

## Spring 2010 Course Descriptions

### 5064 – Topics in Language: Sociolinguistics Dannenberg

This course is designed to investigate the correlations between spoken language and ethnic, gender, regional, socioeconomic, and gender identities. The class intends not only to explore the structure of American English dialects utilizing contemporary language data, but also to address the fundamental properties of language construction and identity negotiation in American society. Issues that will be addressed include but are not limited to: (1) dialect construction, configuration, and maintenance; (2) principles of sociolinguistic research; (3) critical discourse theory; and, (4) socialization of language.

### 5074 – Digital Humanities Radcliffe

This course is an introduction to humanities computing that combines background readings in history and theory with hands-on experience with editing digital documents. Students will examine and criticize digital works, learn how to use an editing program, edit a collection of letters in TEI-XML as a group project, and complete an individual project on their own that might be either a paper or an original digital work. The course will involve lecture, class discussion, workshop, and student presentations. Minimal prior experience with computing is expected; the chief requirements are a laptop, problem-solving skills, and a modicum of imagination.

### 5164 – Studies in Black American Literature: Modern African-American Fiction Fowler

This course will survey some of the major texts in the development of the African American novel during the first sixty or so years of the twentieth century. We will begin by considering the vernacular tradition, out of which African American literature grew, and the slave narrative, which became the prototype of later fictional narratives. We will then turn to the fiction, including Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923), Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928), Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and "The Man Who Lived Underground" (1942), Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Gwendolyn Brooks's *Maud Martha* (1953), James Baldwin's *Go Tell It On the Mountain* (1953), and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1969). This is an ambitious reading list, to be sure, but the course is intended to provide an overview of the modern African-American novel, thereby equipping students who have little knowledge of the field with an intense immersion into some of the most important of its texts. We will also consider gender and its role in shaping different narrative traditions for male and female writers.

Requirements include weekly notes on the reading, a formal presentation about a critical or theoretical text (you will work in pairs on this assignment), and a research essay of at least 20 pages.

5224 – Studies in Early English Authors: Chaucer  
Mosser

While the fourteenth century was different from our own time and in many ways alien, foreign, unfamiliar, and strange, we can nevertheless find much that is familiar, conveyed through texts that seem curiously modern, even postmodern.

We will consider the nature of the medieval text, the contingent circumstances of its composition, production, dissemination, and reception. We will struggle, always, usually vainly, to locate the “voice of Chaucer” within the ironic universe of his creations.

Chaucer’s exploration of the nature of language—of the crucial roles of context, intention, and contingency in the construction of meaning—will be a primary focus of our reading and discussion.

TEXTS: Selected Canterbury Tales, Troilus & Criseyde, the Legend of Good Women, the House of Fame, and other works by Geoffrey Chaucer.

EVALUATION: Précis of secondary readings; presentation; term project, class participation.

5334 – Special Topics in Literature: Children's Literature in Translation  
Stahl

This course will focus on issues of translation in children's literature. "Translation" is defined here to include the problems of composing a text in a second language based on the original text in the language in which the work was first written. Translation also involves the concomitant problems of conveying a sense of cultural detail. Is translated children's literature a means of bridging cultural differences or of obscuring them? What survives in the process of translation, and what is the spectrum of choices along which translators of children's literature must decide to place themselves? What does "faithfulness" mean in the process of translation? Why is translation so often considered a form of betrayal or loss? What issues of translation are specific to writing for children? This course will seek to find answers to these questions, and in cases where definitive answers are not possible, to understand how to think about the questions productively.

This course will also consider filmed versions of children's novels as part of the translation and interpretation process. We will combine the study of theory with close analysis of particular translated works of children's literature. Knowledge of one or more languages besides English is desirable but not necessary.

We will focus in particular on European children's books that have been translated into English and are available in the United States and Canada, including some of the most popular and influential children's books, such as *Pinocchio*, *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, *Pippi Longstocking*, and *The Little Prince*.

5354 – Comparative Studies in Literature: Moral Revolutions and the Novel  
Knapp

The theme of the course, as stated by Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables*, is “Utopia today, flesh and blood tomorrow”—or the link, in nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction, between a revolutionary moral vision (frequently, though not exclusively) associated with political action, and its dramatization in narrative fiction. The writers-- Victor Hugo (*Ninety-Three*), Fyodor Dostoevsky (*Demons*), E. L. Voynich (*The Gadfly*), Ayn Rand (*Atlas Shrugged*), and Richard Wright (*The Outsider*) integrate exciting, dramatic individual quest narratives with the revolutionary project of shaping history through moral/political engagement. This course examines novels from several national literatures and from several perspectives, including the genre of the historical novel, the rhetoric of revolutionary polemic, and the intersection of realism and romanticism.

Evaluation is based on regular class contributions (including the submission of thought-provoking questions), a final exam (including questions on the texts and on the student reports) and two papers. One paper is an independent reading project (involving reading at least one book or a combination of texts that, together, are book-length) related to one or more of the readings, and considered in relation to the issues of our course. The second paper deals with a controversy or common thread. The task here is to present, explicate, and contextualize an aspect of a significant and controversial issue (an issue that enrages or engages the student) that is relevant to two or more of our texts.

5644 – Genres of Professional Practice.  
Evia

Regardless of their level of technological literacy, users and readers are frequently juggling print and digital information in a collection of artifacts and genres that rarely communicate well with each other. Artifacts include the basic pen and paper, a personal computer, mobile devices, and Rich Internet Applications (RIAs) such as calendars and organizers. Genres include memos, proposals, reports, emails, blog entries, online videos, and even 140-character Twitter status updates. As we see panels and presentations in industry and academia inviting people to incorporate social media websites or the latest new software trend for “productivity,” more artifacts and genres are added to personal and corporate ecologies that without proper management can create more problems than solutions. In ENGL 5644 we will look at the rhetorical exigence for Personal Information Management (PIM) to control the different genres interacting on desktops, computer screens, cubicles, and classrooms on a daily basis. We will read from authors in human-computer interaction, technical communication, and rhetoric as we identify problems and propose solutions for managing ecologies of artifacts and genres. Assignments will include a research project (based on a mini workplace ethnography) and experimental activities with technological devices (the fun stuff).

5734 – Form and Theory of Fiction  
Falco

Form and Theory of Fiction is a course that reviews and analyzes modern and contemporary approaches to writing fiction. The class will consider the elements of fiction from a theoretical perspective, and analyze literary theories and techniques with an emphasis on their relationship to creative practice. The reading list will include modern and contemporary short story collections and novels that are representative of various aesthetic approaches to fiction. Students will have the opportunity to write critical or creative responses to the works read and discussed in class. Grading will be based on class participation and a final portfolio of creative and/or critical work.

Reading List:

Hemingway: *In Our Time*

Carver: *Where I'm Calling From*

Hurston: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Morrison: *Beloved*

Silko: *Ceremony*

Coover: *Pricksongs and Descants*

Wallace: *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*

Maso: *Ava*

Joyce: *Twelve Blue*

Tomosula: *TOC*

5754 – Form and Theory of Drama: Verse Plays  
D'Aguiar

How does a play written in verse read, sound and look on stage? What are the examples of verse plays? Why aren't more poets and writers engaged with this vibrant form of playwriting? We read and discuss a selection of early and contemporary verse plays. Each student writes an original verse play which is evaluated in class from its inception and as it progresses to completion by the end of the semester.

5774 – Editing a Literary Journal  
Hicok

In this course, you'll participate in making the selections of poetry and fiction for two issues of "The Minnesota Review," which now lives at Virginia Tech after much vagabonding. We'll focus on both the nuts-and-bolts of this process – letters of acceptance and rejection, solicitation of new work (which sounds somehow illegal), etc – as well as the aesthetic considerations and group dynamics of the editorial process. The intent is that you sharpen your ability to express how poems and stories fit within contemporary literature: what new ground they cover (or don't), what kinships they hold, what they achieve and how they achieve it.

6364 – Research Design in Rhetoric and Writing  
Powell

In the field of Rhetoric and Writing, researchers have long been interested in the ways that language is acquired, how composing works for different writers and in different contexts, and how teachers of writing might improve pedagogy to more fully engage writing students. In this course we will study the ways that researchers have evaluated, designed, and conducted empirical research projects in various composing contexts. We will also ask how knowledge is made in Rhetoric and Composition Studies and what motivates particular inquiry in the field. We will examine the field historically and ideologically, exploring how researchers have attended to various questions of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, discourse analysis, statistical analysis, ethical representation, activism, reciprocity, participatory research, and institutional critique. In particular we will identify the ways that certain research questions drive certain methodologies, and how researchers have shifted their methodologies given predominant questions and concerns of the field. In addition to response papers, leading class discussion, a book review, peer reviews, and an exam, students will complete a research proposal (ideally leading to a dissertation prospectus and/or published study) with an extended annotated bibliography. This research proposal will identify a gap in a particular area, frame appropriate research questions to study that gap, and design an appropriate plan of research in order to join the conversation in Rhetoric and Writing Studies about this topic.

6514 – Studies in Rhetoric: Modern Rhetoric  
Heilker

This course will engage students in the history, topics, sites of practice, and major figures of modern rhetoric, with application to written communication and English studies. Having successfully completed the course, students will be able to explain key terms, concepts, and issues in modern rhetoric; understand and use research methods appropriate for the study of modern rhetoric; analyze texts or trends relevant to modern rhetoric; and develop, articulate, and use their own theoretical position as interpreters of texts of modern rhetoric. Key figures we will study include Burke, Bakhtin, Weaver, Perelman and Obrechts-Tyteca, Toulmin, Foucault, and Cixous.

Assignments will include weekly dialogic journals, seminar discussion leadership, a specialized research project, and a formal presentation of that research.

6704 – Fiction Workshop  
Lucinda Roy

This graduate course will be taught as a workshop. Primary focus will be on the writing and critiquing of original fiction, while paying close attention to the work of established writers. Graduate standing and enrollment in the MFA program in Creative Writing (or special permission from the instructor) is required. The assumption will be that you want to learn more about the craft of writing fiction, and that you are eager to apply new techniques and approaches to your own work. We will ask questions about such things as the interplay between form and function, and we will examine the various elements of traditional and nontraditional fiction, including point of view, character development, setting, plot or narrative design, and language. In this advanced fiction writing workshop you will be free to work on short stories and/or novel chapters. We will therefore examine the different demands posed by these related genres, read samples of work by accomplished writers, and discuss their approaches in class. Working collaboratively, we will hone our skills as writers, readers, and editors during the course of the semester. Requirements include the production of a portfolio of original revised fiction, various exercises and responses, and significant class participation.

6714 – Poetry Workshop  
Meitner

"The creative writing department is not just a factory for producing poems...that are then published and consumed, but...a site where minds converge and think through writing about language, self, boundaries and the larger concerns of the world." This quote from poet Kristin Prevallet will serve as an overriding philosophy for our workshop. Students will be required to write poems each week, and consider their practices, interests, goals, and processes carefully. This course will help you to develop your poetic voices, and simultaneously push you in new directions with your work.

In addition to workshoping each other's poems, we will also be having weekly discussions on assigned reading (selected collections of very contemporary American poetry, and essays on poetics). Students will be evaluated on their class participation in both discussions and workshop, and on a final portfolio of revised work.