writer use German after the Shoah?).

No other languages-competence except in English is required (we can discuss the processes and theories of "translating" texts from languages one doesn't know); students who do know other languages, however, are welcome.

Theorists include Walter Benjamin, Benjamin Whorf, Nancy Chodorow, George Steiner, Jon Felstiner, William Gass. Artists whose work we'll read include Basho, Li Bai, Ezra Pound, Xu Zhimo, Lam Thi My Da, Ngo Tu Lap, Cesar Vallejo, Robert Frost, Dante, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Rainer Maria Rilke, Pablo Neruda, Gabriela Mistral, Paul Celan, Czeslaw Milosz, Wislawa Szymborska, Aimé Césaire, Samuel Beckett, Constantine Cavafy, Robert Lowell, Charlie Chaplin... and probably others.

# SPECIAL SUBJECTS

## 21.01 Compass Course Love, Death, and Taxes: How to Think – and Talk to Others – About Being Human

Arthur Bahr & Lily Tsai

Lecture	T 1-3P	E51-385
Recitation	F 11-12P	TBA

(Assorted lecture and recitation times with other faculty). Website: [compass.mit.edu](http://compass.mit.edu)

Fast forward 25 years — sea levels rise, the media lies, democracy dies. Nothing is certain but love, death, and taxes. Have you made good decisions? Are you a good person? Do you know what is true? In this class, you will develop a compass to navigate a world full of challenges and complexity with insights from Beethoven, Dante, T. Chiang, LeGuin, Laozi, Kongzi (Confucius), Kuhn, Mill, J. Nagel, C.T. Nguyen, Plato, Rousseau, and more. The work will be done through a flipped, seminar style class taught by faculty across SHASS with debates, writing, and simulations.

## 21L.S60J C23 Rap Theory and Practice

Same subject as CMS.S60

Wasalu Jaco (Lupe Fiasco)

W	2-5P	1-150
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“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.

## 21L.S89 Special Topics in Literature: Old English

Arthur Bahr

MW 9:30-11A 2-103

Pre-1900

Translation and discussion of key passages of the Old English *Beowulf* and *Judith*, whose sole surviving copies were bound together over a thousand years ago. Other topics to be shaped by student interest but may include: hypermeter and theories of Old English meter more generally; Old English prose composition; the dating and religious perspective of *Beowulf*; and, depending on availability, workshopping the ongoing development of a chamber opera of *Judith*, sung in both modern and Old English. Prerequisite: One semester of Old English.

# INTERMEDIATE

## 21L.324 (H) New Culture of Gender: Queer France

Sections 21L.325  
Uno Perla R 7-10P 14N-313

# CANCELLED

Is French culture queer? Who are the new LGBTQIA+ authors in France? What are the main concerns of the young queer generation? The class introduces students to the main classical references of queer subcultures from Proust and Vivien to Hocquenghem and Wittig. It also studies debates on postcolonial and globalized LGBTQIA+ identities exploring essays, songs, movies, and novels. Among the authors studied: Didier Eribon, Anne Garréta, Abdellah Taïa, Monique Wittig, Nina Bouraoui, Édouard Louis. Taught in French.

## 21G.348 (H) Global Paris: Black Paris

Aliko Songolo T 7-10P 14N-313

“Black Paris” will focus on the histories and contemporary lives of people of African descent in the French capital city. The course will explore the reasons and manner of migration of these populations to France from the United States, the Caribbean, and the continent of Africa, and it will examine in detail the status and impact of these populations on contemporary Paris. Issues to be discussed include immigration, assimilation, integration, and citizenship. Taught in French.

Students will investigate other aspects of Paris to gain a deeper understanding of the city, such as the characteristics of each of the 20 districts. They will be encouraged to pursue research related to their interests such as the role Paris plays in science, commerce, industry, culture, and entertainment. They may also research the biographies of influential figures such as Josephine Baker, Léopold Sédar Senghor, or Maryse Condé, or conduct a comparative study between Paris and a major American city such as New York.

## 21L.430 (H) Popular Culture and Narrative What is the Good Life?

Caitlyn Doyle

MW 2:30-4P

56-167

Before it comes to an end, how shall I spend the life I have? What makes it worthwhile? What should I strive for? This course looks to art, philosophy, and popular culture to examine the question—what is the good life? Students will grapple with diverse perspectives on the good life. We will consider the philosophers, from Aristotle to bell hooks, who have explicitly addressed these questions, works of art that have sought to reimagine them, and examples of popular culture that presuppose a consensus regarding them. Students will write, reflect, and create, as they learn to consider the role of rationality, morality, absurdity, economics, politics, class, and identity in constructing an idea of the good life. Sample films and television shows include: *Bridgerton*, *The Good Place*, *The Office*, *Do The Right Thing*, and *La Dolce Vita*.

## 21L.435 (H) Literature and Film Indigenous Literature and Film

Caitlyn Doyle

MW 11-12:30P

4-253

This course examines diverse Indigenous films, television shows, and novels from Turtle Island (Canada & the United States). Students will study a wide variety of influential and popular Indigenous works of art, including activist-based documentaries, adventure comedies, memoirs, dystopian novels, sitcoms, and animations. These works challenge accepted historical and contemporary fictions that sustain settler-colonial forms of domination, offering poignant correctives to the misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples that have dominated popular culture in the region. We will also consider the larger historical, legal, and political contexts to which these works respond. Film and literary texts will include: *Reservation Dogs*, by Sterlin Harjo (Seminole/Muscogee Creek), *The Mountain of S'Gaana*, by Christopher Auchter (Haida), *Smoke Signals*, by Chris Eyre (Cheyenne and Arapaho), *The Marrow Thieves*, by Cherie Dimaline (Métis) and *Out of the Depths*, by Isabelle Knockwood (Mi'kmaw).

# INTERMEDIATE

## 21L.451 (H) Literary Theory

Shankar Raman

TR

11:30-1P

5-232

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.

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

Same as 21G.066

Yohann Noh

TR

1-2:30P

66-154

Pre-1900

Introduction to two millennia of Korean literature and culture. Discusses texts, artifacts, and films in their cultural context and from a comparative global perspective. Explores poetry; historiography, story-telling, drama and fiction; philosophical and religious texts and practices; and visual materials. Includes creative exercises to help students develop their own Korean wave and K-drama passions with a critically informed eye.

## 21L.493J (H) Gateway to Japanese Literature and Culture

Same as 21G.062, meets with 21G.562

Wiebke Denecke

MW

9:30-11A

1-135

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, but also 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. As “virtual fieldwork” includes several sessions taught from Tokyo virtually, with Japanese students joining.

## 21L.504J (H) Race & Identity in American Literature Black Feminist Novels

Same as WGS.140

Sandy Alexandre

T

7-10P

14E-310

This course examines Black Feminism through the lens of literature and literary studies. Using twentieth-century and contemporary literature, film, and Black Feminist theory, we will study ways of thinking, creating, and being that spring from the lived experiences and observations of Black women. Some of the questions we will think about throughout the course include: How does Black feminism intervene in and contribute to the value, beauty, and complexity of literature? What can a Black Feminist novel teach us that we didn't know before? How does a Black Feminist work of fiction advocate for the importance of language and storytelling? Through our readings of the texts assigned for this course, students will have a chance to think about so many topics, including but not limited to: sisterhood, climate change, city life, friendship, romantic relationships, community, parenthood, pain, joy, fear, courage, intersectionality, and writing as a life-saving practice.

# INTERMEDIATE

## 21L.639 (H) American Authors The Art of Autobiography

Joshua Bennett

T

2-5P

5-231

Pre-1900

**CANCELLED**

This is a class of autobiography and in it we will play the hosts: Douglass, Ellison, Didion, Jordan, Thoreau, etc. Harney Cavall's *The Pitfalls of Philosophy*, with its elegant dance between life-writing and the major disciplinary debates of the day; the James Baldwin classic, *No Name in The Street*, and its instructive opening image: Baldwin's mother saying, "That's a good idea" in reference to a yard of black velvet, and for months the boy thinks that ideas are pieces of fabric; Harriet Jacobs's 19th-century narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, in which she writes letters from a crawlspace to deceive those intent on her capture, using the written word to transport herself many miles beyond her current surroundings.

Each week, these texts will help us compose ourselves anew on the page. Always, though, there will be a set of questions about craft following us as we study: Where to start? How to begin the story of our beginnings?

## 21L.609 Greek Readings

First Half Term: Ends Mar 21

Eric Driscoll

MW

11-12:30P

4-251

Pre-1900

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. 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.

## 21L.610 Advanced Greek Readings

Second Half Term: Starts Mar 31

Eric Driscoll

MW

11-12:30P

4-251

Pre-1900

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. 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.



## 21L.611 Latin I

First Half Term: Ends Mar 21

Stephanie Ann Frampton

MW

9:30-11A

4-251

Pre-1900

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.

## 21L.612 Latin II

Second Half Term: Starts Mar 31

Stephanie Ann Frampton

MW

9:30-11A

4-144

Pre-1900

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.

## 21L.636J (H) Introduction to Contemporary Hispanic Literature & Film

Same as 21G.716

Joaquín Terrones

W

7-10P

2-103

This course introduces students to the literature and cinema of contemporary Spain and Latin America. By becoming familiar with the historical, political, and cultural settings that shaped these texts and films, we will consider what, if anything, makes them uniquely Hispanic. What links the Old World with the New? How has Spain envisioned its place within Western Europe? How has Latin America defined itself in relationship to its northern neighbor? Some of the authors and filmmakers we will discuss include Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, Roberto Bolaño, Luis Buñuel, and Pedro Almodovar. The course is conducted in Spanish, and all reading and writing will be in Spanish.

# SEMINAR

## 21L.703 Studies Drama Brave New Worlds: Making Shakespeare (and Marlowe) Modern

Diana Henderson

TR

3-4:30P

14N-325

Pre-1900

From Akira Kurosawa to Tom Stoppard, from Giuseppe Verdi to Julie Taymor and a legion of meme makers and gamers, creative artists around the world have remade Shakespeare's plays in new media and cultural contexts: they are doing so right now. Why this enduring fascination? How have the stories been transformed by their movement across time and space? And why is Shakespeare's fellow playwright Christopher Marlowe—the true wild child of the Elizabethan Renaissance—lurking in the background? We will study the texts and remaking of Shakespeare as modes of modern cultural and artistic collaboration—including our own! Working with old and new media, students will gain a deeper understanding of theatrical and screen performance, literary analysis, cross-media adaptation and online research tools—as well as the fun of “Shakeshifting.” Source texts to include Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, *Edward II*, and *The Massacre at Paris*; Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest*; plus a modern “field” that defies definition.

## 21L.705 (H) Major Authors James Joyce

James Buzard

TR

7-8:30P

66-148

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 Cinema/Provocateur: Lars von Trier

Jessica Ruffin

Seminar M 1-4P

4-253

Screening M 7-10P

4-270

This course surveys Danish filmmaker Lars von Trier's oeuvre as a medium for engaging cinema's capacity to provoke reflection on history, culture, and the very medium itself. Producing television and movies ranging from musical, horror, drama, comedy, and science-fiction, Lars von Trier has been called a sadist, genius, and—interchangeably—a provocateur. Born in Denmark in 1956, von Trier straddles the generations of Euro-American 'children of World War II' and those generations whose distance from that global catastrophe opened the way for reflection on historical complicity. History and tradition are key points of interrogation for von Trier's works, which probe the Second World War in Europe; racism and chattel slavery; sex and gender politics; and religious fundamentalism, alongside the conventions and traditions of cinematic form. We will discuss and debate these issues through pairings of von Trier's work with cinematic and cultural theory as well as historical documents. Students will have the opportunity to produce analytical essays, artistic manifestos, and their own provocative cinematic works. 21L.011 Introductory to Film or a previous film/media course is recommended; introductory materials can be recommended by the instructor.

## 21L.707 (H) Problems in Cultural Interpretation AI and the Literature of Consciousness

Benjamin Mangrum

TR 11-12:30P

4-253

This subject puts debates about artificial intelligence and theories of mind in conversation with literary representations of consciousness. What does it mean to be conscious? Do AI programs understand or merely simulate understanding? We will approach these and many related questions by examining classic experiments like Newell and Simon's Logic Theorist computer program, arguments by philosophers like John Searle, and science fiction about machines that think, act, and interact with the world. We will also consider various literary devices that make a fictional character's consciousness seem plausible. We'll ask how, if at all, these literary techniques differ from the user-facing personalities of present-day chatbots and other intelligent computer programs.



**Date: Mondays** (except holidays) during the semester

**Time: 4:15pm - 5:45pm**

**Location: Building 14, 14N-417**



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# LIT TEA



FOR MORE INFO: [LIT@MIT.EDU](mailto:LIT@MIT.EDU)

# CONCENTRATION

The concentration in Literature requires three subjects including one subject from the intermediate tier (400-, 500-, 600-) and one subject from the seminar (700-) tier. Two six-unit samplings courses (from the 300 and 600 tier) may be combined by petition to count as one intermediate-tier subject. Certain subjects from outside of Literature may also qualify as part of a Literature concentration with permission of the instructor. To propose a concentration, you must meet with a concentration advisor, please email [litconcentrationadvisor@mit.edu](mailto:litconcentrationadvisor@mit.edu)

# MINOR

The minor in Literature allows for an exciting focus either in film or literature. The minor program in literature requires six subjects:

- At least one and no more than two introductory Literature subjects
- Two to three Literature intermediate subjects. Six-unit samplings subjects may be petitioned to count for a maximum of two twelve-unit intermediate subjects
- At least two pre-1900 courses
- At least two seminars

The minor program with a film focus also requires six subjects including at least three subjects from the following list:

- 21L.011 Introduction to Film Studies
- 21L.431 Shakespeare on Film and Media
- 21L.433 Film Styles and Genres
- 21L.435 Literature and Film
- 21L.706 Studies in Film

For more info on either minor programs, please email: [litminoradvisor@mit.edu](mailto:litminoradvisor@mit.edu)

# 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. Please email the Academic Program Specialist at [litacademics@mit.edu](mailto:litacademics@mit.edu) to declare intent in the major.