

CORNELL UNIVERSITY  
Department of English  
Graduate Courses  
Spring 2018

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**6021 Literary Theory on the Edge**  
4 credits. (Also COML 3021, COML 6021)

MW 2:55 - 4:10

**Caruth, Cathy;  
Villarejo, Amy**

This course juxtaposes the exciting theoretical advances of the late 20th century, including structuralism and post-structuralism, with current developments in 21st century theory such as performance studies, media theory, digital studies, trauma theory, transgender studies, and ecocriticism. Taught by two Cornell professors active in the field, along with occasional invited guests, lectures and class discussions will pay close attention to the differences among mediatic systems in the texts we read as well as the uniqueness and complexity of language in its various forms. The course may involve presentation of performance art. Course open to all levels; no previous knowledge of theory required.

**6120 Beowulf**  
4 credits. (Also ENGL 3120, MEDVL 3120, MEDVL 6120)

TR 2:55 - 4:10

**Zacher, Samantha**

*Beowulf* has received renewed attention in popular culture, thanks to the production of recent movies and riveting new translations. The poem's popular appeal lies in its complex depictions of monsters, its accounts of heroic bravery, and its lavish portrayals of life in the Meadhall. Through close readings we will also explore the "darker side" of the poem: its punishing depictions of loss and exile, despairing meditations on unstable kingship and dynastic failure, and harrowing depictions of heroic defeat and the vanities of existence on the Middle-Earth. Attention will be given to the poem's cultural contexts, its literary heritage, and its layered pagan and Christian perspectives. A bilingual edition of the poem will be assigned so that students may read in Old and Modern English.

**6171 The Archaeology of the Text from Chaucer through the Renaissance**  
4 credits. (Also ENGL 4170)

W 12:20 - 2:15

**Galloway, Andrew**

This seminar will explore and write about manuscripts, handwriting, literacy, printers, and other issues linking material and social book-making to "literary history." As a class, we will focus on the formative period of English literature: from Chaucer to Shakespeare, roughly, both of which you will read in their original Englishes. Individual projects, however, can take up any period or language so long as this serves as an opportunity to investigate issues where material book-culture meets cultural and literary history—including the theoretical problems of editing something for modern users. The final project will involve a small edition of some work or copy that you study independently, plus discussion of some of the forces or issues that the work or text brings to bear.

**6285 Early Modern Translations**  
4 credits. (Also COML 6285)

W 7:30 - 9:25

**Lorenz, Philip**

Translation is a cultural, conceptual, and political problem. It lies at the heart of the literary itself. Methodological discussions of "world" literature hinge on it, and Renaissance culture is unthinkable apart from it. The Renaissance—defined in terms of transmission and reception of ancient texts—is itself, in a way, translation. Tied to philosophical and theo-political problems of origin and copy, Truth and falsehood, fidelity, heresy and betrayal (as the Italian maxim *traduttore, traditore* attests), translation raises questions of sameness and identity, originality, authority, property, sacredness and evil. The seminar explores these questions in texts from Luther, Cervantes and Montaigne, through Benjamin, Derrida and Agamben. Particular focus is on the early modern as template and groundwork for the complexity and centrality of translation to life.

**6330 Eighteenth-Century Literature: Other-than-Human Forms: Materialism, Affect, Ecocriticism, Animal**  
4 credits.

R 10:10 - 12:05

**Brown, Laura**

This course juxtaposes some of the core strains of current post-humanist theory—new materialism or "thing theory," the "affective turn," ecocriticism or environmental humanities, and literary animal studies. Using eighteenth-century literature, culture, and intellectual discourse as a starting point and then sampling related materials in the Anglo-American tradition from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we will define these theoretical scenarios, and evaluate the broader impact of the other-than-human on literary theory and on formal critique.

Texts (and selections): Newton, *Opticks*; Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*; Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*; Burney, *Evelina*; Nabokov, *Lolita*; Cowper, *The Task*; Voltaire, *Candide*; Robinson, *Forty Signs of Rain*; Kendall, *Keeper's Travels*; *The Dog of Knowledge*; *The Biography of a Spaniel*; Auster, *Timbuktu*.

**6415 Victorian Poetry and Poetics**  
4 credits. (Also ENGL 4415)

M 2:30 - 4:25

Sawyer, Paul

A study of Victorian poetry in its immense variety, from Tennyson to Hardy. Drawing on Culler's *Theory of the Lyric*, we'll approach the texts not only to interpret them but also to consider their conditions of possibility of meaning. Topics will include: (a) the relationship of lyric to dramatic, or performative, speakers; (b) the absorption of aesthetics into poetics through the trope of "art"; (c) shifting notions of poetic personality; (d) ideological debates about nature, truth, and wholesomeness; (e) experiments in narrative. We'll bring these topics to bear on a shared experience with such sensations and effects as rhythm and movement, sound patterns, the relation of syntax to lineation, and class-marked alterations in diction (the plain style, the elevated style, the emergent category of the grotesque).

**6507 African Women Writers Critique the PostColonial State**  
4 credits. (Also ASRC 6507)

TR 2:55 - 4:10

Boyce Davies, Carole;  
Ngugi, Mukoma wa

An exploration of writing by representative black women writers. We will examine specific texts as well as necessary critical and theoretical ideas which have been generated through, or with which this literature is in conversation. Students will develop critical thinking and other analytical skills as they engage the meanings of the politics of black women's lives in cross-cultural contexts. We will therefore consistently broaden the definition of black women's writing so that the trans-national contexts of this writing become visible. Among other ideas, the course will explore the social construction of black womanhood; social and literary hierarchies which locate black women and their writing in specific ways; and aspects of black women's creativity. Moving beyond the questions of the representation of black women by others, our focus will be on the way that black women represent themselves.

**6530 The Modern Imagination**  
4 credits. (Also ENGL 4535)

R 12:20 - 2:15

Schwarz, Daniel

Following my credo, "Always the text; always historicize," "The Modern Imagination: Major Authors" has been a successful course for relatively advanced undergraduates as well as for Ph.D students and MFAs. It is an indispensable, probing, and pleasurable course for those studying nineteenth, twentieth, and contemporary century Anglophone and European literature. Our readings will include works by Joyce, Woolf, Conrad, Proust, Kafka, Mann, Ferrante, Kundera, and W. G. Sebald as well as the poetry of T.S.Eliot, Yeats, and Stevens. The emphasis will be on close reading of individual texts, but we shall place the authors and works within the context of literary, political, cultural, and intellectual history. We shall also be aware of critical and theoretical approaches. The course will seek to define the development of literary modernism and as well as Post-Modernism. We shall be especially interested in the relationship between modern literature and modern painting and sculpture. Within the very broad course rubric, students will be able to select the special topics on which they write essays and perhaps formulate subjects for further study.

**6605 Melville**  
4 credits.

T 2:30 - 4:25

Cheyfitz, Eric

Herman Melville is one of America's most trenchant social, political, and economic critics. Our study of Melville's fiction will analyze his critique of central national and international issues—the effects of which are still with us. These issues are focused in the capitalist/imperialist matrix of settler colonialism with its machinery of slavery, Native American genocide, patriarchy, and poverty.

**6710 Law and Literature**  
4 credits. (Also ENGL 3762, GOVT 6045, LAW 6710)

TR 2:30 - 3:55

Anker, Elizabeth

What can lawyers and judges learn from the study of literature? This course explores the relevance of imaginative literature (novels, drama, poetry, and film) to questions of law and social justice from a range of perspectives. We will consider debates about how literature can help to humanize legal decision-making; how storytelling has helped to give voice to oppressed populations over history; how narratives of suffering cultivate popular support for human rights; the role played by storytelling in a trial; and how literature can shed light on the limits of law and public policy.

**6720 New Latinx Writing**  
4 credits. (Also LSP6720)

T 10:10 - 12:05

Brady, Mary Pat

Contemporary Latinx writing explores an extraordinary range of experiences using a variety of experimental forms. This course will examine the poetry, fiction, memoirs, plays, and new media produced within the last fifteen years by a new generation of Latinx writers and artists. We will consider how writers queer Latinidad, play with gender norms, question received concepts of race and culture, and examine the constraints imposed by immigration laws and de facto practices of segregation. Authors may include Justin Torres, Sandra Cisneros, Eduardo Corral, Erika Lopez, Junot Diaz, Helena Viramontes, and Lin-Manuel Miranda.

**6780 Experimental Writing and Transmedia Theory**  
4 credits.

TBD 2:30 - 4:25

McKenzie, Jon

How does one "do theory" inside and outside the book? This course explores experimental writing and transmedia theory. Materials include: Artaud's "To Be Done with the Judgment of God" (text and radio drama), Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (text and film), Lesy's *Wisconsin Death Trip* (text), Marsh's *Wisconsin Death Trip* (film), McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage* (text and audio), Ronell's *The Telephone Book* (text), Reines's *Telephone* (play); Trinh T. Minh-Ha's *Woman, Native, Other*; films *The Ister* (Barison and Ross) and *Deleuze from A to Z* (Boutang), and Zizek and Fiennes's *The Pervert's Guide To Cinema*. Students will do theory and make media, including texts, lecture performances, and video, while also developing teaching philosophies and digital pedagogies. No prior media experience needed (except writing).

**6919 Building Feelings / Feeling Buildings: Mapping Urban Memory in an Ahistorical**

W 10:10 - 12:05

Diaz, Ella

**Age**

4 credits. (Also SHUM 6819)

In 2014, architect and author Marc Kushner praised the role of social media in shaping the future of our built environments. In a TED Talk, he skipped over histories of social, economic, and political exclusions in modern American cities, to declare, "Architecture is not about math and it's not about zoning; it's about those visceral, emotional connections that we feel to the places that we occupy." This course asks how built environments make us feel by connecting different vocabularies and methodologies used in academic fields (public history, ethnography, cultural studies, etc.) and visual and performance art to map architectures of identity and unpack notions of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. The early twentieth century witnessed unprecedented migrations of racial-ethnic and working-class peoples in the U.S., many of whom moved from rural to urban environments. We will consider the absence of local histories in the remaking of urban landscapes as global art networks and transactional spaces in the neoliberal age. Moving between U.S., Latin American, and Caribbean cities, the course explores popular arts movements in connection with relational aesthetics, social sculpture, and public art interventions from a range of artists and collectives including Anne Bray, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Judith Baca, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Regina José Galindo, INDECLINE, Ana Teresa Fernández.

**7412 Law and Humanities Colloquium**

R 4:15 - 5:55

Anker, Elizabeth

4 credits. (Also LAW 7412)

In an era of increasing interdisciplinary collaboration, the fields that comprise the humanities are engaging in new ways with law as well as with each other, and projects developed within the context of law schools themselves bear renewed relevance to the humanities. This colloquium will bring together scholars working at the forefront of legal history, law and literature, law and culture, and critical theory from the institutional vantage points of both law and the humanities. The course will begin with three weeks of seminar designed to apprise students of existing work in law and the humanities and to situate current developments within this broader frame. After the introductory sessions, the remainder of the course will be organized around a series of speakers, some drawn from Cornell and some from other universities. Students will be required to write six three- to five-page papers responding to the speakers' pre-circulated talks. The theme for Spring 2018 is "Law and Violence".

**7810 MFA Seminar: Poetry**

T 2:30 - 4:25

Van Clief-Stefanon,  
Lyrae

5 credits.

Required course for MFA poetry students only.

**7811 MFA Seminar: Fiction**

T 2:30 - 4:25

Lennon, John

5 credits.

Required course for MFA fiction students only.

**7850 Reading for Writers: Topic TBD**

R 2:30 - 4:25

4 credits.

This course will not be offered in Spring 2018. The next offering will be in Fall 2018.

**7890 Pedagogical and Thesis Development**

R 2:30 - 4:25

Viramontes, Helena

4 credits.

Required course for MFA students in their second year of study.

**Courses Originating in Other Departments****6880 Contemporary Poetry and Poetics**

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Monroe, Jonathan

4 credits. (Also COML 6865)

What gives contemporary poetry and poetics its resonance and value? What are its dominant features, audiences, and purposes? What does 21st-century poetry's environment look like, and how does it situate itself among other genres, discourses, disciplines, media? How would we describe its ambient noise and how does that noise shape, inform, and inflect its particular concerns and motivated forms? How are we to understand its relation to the pivotal developments of our time? This seminar will explore these and related questions in a range of works from the past two decades that open onto the rich interplay of contemporary poetry and poetics with questions especially of language, aesthetics, and politics.

This course will explore the ways in which Michel Foucault's oeuvre transitions from a concern with sovereignty to a preoccupation with biopolitics. Foucault's early work such as "Madness and Civilization," attends to the structure, the construction and the force of the institution - the birth of asylum, the prison, while his later career takes up the question of, for want of a better term, "political efficiency." That is, Foucault offers a critique of sovereignty insofar as sovereignty is inefficient (neither the sovereign nor sovereign power can be everywhere; certainly not everywhere it needs or wants to be; ubiquity is impossible, even/especially for a project such as sovereignty) while biopower is not. Biopower marks this recognition; in place of sovereignty, biopower "devolves" to the individual subject the right, always an intensely political phenomenon, to make decisions about everyday decisions - decisions about health, sexuality, "lifestyle." In tracing the foucaultian trajectory from sovereignty to biopower we will read the major foucaultian texts - "Madness and Civilization," "Birth of the Prison," "History of Sexuality" as well as the various seminars where Foucault works out important issues.