

Course Descriptions | Fall 2022



*****You can take any course number a second time as long as the topic of the course is different. No course number can be taken more than a total of four times.*****

ENGL 674 Research Trends in English Ruins/Repairs Elegy in British Literature

M 6:15-8:45pm

Dr. Michael T. Williamson

This course offers students an opportunity to explore the history of the elegy, a form devoted to the complex dynamics between ruin and repair. Our first unit will consider ways of reading British elegiac poetry from a variety of historical periods. Our “test case” will be Victorian elegiac poetry. Our second unit will consider a specific historical period, the 1930s and 1940s, and will explore connections between poetry, the novel, and theories of ruin and repair, especially those related to recovering from war. Our “test case” will be two novels by Elizabeth Bowen about orphans.

Required Texts:

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6. Peter Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* 9780801834714
7. Alfred Tennyson, *Selected Poems* 9780140424430

ENGL 761/861 American Literature before 1870 Literatures of the US-Mexico War

M 3:30 – 6:00pm

Dr. Todd Thompson

“The United States will conquer Mexico, but it will be as the man swallows the arsenic, which brings him down in turn. Mexico will poison us!”—Ralph Waldo Emerson

The U.S.-Mexico War—which was fought between 1846 and 1848 and doubled the size of the U.S. through seizure of Northern Mexican territory—was an watershed moment in the history of American imperialism, nationalism, race relations, and mass media. But what has been called the U.S.’s “first foreign war” is often neglected in historical and literary scholarship in favor of the Civil War and even the Spanish-American War. Taking a comparative, hemispheric approach, this course will examine literary and cultural production of and around this conflict in multiple genres and contexts to consider concepts of citizenship, race, and empire at a time when national boundaries were hotly debated and entirely in flux.



ENGL 763/863 British Literature to 1660

Plays, Authoritarianism, and Resistance

W 3:30-6:00pm

Dr. Christopher Orchard

In our current zeitgeist when authoritarianism has resurfaced, this course will focus on an earlier but eerily prescient moment of history in which the tensions that existed between authority, the state and playwrights in the Renaissance period are fully articulated. We will be asking questions such as: how did playwrights of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period such as Thomas Massinger use the stage to protest the interference by figures of authority in the arts? How did writers such as Ben Jonson in his Roman Play *Sejanus*, John Webster in *The Duchess of Malfi* and William Shakespeare in *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* consider the dangers of the surveillance state, in which the paranoia of subjects was expressed through state tactics of torture, spying and informers. Students will write a series of short responses that will serve as scaffolding for a longer conference length paper at the end of the course.

ENGL 765/865 Literature as Genre

Film & the City: Intersections of Local and Transnational Cultures

T 3:30-6:00pm

Dr. Reena Dube

The twentieth-century legacy of wars, conflicts, and accelerating violence has given birth to imagined worlds where ethical imperatives and moral stability appear to have collapsed. Philosophers, writers, and artists have typically addressed this legacy by forging an estrangement with the present, creating an archive of dystopian thought. While the philosophical and literary tradition has proven itself as an important site for dystopian commentary, it is the technological impetus of cinema, television, and photography that has fundamentally expanded and altered the dystopian archive. The genres of science fiction and horror with mindscapes, images of technological rationalization, violence and the crises of the soul, are perhaps the most obvious in their articulation of dystopian imagery. The other significant site of the dystopian is found in the world of city films. The city as a site of darkness was seen in the expressionist films of the Weimar period and in the noir forms of postwar Hollywood. In recent years, post-colonial urban crisis combined with contemporary technological modernity has provided significantly new resources for the dystopian in cinema.

Rajani Majumdar 2010

As the world becomes increasingly urban, dire predictions of an impending crisis have reached a feverish pitch. Alarming statistics on the huge and unsustainable gap between the rates of urbanization and economic growth in the global South is seen to spell disaster. The unprecedented agglomeration of the poor produces the specter of an unremittingly bleak “planet of slums.” Monstrous megacities do not promise the pleasures of urbanity but the misery and strife of the Hobbesian jungle. The medieval maxim that the city air makes you free appears quaint in view of the visions of an approaching urban anarchy. Urbanists write about fortified “privatopias” erected by the

privileged to wall themselves off from the imagined resentment and violence of the multitude. Instead of freedom, the unprecedented urbanization of poverty seems to promise only division and conflict. The image of the modern city as a distinct and bounded entity lies shattered as market-led globalization and media saturation dissolve boundaries between town and countryside, center and periphery. From the ruins of the old ideal of the city as a space of urban citizens there emerges, sphinx-like, a “Generic City” of urban consumers.

Gyan Prakash 2010

The two excerpts above map the breadth of the canvas of this course. The City films, as they are known, are first of all a record of the postwar technological developments of dystopian urbanization, as Majumdar points out. But equally importantly, Prakash argues, the city films show the demise of the old ideal of the freeing city and the emergence of the consumer driven generic city. Between the dystopia and the generic, there is interplay of the local and the global or transnational. It is this interplay that we will examine in detail in this course in order to locate the possibilities of new urban dystopias and utopias.

This course uses city centered films and film theory texts to investigate how local and transnational cultures are impacting each other in the global world. The course examines the representation of the city (London, Paris, New York, Taipei, Singapore, Kolkatta etc.) in some classic and mostly contemporary films and juxtaposes it with the new critical realities of the growth and rise of Megacities in Globalism and of living & surviving within these cities.

Required Texts: (I reserve the right to substitute or/and add to the film and critical essays)

- 1) Since all the essays I wanted to include were not part of a single selection and textbooks are so expensive I decided I would email or upload the essays on D2L.
- 2) You must have the Readings available on your computers when we have zoom discussions, since we read them closely and refer to specific passages in discussion.

Films: not given in chronological order and subject to change (I promise you will like/enjoy that)

Metropolis Dir. Fritz Lang (1927)
Sherlock Holmes Dir. Guy Ritchie (2009)
Midnight in Paris Dir. Woody Allen (2011)
Chop Shop (2007), Man Push Cart (2005) Dir: Ramin Bahrani
Pinoy Sunday Dir. Wi Ding Ho (2009)
80 KMH (2004) Dir. Tan Pin Pin
Kahani Dir. Sujoy Ghosh (2012)
Some other films that I might add or change!!

ENGL 766/866 Comparative Literature
Orality, Ethnopoetics, and Digital Humanities
TH 3:30-6:00
Dr. Kenneth Sherwood

As we move between paper and screen, to laptop and Kindle, from Twitter feed to Audible book, we can't help but feel that language practices are on the move. Today perhaps more than any time since Gutenberg, scholars of literature are aware of the provisional or historically contextual nature of print texts. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Pressman write that:

As the era of print is passing, it is possible once again to see print in a comparative context with other textual media, including the scroll, the manuscript codex, the early print codex, the variations of book forms produced by changes from letterpress to offset to digital publishing machines, and born-digital forms such as electronic literature and computer games. (Introduction to Comparative Textual Media: Transforming the Humanities in the Postprint Era. U Minnesota P, 2013)

In this useful framing of "comparative textual media" Hayles and Pressman identify a situation that is both new and not so new, especially if we can think of oral cultures as making (unwritten) texts. Before there were books, grammars, or even letters--humans produced oral literatures, as cultures still do. Oral literature is a cultural universal; every known language has produced a poetry. From voice to ear, the body finds rhythms and patterns to verse in all known cultures, through 30,000 years of shouts, whispers, stutters, and chants.

So as the "digital" emphasis of the last two decades seems to have shifted our perspective on the material book, I'm interested in going back a little further to the advent of Ethnopoetics in the 1970s. An informal movement in poetry and scholarship named by Jerome Rothenberg, Ethnopoetics refers narrowly to collaborations among poets, anthropologists, linguists, and literary scholars focused on the artfulness of oral and traditional poetics -- and the challenge of how to record, preserve, interpret, analyze, and translate them for print culture. This movement was informed by an earlier phase of "media studies" associated with Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong; but it was impelled by an ethical commitment to bring multicultural and aesthetic diversity to what was seen as a restricted, Eurocentric print canon.

So, in 2022 we will revisit this work under the framing of "comparative textual studies" and consider how to record, preserve, interpret, analyze, and translate for communities, students, scholars, and the general public in the digital culture. Our reading (and listening) will expose students to the fundamental concepts of orality through the study of traditional oral genres and practices including narrative, lyric, chant, and toast; it may extend to popular as well as high-cultural domains. But we will approach oral literature as a living art that continues to be produced and consumed in radio art and spoken word, open mics and Pow Wows, in the bardic contests of Europe, and in podcasts and web audio. We will also grapple with the valuable yet problematic roles academic disciplines play whenever working with the materials of Other cultures. We will spend considerable time with an historical journal in the field, *Alcheringa*, now digitized.

In 2021 IUP students helped initiate a collaborative scholarly wiki at Ethnopoetics.Org, which we will use it as a base for practical and theoretical considerations about how traditional oral performance, poetry, and other verbal arts intersect with print culture, and how they might be remediated through emerging digital interfaces. Participating directly in this project will allow students to explore how an Ethnopoetic vision can be realized today through a public humanities project. In addition, students will explore opportunities for disseminating oral texts and raising an appreciation for oral art through the production of audio podcasts.

For more, see:

Foley, John Miles. How to Read an Oral Poem. U Illinois P, 2002.
Oral Tradition. <https://journal.oraltradition.org/>
Ethnopoetics Wiki: <http://www.ethnopoetics.org>

ENGL 955 History of Criticism

T 6:15-8:45

Dr. Veronica Watson

Literary studies has been continually shaped and reshaped by a range of theoretical and methodological questions and approaches. Using selected texts from the A Very Short Introduction series to anchor our explorations, we will engage with some of the theorists and critical and conceptual frameworks that have had significant impact on the academy broadly speaking, and field of literary study specifically, over the last 50 years or so: Freud, Modernism/Postmodernism, Feminism, Postcolonialism, Racism, to name but a few. Additionally, students will read 1-2 texts from key figures identified in the A Very Short Introduction texts for the class. Our engagement with these ideas will center on understanding the conversations and debates that have defined and propelled these issues, and beginning to reflect on how they impact both modern higher education and literary study today. This course will begin your exploration of the questions, “What is theory?” and “What is criticism?”, and will help to lay a foundation for your continued study in the program. It will also begin the important process of querying, entering scholarly conversations, and potentially re-envisioning received traditions and the work we do as literary scholars.

Course components: Weekly reading and discussion, leading class discussion, short papers, an extended research project.

ENGL 984 Literary Theory Applied to a Major British Author or Theme

Ruins/Repairs Elegy in British Literature

Dr. Michael T. Williamson

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