

# LITERATURE SUBJECTS

Course 21L Supplement to the Bulletin



“Gardening is really an extended form of reading, of history and philosophy. The garden itself has become like writing a book. I walk around and walk around. Apparently people often see me standing there and they wave to me and I don’t see them because I am reading the landscape.” — Jamaica Kincaid

Image: “Woman Reading in the Reeds, Saint-Jacut-de-la-mer” Édouard Vuillard. Oil on Canvas, 1909.



## LITERATURE SECTION

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

21L	UNITS	CREDIT	SUBJECT TITLE	INSTRUCTOR	DAY	TIME	ROOM	PRE-1900
INTERMEDIATE including subjects taught in Global Languages								
21L.600	2-2-8	HASS H	Reading Classical East Asian Masterpieces of Literature and Philosophy	Denecke, Wiebke	M-R	9:30-12 P	26-322	Yes

## INTERMEDIATE

### 21L.600 (HASS-H) Reading Masterpieces of Classical East Asian Literature and Philosophy

Wiebke Denecke

Pre-1900

Prereq: 21G.104, 21G.110, 21G.504, 21G.904, or permission of instructor

- 1 year of Mandarin or Japanese, or equivalent level (\*\*for heritage speakers of Korean or Vietnamese, please consult with instructor.)

NOTE: Character acquisition skills are required rather than a particular amount of Chinese character knowledge. All characters will be introduced in the teaching materials.

– Class time will also include afternoon exploratory excursions in the Boston area and self-paced film modules.

– Gateway to the world’s oldest continuous literary and philosophical tradition!

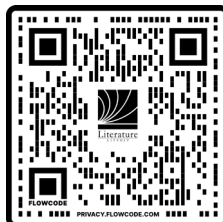
– Read canonical works that have become touchstones of cultural truth and intelligence, global political strategy, personal wisdom, and consummate literary artistry, by authors from China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam.

– Immersive introduction to the Classical Chinese language (also called “Literary Chinese” or “Literary Sinitic), the official language of pre-20th century East Asia through readings of major works of philosophy, poetry, fiction and historiography.

– Students acquire solid competency in Classical Chinese by reading classical masterpieces from East Asia in the original language and debating their legacy and relevance in today’s world and their own lives.

# SPRING 2026

21L	UNI TS	CREDIT	SUBJECT TITLE	INSTRUCTOR	DAY TIME	ROOM	PRE- 1900
INTRODUCTORY							
21L.004	3 0 9	H, CI-H	Reading Poetry	Fuller, Mary	M W 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	2-103	
21L.008[J]	3 0 9	A, H, CI-H	Same as 24.912, 21H.106, 21W.741, CMS.150, WGS.190 Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies	DeGraff, Michel; Harrell, D. Fox; Wood, Danielle	T 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM	E15-335	
21L.009	3 0 9	H, CI-H	Shakespeare	Raman, Shankar	T R 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM	1-379	Yes
21L.019	3 0 9	H, CI-H	Introduction to European and Latin American Fiction (taught in English)	Terrones, Joaquin	M W 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM	2-103	
21L.020[J]	3 0 9	H, CI-H	Globalization: The Good, the Bad and the In-Between	Resnick, Margery	T R 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM	14E-310	
21L.024[J]	3 0 9	H, CI-H	<b>Life, Death and Freedom</b> [Literature and Existentialism]	Doyle, Caitlyn	T R 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	66-148	
21L.027[J]	3 0 9	H, CI-H	Same as CMS.425, WGS.258 <b>Children Co-Creating Culture</b> [Children and Culture]	Gubar, Marah	M W 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	66-156	
21L.050	3 0 9	H, CI-H	<b>The Personal Essay</b> [Reading Nonfiction]	Mangrum, Ben	T R 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM	4-251	
INTERMEDIATE including subjects taught in Global Languages							
21G.341	3 0 9	H	<b>Resistance in French and Francophone Cinema</b> [Contemporary French Film and Social Issues] (taught in French)	Songolo, Aliko	T 7:00-10:00 PM	14N-313	
21L.419	3 0 9	H	<b>Books I Grew Up With</b> (Or Wish I Had) [Books to Grow By]	Raman, Shankar	T R 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM	1-379	
21L.420	3 0 9	H	<b>Oscar Wilde and His Friends</b> [Gateway to British Literature]	Tapscott, Stephen	M W 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	14N-112	Yes
21L.430	3 0 9	H	Meets with CMS.920 <b>What is the Good Life?</b> [Popular Culture and Narrative]	Doyle, Caitlyn	T R 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM	4-144	
21L.435	3 3 6	H	Meets With CMS.840 <b>Race and Horror in the Americas</b> [Literature and Film]	Terrones, Joaquin	M W 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	56-167	
21L.437[J]	3-0-9	H	Same as CMS.358/21G.736/WGS.210 The Short Form: Literature and New Media Culture in the Hispanic World (taught in Spanish)	Duong, Paloma	T 7:00 PM-10 PM	4-144	
21L.438[J]	3 0 9	H	Same as WGS.238 Intersectional Feminist Memoir	Williams, Brianna	T R 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM	4-253	
21L.453[J]	3 0 9	S	Same as 17.517 Political Utopias and Dystopias	Fuller, Mary; Lawson, Chappell	F 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	56-167	
21L.455	3 0 9	H	Ancient Authors	Frampton, Stephanie; Driscoll, Eric	M W 2:30 PM - 4:00 PM	66-154	Yes
21L.471	3 0 9	H	<b>Novels of Mystery, Detection and Suspense</b> [Major Novels]	Buzard, James	T R 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	1-136	Yes
21L.482[J]	3 0 9	H	Same as WGS.260 Topics in Queer Studies	Arain, Hafsa	M W 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	4-145	
21L.484[J]	3 0 9	A	Same as CMS.305, 21M.222; Meets with CMS.805 Rap Theory and Practice	Jaco, Wasalu	W 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM	1-150	
21L.486[J]	3 0 9	A	Same as 21T.244, WGS.285 <b>Gender and Performance</b> [Modern Drama]	Henderson, Diana	T R 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM	14E-310	
21L.490[J]	3 0 9	H	Same as 21G.077 Introduction to the Classics of Russian Literature (taught in English)	Khotimsky, Maria	M W 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	4-249	Yes
21L.500[J]	3 0 9	A	Same as 21T.247, CMS.427 How We Got to <i>Hamilton</i>	Gubar, Marah	M W 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM	4-364	
21L.504[J]	3 0 9	H	Same as WGS.140 <b>Style in an Age of Sameness</b> [Race and Identity in American Literature]	Alexandre, Sandy	T R 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	56-167	
21L.512	3 0 9	H	<b>T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden</b> [American Authors]	Buzard, James	T R 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM	5-232	
21L.609	2 0 4		<b>Greek Reading 1</b> [Greek Readings] (First Half Term Ends March 20)	Driscoll, Eric	M W 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM	4-251	Yes
21L.610	2 0 4		<b>Greek Reading 2</b> [Advanced Greek Readings] (Second Half Term Begins March 30)	Driscoll, Eric	M W 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM	4-251	Yes
21L.611	3 0 3		Latin I (First Half Term Ends March 20)	Frampton, Stephanie	M W 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM	4-251	Yes
21L.612	3 0 3		Latin II (Second Half Term Begins March 30)	Frampton, Stephanie	M W 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM	4-251	Yes
SEMINAR							
21L.703[J]	3 0 9	H, CI-M	Same subject as 21T.246 <b>Stoppard, Churchill and Company</b> [Studies in Drama]	Henderson, Diana	T R 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM	66-156	
21L.704	3 0 9	H, CI-M	<b>The Radical Imagination</b> [Studies in Poetry]	Jackson, Noel	M W 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM	14N-112	Yes
21L.706	3 0 9	H, CI-M	<b>Indigenous Film and Television</b> [Studies in Film]	Doyle, Caitlyn	T 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM	66-148	
21L.720	3 0 9	H, CI-M	Chaucer's <i>Canterbury Tales</i>	Bahr, Arthur	M W 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM	4-253	Yes



Information as of November 25, 2025.  
For most current information, visit [lit.mit.edu](https://lit.mit.edu)

# INTRODUCTORY

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

Mary Fuller

Pre-1900

How do you read a poem? Many people find poetry “difficult” – sometimes pleasurable and sometimes less so. But things that are difficult may also be useful and valuable to us as readers and human beings. This class will focus on developing and practicing the skills, habits, and knowledge to approach poetic texts – difficult or otherwise – so that you can assess their use and value for yourselves. We’ll take a close look at the kinds of evidence that can be used for thinking and talking about poetry, with and without knowledge of context. Readings will lean towards 20th and 21st century work in English, so that we can dig into how poets work with the specific features of one contemporary language we have in common. However, you can expect some exposure to older materials as well as one or more sessions on poetry in translation, and any knowledge of other languages will be a valuable resource to contribute to our discussion. We will explore a variety of tools and approaches: memorization, listening, reading out loud, visualization and annotation, as well as small group discussions and presentations. The last two weeks of the semester will focus on readings chosen and presented by the class.

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

Same subject as 24.912, 21H.106, 21W.741, CMS.150, WGS.190

Michel DeGraff; D. Fox Harrell; Danielle Wood

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

## 21L.009 (H, CI-H) Shakespeare

Shankar Raman

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*.



# INTRODUCTORY

## 21L.019 (H, CI-H) Introduction to European and Latin American Fiction (Taught in English)

Joaquín Terrones

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

Same subject as WGS.145  
Margery Resnick

This subject examines the cultural, artistic, social, and political impact of globalization across international borders in a 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? How has globalization affected human rights? Students develop sensitivity to other cultures and the ability to read broadly across national boundaries. Furthermore, the emphasis on the historical context gives students a foundation to continue work in literature, history, and the arts from a global perspective.

# INTRODUCTORY

## 21L.024 [J] (H, CI-H) Life, Death, and Freedom Literature & Existentialism

Caitlyn Doyle

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

## 21L.027 [J] (H, CI-H) Children Co-Creating Culture Children & Culture

Same subject as CMS.425, WGS.258

Marah Gubar

Children's creative contributions to culture are often belittled, ignored, and forgotten, rather than being judged worthy of preservation, sustained study, and critical analysis. This course therefore constitutes a bold experiment in reclamation, whereby we co-investigate the following question: What happens if we try to build *a whole class* around cultural artifacts that children themselves had a hand in creating?

We will begin by exploring the leading role that Native American, Jewish, and Black children (and their teachers) played in paving the way for a golden decade of youth participation in American culture that stretched from 1965 to 1975. Besides analyzing playground chants, diaries, and picture books based on children's sayings and stories, we will also study child-crafted films, poetry, and novellas, as well as plays, TV shows, photo books, and dances co-created by children and adults. In addition, contrasting how Holocaust-era children's artwork was received compared to contemporary Palestinian children's art will allow us to explore why and how adults appropriate, rewrite, and sometimes even censor children's creative efforts.

To expand and enrich our understanding of this archive, all students will be required to choose a single cultural artifact created or co-created by a child to do an in-depth oral presentation on, which you will then expand into a final essay. You might choose to dig up and scrutinize a story that you yourself wrote when you were young; or identify and analyze a particularly cool contribution to a new media trend involving children; or deepen your understanding of one of the cultural artifacts that's already on the syllabus by doing some additional independent research that you use to contextualize and enrich your close reading of it.

Whatever type of cultural artifact we are discussing in this seminar-style class, we will grapple with the following questions: What vision of childhood emerges in this artwork? Does it differ from how childhood tends to get represented in similar material created solely by adults? How is the adult-child relationship depicted? How do power asymmetries related to age, gender, ethnicity, and class affect the creation, content, and reception of this cultural artifact? And finally, what difference does the type of media being employed make, especially in terms of what liberties and rewards, risks and dangers are being afforded to young artists?

# INTRODUCTORY

## **21L.050 (H, CI-H) The Personal Essay** **Reading Nonfiction**

Ben Mangrum

An introduction to reading and writing creative nonfiction. We will explore essays and memoirs written by Joan Didion, Zadie Smith, David Foster Wallace, and many others. We will focus on how these writers use language to represent ordinary experience in reflective and artistic ways. Students will regularly give and receive feedback in writing workshops.

# INTERMEDIATE

## **21G.341 (H) Resistance in French & Francophone Cinemas** **Contemporary French Film and Social Issues** **(Taught in French)**

Aliko Songolo

This course will focus on the issue of resistance in French and Francophone cinemas. It will explore departures from the Golden Age of French Cinema (Jean Renoir's *The Rules of the Game*) to the technical and technological resistance and innovation of the French New Wave (Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless*). Beyond France, films made in the wake of the New Wave, without being necessarily influenced by them, exhibit political resistance to the colonial order (Ousmane Sembène's *Le camp de Thiaroye*). In nearby Québec, the split between a nascent cinema consciousness and the Canadian Film Board went hand in hand with a cultural identity crisis (Denys Arcand's *The Decline of the American Empire*). Readings will include texts on the techniques of cinema and how to read a film. Films will be shown with English subtitles. Class taught in French.

# INTERMEDIATE

## 21L.419 (H) Books I Grew Up With (Or Wish I Had) Books to Grow by

Shankar Raman

This is a subject built around texts I either grew up reading or was drawn to later in life because of the texts I grew up reading. I suspect some will be unfamiliar to you -- which children's books cross which national boundaries is always hard to figure out -- but I hope you will find this plunge into children's books you have not read as refreshing as returning to those that you already know from your own childhoods.

Through the first half of the twentieth century, a canon of "classic" texts for children took shape. This course will invite you to (re)encounter a selection drawn from Europe and England. You will absorb yourselves again in such classics as Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*; meet for perhaps the first time Tove Jansson's *Moomintroll* family; see what else Astrid Lindgren has written beyond *Pippi Longstocking*; follow Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story* to its end. We will be guided by such question as: How do children's texts approach (and reflect upon) how to (re)present the world? How do they evoke the experience of thresholds that separate one stage of life from another? How do illustrations work with the text to shape interpretation and response? Why do we return to these stories repeatedly in so many different forms?

## 21L.420 (H) Oscar Wilde and his Friends Gateway to British Literature

Stephen Tapscott

Pre-1900

Oscar Wilde seems to bridge the gaps: between Ireland and England, between imperium and colony, between the 19th and the 20th centuries, between gender-discrimination and [through a form of martyrdom] gradual acceptance/celebration, between art-as-utilitarian-social-function and art-for art's-sake. He both wrote the [arguably] funniest play ever in English and, within a couple of years, was tried for "gross indecency" and sent to prison. He is the patron saint of gay identity [he claims to have kissed Walt Whitman... Whitman, never otherwise known for his tact, withheld comment] and was also putatively the model for the characters of Sherlock Holmes [by his friend, the Scottish writer, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Count Dracula [by his friend, the Irish writer, Bram Stoker].

We read texts by Oscar Wilde, Augusta Gregory, W.B. Yeats, Arthur Conan Doyle, Bram Stoker, Henry James, Lewis Carroll, Walt Whitman, Thomas Hardy, A.E. Housman, Gilbert and Sullivan, Tom Stoppard, and others. We read visual images by Wilde's friends Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, John Singer Sargent, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, James McNeill Whistler, Edward Burne-Jones, Frances Richards, and Aubrey Beardsley. Short papers, several presentations, no final exam.



# INTERMEDIATE

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

Meets with CMS.920  
Caitlyn Doyle

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.

## 21L.435 (H) Race and Horror in the Americas Literature & Film

Meets With CMS.840  
Joaquín Terrones

This course examines the relationship between race and horror in literature and film 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 does so, 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 alongside films such as *Sinners*, *Candyman*, *Nanny*, *Nope*, *Sorry to Bother You*, *Blood Quantum*, *The Devil's Knot*, and *La Llorona*.

## 21L.437 [J] (H) The Short Form: Literature and New Media Cultures in the Hispanic World

Paloma Duong

Examines the aesthetics of the brief form across a variety of media and genres in Latin America and Spain, from short stories and snapshots to newspapers and Twitter. Explores the history and social significance of four short genres in the Hispanic world: the short story, the crónica, the poem, and the song. Discusses the rich literary and critical tradition that relates narrative length and temporality to the prose and the lyric in Spanish speaking cultures. With an emphasis on the 20th- and 21st-century epistemologies of acceleration and the remediation of literary theories of brevity, analyzes the relationship between temporality, aesthetic form, and media technologies, and the way these topics have taken shape in the imagination of writers, artists, and audiences in historically specific and politically significant contexts. Taught in Spanish. Limited to 18.

# INTERMEDIATE

## 21L.438 [J] (H) Intersectional Feminist Memoir

Brianna Williams

In this class, we will explore the memoir genre through a feminist intersectional lens, looking at the ways in which feminist writers ground personal experience within a complex understanding of race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, immigration status, religion, language, and disability. We will pay particular attention to the relationships between: form and content; fact and history; self and community; trauma and healing; coming to voice and breaking silence. To this end, we'll examine the use of metaphor, dreams, myth, and lore to make meaning out of memory, reconcile the loss thereof, and craft imaginative futures. Readings include books by Qian Julie Wang, Akwaeke Emezi, Carmen Maria Machado, Safiya Sinclair, Tara Westover and shorter works by Cinelle Barnes, Jamaica Kincaid, and Taiye Selasi.

## 21L.453 [J] (S) Political Utopias and Dystopias

Same subject as 17.517

Mary Fuller; Chappell Lawson

Explores fundamental questions about equality, freedom, privacy, community, and popular accountability through representation of idealized or horrific political systems. Focuses on classic, time-tested novels paired with short pieces on real-world cases that address key themes in the fictional treatment.

## 21L.455 (H) Ancient Authors

Stephanie Ann Frampton; Eric Driscoll

Pre-1900

Building on the Institute's shared foundation in science and engineering, this subject invites students to explore how imaginative literature from antiquity to the present has shaped our ways of thinking about the self, community, and the world. Readings range from *Gilgamesh* and Sappho to Plato, Montaigne, Rousseau, Du Bois, Heidegger, Arendt, and Claudia Rankine.

Through close reading and open discussion, students engage works that ask how we live with others, what obligations bind us, and how the past continues to illuminate the present. No prerequisites are required. Designed especially for STEM majors, the course offers a shared humanistic experience that complements MIT's technical education while inviting reflection on meaning, responsibility, and the common good.

Alumni of Fall 2025's 24.01 Classics of Western Philosophy are especially encouraged to enroll.

# INTERMEDIATE

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

James Buzard

Pre-1900

In the Victorian era (1837-1901), novels provided popular entertainment but also began staking large claims to artistic seriousness and ambition. Having become a celebrity as the author of best-selling comic novels, Charles Dickens (1812-1870) turned, in his middle years, to producing novels of much more careful construction and much higher aims.

*Bleak House* (serialized 1852-53) is Charles Dickens's masterpiece: one critic called it "the most audacious and significant act of the novelistic imagination ... in the nineteenth century" (and that is saying something, because the 19th century is known for many excellent novels, from Jane Austen to Tolstoy and Dostoevsky).

*Bleak House* attempts a comprehensive representation of English culture, from high society to the lowest of the low. This was the culture of the world's most powerful nation, holding the largest empire the world had ever seen. The novel ranges from broad comedy to scathing critique. It also features several mysteries, sustains an atmosphere of danger and suspense, and introduces one of the first detectives in modern fiction.

Depicting a complex, immersive social world, *Bleak House* is long and intricate. To make the task more approachable, this class will take up *Bleak House* in a manner resembling the way it was initially published: in **serial installments**. Installments of the novel will be interspersed with other readings throughout the entire semester. Those other readings will include two novels by contemporaries of Dickens's who also helped pioneer the detective story. We will read Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868), two fascinating page-turners teeming with mystery and suspense. We'll also read selected stories by Arthur Conan Doyle about the world's most famous detective, Sherlock Holmes.

The class will help students develop skills of close reading and interpretation. Student work will include short writing exercises, quizzes, and brief oral reports. A final project will reflect on the semester's experience. Please contact [jmbuzard@mit.edu](mailto:jmbuzard@mit.edu) with any questions.

## 21L.482 [J] (H) Topics in Queer Studies

Same subject as WGS.260  
Hafsa Arain

Develops critical understanding of queer theory through foundational and contemporary texts and other media forms. Examines relationships between queer theory and other social and cultural theories that probe and critique power, privilege, and normativity including critical race theory, transgender studies, feminist theory, and disability theory. Topics may include social movements, queer of color critiques, transnational activisms, and transgender politics.

# INTERMEDIATE

## 21L.484 [J] (A) Rap Theory and Practice

Same subject as 21M.222, CMS.305; Subject meets with CMS.805  
Wasalu Jaco (Lupe Fiasco)

“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.486 [J] (A) Gender & Performance Modern Drama

Same subject as 21T.244, WGS.285  
Diana Henderson

“Words fail.” —Samuel Beckett

What does it mean to stage a play in a world where talk is cheap but also incendiary, where screens have come to dominate our lives and we are deluged with multimedia entertainments and images? Is “liveness” still special, and if so, what does that mean? At a time when gender has become newly fluid and its performativity both a given and a source of political conflict, how does theater imagine the gendered world differently? Is identity real, and is it the same as character? How do nation, race, culture and class factor into gender’s meanings? So many challenging questions to explore!

We will consider the reasons playwrights still write drama, attending to the different possibilities that theater affords those whose voices are ignored or marginalized; those who want to challenge their dominant culture; and those who delight in the legacies of literary drama, community rituals, and language as an essential part of performed storytelling. Playwrights will range from Ibsen, Brecht, María Irene Fornés and the master of failure Samuel Beckett to living playwrights Caryl Churchill, Tony Kushner, Tom Stoppard, and Kwame Kwei-Armah. And you. First and foremost, we will be considering and experiencing modern drama as performance art, technologies and/of embodiment, and, for lack of a better word, gender.

# INTERMEDIATE

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

Same subject as 21G.077; Subject meets with 21G.618  
Maria Khotimsky

Pre-1900

Explores the works of classical Russian writers of the 19th and 20th centuries, including stories and novels by Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Bunin, Nabokov, Platonov, and others. Focuses on their approaches to portraying self and society, and on literary responses to fundamental ethical and philosophical questions about justice, freedom, free will, fate, love, loyalty, betrayal, and forgiveness.

Taught in English; students interested in completing some readings and a short writing project in Russian should register for 21G.618.

## 21L.500 [J] (A) How We Got to *Hamilton*

Same subject as 21T.247, CMS.427  
Marah Gubar

Winner of the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Drama as well as eleven Tony Awards, Lin Manuel-Miranda's *Hamilton: An American Musical* (2015) was a critical and commercial smash hit. Justly praised for its innovative rap battles and nontraditional casting, this musical also builds in brilliant ways on the work of past creators of musical theater whose work has too often been undervalued and overlooked.

To enrich our appreciation of *Hamilton*, we will begin by studying forms of drama that routinely go untaught, including burlesque, minstrelsy, all-black revues, and the classic American book musical. Listening to or watching multiple performances of the same material will help us to deepen our analysis of how individual songs, dances, and entire shows are structured, as well as to appreciate how they vary depending on who is performing them.

In the process, we will celebrate the groundbreaking yet often forgotten (or appropriated) achievements of artists of color, including "Master Juba," the "Black Swan," Ethel Waters, Bert Williams, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, and many others. By the time we get to *Hamilton*, our attunement to how popular songs and musicals are structured will enable us to analyze Manuel-Miranda's debts to past artists as well as to appreciate his scintillating originality. We'll also discuss insightful critiques of *Hamilton* by a wide range of contemporary commentators. Because this is an "Arts" course that's cross-listed with Music and Theater Arts, it will feature a mix of creative and critical assignments, some of which may be linked to field trips to local theaters, dance studios, or archives.



# INTERMEDIATE

## 21L.504 [J] (H) Style in an Age of Sameness Race & Identity in American Culture

Same subject as WGS.140  
Sandy Alexandre

In an age when algorithms smooth out our edges and platforms reward the predictable, how do writers craft voices that resist flattening? This course explores the unmistakable, often inimitable signature styles of authors such as Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, Franz Kafka, James Baldwin, Clarice Lispector, Gabriel García Márquez, Joan Didion, and others whose voices are so distinct that we can often easily recognize them when we encounter them on the page.

We'll study how these authors persisted in environments that pressured them to conform, and how voice becomes both craft and courage. And we'll develop the ability to see (and articulate) what makes a sentence recognizably Morrisonian, Kafkaesque, or Baldwinian—and what makes a sentence recognizably yours.

Through close reading, style mimicry experiments (including deliberate “AI misfires” as teaching moments), and creative practice, students will investigate how voice operates not as ornament, but as identity, resistance, and persuasion. The course ultimately asks:

**In a world that constantly sells us sameness, how do we author something unmistakably our own?**

## 21L.512 (H) T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden American Authors

James Buzard

This class focuses on two of the most prominent English-language poets of the twentieth century. Both complicate the idea of an “American author.”

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), the author of *The Waste Land*, *Four Quartets*, and many other influential works, was born in St. Louis to a branch of an elite New England family but settled in England and became a British subject in 1927. Eliot's work bears an American stamp, but it also reflects the influence of literature, philosophy, and religious thought from around the world.

W. H. Auden (1907-1973), whose best-known poems include “September 1, 1939,” “Musée des Beaux Arts,” and the series *The Sea and the Mirror*, was born in York, England, but became a naturalized American citizen after the Second World War. As an editor in London, Eliot helped promote Auden's early work.

Both figures were regarded as leading voices of their respective generations. Both dealt with the consequences of early fame. Both thought and wrote much about the social and political responsibilities of the artist. In an era of increasing secularization, both had experiences of spiritual vision and conversion and dwelt on these in their work. Both write about the age-old contest of flesh and spirit – Auden from the viewpoint of a gay man. In addition to their poetry, both Eliot and Auden wrote plays and were influential critics of literature and culture. We will read poetry, plays, and essays by each of these major authors. Student work will include brief oral reports and frequent writing exercises. There will probably be one or two in-class exams. Please contact [jmbuzard@mit.edu](mailto:jmbuzard@mit.edu) with any questions.

# INTERMEDIATE

## 21L.609 Greek Reading I Greek Readings

Eric Driscoll

Pre-1900

(First Half Term: Ends March 20) 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 an 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. **Content and format will be determined in consultation with students on the first day.**

## 21L.610 Greek Reading II Advanced Greek Readings

Eric Driscoll

Pre-1900

(Second Half Term: Begins March 30) Building on 21L.609, develops the ability to read and analyze ancient Greek literary texts. 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. **Content and format will be determined in consultation with students on the first day.**

## 21L.611 Latin I

Stephanie Ann Frampton

Pre-1900

(First Half Term: Ends March 20) 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

Stephanie Ann Frampton

Pre-1900

(Second Half Term: Begins March 30) 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.

# SEMINAR

## 21L.703 (H, CI-M) Stoppard, Churchill, & Company Studies in Drama

Same subject as 21T.246  
Diana Henderson

Working outwards from the plays of two of Britain's most respected, prolific—and seriously funny—living dramatists, this seminar will explore a wide range of knowledge in fields such as mathematics, philosophy, politics, history, genetics, and art...as well as, of course, literature and theater! To anchor our thinking and unleash your creativity, we will focus on selected texts by (Sir) Tom Stoppard and his exact but quite different contemporary, Caryl Churchill. To illuminate them, some students will report on earlier plays by Shakespeare, Wilde, and Beckett; others will explore topics ranging from the poetry of Lord Byron and A. E. Housman to the art of Dadaism and Pink Floyd, from the (financial) Big Bang to the bridges of Konigsberg, and from Czechoslovakian dissidents to feminist theater collectives.

We will uncover the societal and theatrical contexts informing these postmodern plays, and consider different critical approaches to them. In the process, we will analyze drama as performance—a distinctive art form within a rapidly changing media landscape. We will also celebrate the wit and verbal energy of these contemporary writers...not to mention, how Fermat's theorem, futures trading, Latin translation, Wittgenstein's language games and chaos theory can become the stuff of stage comedy. Plays will include *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Top Girls*, *Arcadia*, *Serious Money*, *Hapgood*, *A Number*, and *Rock 'n' Roll*.

## 21L.704 (H, CI-M) The Radical Imagination Studies in Poetry

Noel Jackson

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 a site of, and an important 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.

## 21L.706 (H, CI-M) Indigenous Film and Television Studies in Film

Caitlyn Doyle

This course examines diverse Indigenous films and television shows from Turtle Island (Canada & the United States) to Aotearoa (New Zealand). Students will study a wide variety of influential and popular Indigenous media, including activist-based documentaries, adventure comedies, 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 Hollywood cinema. We will also consider the larger historical, legal, and political contexts to which these works respond. Films/television shows will include: *Reservation Dogs*, by Sterlin Harjo (Seminole/Muscogee Creek), *The Mountain of SGaana*, by Christopher Auchter (Haida), *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, by Taika Waititi (Māori), *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, by Jeff Barnaby (Mi'kmaq), *Smoke Signals*, by Chris Eyre (Cheyenne and Arapaho) and *Maliglutit*, by Zacharias Kunuk (Inuk).

## 21L.720 (H, CI-M) Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

Arthur Bahr

Pre-1900

In this course, we will read Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a narrative and poetic collection that is variously bawdy, pious, moving, disturbing, and hilarious. We will read about drunken millers, man-hungry serial monogamists, glad-handing social climbers, bitter provincial bureaucrats, hypocritical members of the ecclesiastical vice squad, and cooks with disturbingly lax standards of personal hygiene (among others). These pilgrims will in turn tell stories of star-crossed love in ancient Athens; why crows are black and can no longer speak; the best way for nerdy students to find love and sex; what one thing all mortal women most desire; and whether you can kill Death without dying yourself (among others). No background in medieval literature or Middle English is expected; enthusiasm for challenging but rewarding material is, and will be repaid with interest.



# 21L Literature Major, Minor, & Concentration Information

## COURSE 21L MAJOR

The **major in Literature** is well-suited to those students who want to experience a wide range of literary and filmic texts across historical periods. Can be completed along side any other major at MIT as a double major with the following degree requirements:

**180 UNITS TOTAL BEYOND THE GIRS**

**TEN SUBJECTS IN LITERATURE**

- No more than **three** subjects may be introductory, at least **three** must be intermediate subjects, and at least **three** must be seminars.
- Minimum of **three** subjects that focus on pre-1900 texts.

## COURSE 21E OR 21S MAJOR

The **joint major in Literature** is another pathway for students interested in combining study of Literature with a STEM field. Please see the bulletin for more details.

**180 UNITS TOTAL BEYOND THE GIRS**

**AT LEAST EIGHT SUBJECTS IN LITERATURE**

- At least **eight** subjects in Literature... along with at least **six** subjects in the science or engineering field of the student's choice.
- Of the **eight** Literature subjects, no more than **three** may be introductory subjects, at least **two** must be intermediate subjects and at least **two** must be seminars.
- Minimum of **three** subjects that focus on pre-1900 texts.

## 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)

## 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)

**AT LEAST THREE  
SUBJECTS IN LITERATURE**

