

CORNELL UNIVERSITY  
Department of English  
Graduate Courses  
Spring 2019

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## Graduate

### 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.

### 6145 Race and Gender in the Middle Ages

4 credits.

R 10:10 -12:05 Raskolnikov, Masha

If "the past is a foreign country," is it a country full of oppressed women? We can, with some smugness, agree that it may have been dreadful to be a woman or sexual minority in the Middle Ages, but it's nowhere near that simple. Also un-simple are medieval notions of race. Scholars long assumed that the European Middle Ages were entirely white and/or that since "race" as a concept hadn't been invented yet, it wasn't an issue. But both racial and gender difference matter tremendously, then as now. Together, we will think about race and gender as imagined at a time before the world we now know came into being, asking what the pre-history of difference might have to do with us and our future.

### 6265 Renaissance Non-Humanism: Animal, Vegetable, Mineral

4 credits.

W 12:20 -2:15

Mann, Jenny

How is the "non-human turn" re-shaping early modern studies? Since Burkhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance* in Italy, humans have occupied the center of the field of Renaissance studies. But recent critical movements have decentered the human in favor of the nonhuman, variously understood as animals, geophysical systems, technologies, and affectivity and materiality more generally. While this new work draws on 21st-century theoretical approaches, it is also deeply concerned with the classical genealogy of concepts of the non-human. This course will survey such recent work in a range of fields loosely categorized under the umbrella of "Renaissance Non-Humanism," including animal studies, ecological criticism, new materialism, and object-oriented ontology. Readings will include works by Plato, Lucretius, Ovid, Montaigne, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Bacon, Cavendish, and Behn.

### 6545 Key Texts of Modernity

4 credits.

T 10:10 -12:05

Brown, Laura

This course will develop critical perspectives on modernity through four juxtapositions of eighteenth-century and modern texts: *Robinson Crusoe* (Defoe) and *Foe* (Coetzee), the *Spectator Papers* (Addison) and Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, *Clarissa* (Richardson) and "Penelope" from *Ulysses* (Joyce), and *Tristram Shandy* (Sterne) and *Midnight's Children* (Rushdie). Key topics will include travel and empire, alterity and cultural encounter, commodification and "thing theory," the public sphere and ideas of community, gendered identity and narrative interiority, temporality and deep time, and sensibility and affect. Through these themes, we will consider the imaginative constitution of modernity in the eighteenth century, the recent challenges to the systematic distinctions posited by modernity, and the transformation or re-constitution of a new "modernity."

### 6554 Modernist Fiction and the Erotics of Style

4 credits. (Also FGSS 6554, LGBT 6554)

W 2:30 -4:25

Hanson, Ellis

"I am interested in language because it wounds or seduces me," the critic Roland Barthes once wrote. How do we take pleasure in a text, even when it appears to betray us? How do we speak of the erotics of style beyond the mere thematic interpretation of sexual representation? Has such an erotics even been written yet? To explore a methodology for contemplating this elusive embrace between the aesthetic and the erotic, we will consider influential works of psychoanalytic, deconstructive, feminist, and queer theory alongside a survey of great modernist novelists whose innovative experiments in prose style have proved most sensual and most challenging, among them Oscar Wilde, Henry James, Gertrude Stein, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Ronald Firbank, and Djuna Barnes.

### 6660 Twentieth Century American Ecocriticism and the Environmental Imagination

4 credits.

M 12:20 -2:15

Hutchinson, George

What, today, is the state of eco-critical theory and the environmental humanities? This course will explore recent work at the edge of literary criticism shading into ecological thought and questions of social justice alongside particularly suggestive twentieth century literary texts. We will also read earlier iterations of eco-criticism from the 1940s, a birth time of the modern environmental movement in the United States. A crucial question will be what relevance, if any, the "humanities" might have for global sustainability. Authors will include Richard Wright, William Carlos Williams, John Steinbeck, Rachel Carson, Leslie Marmon Silko, A. R. Ammons, Rob Nixon, Stephanie LeMenager, Lawrence Buell, Amitav Ghosh, Ursula LeGuin, Ramachandra Guha, Timothy Morton, and others.

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

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.

**6741 Sustainable Forms** M 2:30 -4:25 **Levine, Caroline**  
4 credits.

This course explores questions of politics and literary studies in an unusual way. We will experiment with turning away from moments of disruption, innovation, and exception to take up the problem of sustainability--how to keep social worlds going over time. This will involve thinking about literary and social forms that have not been traditionally valued in our field, such as routine and infrastructure. We will ask about how we might create a canon of sustainability, and we will read a range of theorists, including Birmingham cultural studies, Foucault, recent work in queer antinormativity, and ecocriticism.

**7810 MFA Seminar: Poetry** T 2:30 -4:25 **Fulton, Alice**  
5 credits.

Required course for MFA poetry students only.

**7811 MFA Seminar: Fiction** T 2:30 -4:25 **Quiñonez, Ernesto**  
5 credits.

Required course for MFA fiction students only.

**7890 Pedagogical and Thesis Development** R 2:30 -4:25 **Van Clief-Stefanon, Lyrae**  
4 credits.

This is a required course for students pursuing an MFA degree in Creative Writing. The course will focus on the pedagogical methodology and philosophical approaches to teaching creative writing. The workshop format will include readings, guest speakers, lesson plan development, and the vetting of syllabi. Graduate students in both poetry and fiction will share ideas on teaching and thesis development.

### Courses Originating in Other Departments

**7412 Law and Humanities Colloquium** - **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 2019 is "Law and Justice".