Department of English

Graduate Course Descriptions

SPRING SEMESTER
2006
ENG 800 Development of the English Language
001 M W 3:00-4:20 Matheson

An advanced course covering the history of the English language from its beginnings to the present, with some emphasis on the earlier periods (pre-1800) of the language and selected topics in greater depth within those periods. We will trace the development of English from an obscure Germanic dialect to its current status as a world language. Topics to be discussed include the evolution of its sounds, work and sentence structure, vocabulary, the meanings of words, notions of correctness, slang, dialects, and dictionaries. Instruction will be mainly by informal lecture (i.e., you can break in when you so desire) and discussion. Each of you will belong to a small group that will be collectively responsible for group activities and a class project throughout the semester.

TEXTS
WWW sites that deal with aspects of the history of the English language.

ENG 811/992C Emergent Modernity
001 TH 4:10-7:00 Logan

**Political, Social, and Intellectual Life in 16th and 17th Century England.** This course will engage with the problems and questions associated with three interlinked trends in the early modern period--nationalism, rationalism, and capitalism--with attention to their associated developments: the public sphere, the family, religion, race, and colonization. We will explore the roles of inscription and performance in the sociopolitical formation that we currently recognize as “modernity”, considering the ways in which dominant and emergent social formations are (re)produced, appropriated, and/or resisted. Our aim will be to engage with the project of social transformation implicit or explicit in the period under consideration, in order to unearth the precepts and perceptions that link rationalism, empiricism, capitalism, and nationalism in the early modern imaginary. We will be especially attentive to the debates over social transformation, in which the “common weal” is sacrificed to possessive individualism, resistance or “dissidence” frequently takes the form of nostalgia, and “progressive” models can be understood to have paved the way for the inequitable and exploitative social conditions of our contemporary world.

The course will begin with late twentieth-century theories of modernity (Jameson, Hardt and Negri, Giddons, Foucault, among others), in order to consider the arguments that question current assumptions about modernity, and to engage with the vexed nature of the central terms of the course title. Building on this theoretical foundation, we will turn to the discourse of “modernity” in the 16th and 17th centuries, looking to decipher the transformations of social, political, and intellectual life that have come to be understood as the markers of modernity. These markers include the dichotomies between subject and object, the rise of rationality in
social, economic, and political spheres, the turn to empirical methods and perceptual categories, the ascendency of a sense of individual autonomy, and the attempt to overthrow fixed hierarchies in favor of participatory political structures.

Our readings in early works may include Thomas More’s *Utopia*, Niccolo Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, selections from Gabriel Harvey, Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Margaret Cavendish, John Locke, Robert Boyle, and others. We will also consider a range of poetic and dramatic writers who take up some of the issues raised by these early theorists in less explicitly theoretical forms, possibly including Wyatt, Kidd, Marlowe, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Cary, Middleton, and Cavendish.

Students will write weekly email reading responses to the class as a whole, lead at least one week’s discussion, and write a final seminar paper of approximately 20 pages directly related to the course issues and materials.

In addition to benefiting those students working in early period literature and culture, this course should be especially useful to those students working in the emphasis areas of Transatlantic Modernities, Postcolonial Studies, and Narrative Theory.

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**English 816/992D   Romanticism on the Road**

**001**  W   7:10-10:00   Goodson

From Rousseau's peregrinations in his *Confessions* to Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, romantic writing was one long road show. And this was only the commencement of a century's strange trip under romantic starts, one that extends through Reginald Heber's Indian journals and George Borrow's *Bible in Spain* to Melville's *Typee* and Rider Haggard's African trekking in his fictions of empire. We'll background these romantic excursions with the more conventional practices of the Grand Tour, taking off from Thomas Coryate's walking tour of 1608, as reported in *Coryate's Crudities*. With Mary Louise Pratt, we'll talk about the cultural politics of romanticism on the road. And we'll conclude with current studies of travel writing as literature in its nineteenth-century golden age. Students will be directed to research in this emerging area of interest, and invited to submit final papers to conferences on related topics.

**Eng. 823 and 991B   Novel/Theory**

**001**  TH  7:10-10   O'Donnell and Juengel

This team-taught seminar is designed to explore the rise and consolidation of the novel as both the genre of modernity and the site of persistent theoretical reflections on experience, mimesis, temporality, literariness, everyday life and the national *bildung*. While the syllabus will privilege a century or more of trying—and sometimes, symptomatically, failing—to “theorize” the novel and the cultural work it performs, students will be asked to read at least four substantial novels that will serve to anchor our discussions (perhaps Fielding’s *Tom Jones*, Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*, and Ishiguro’s *The Unconsoled*). Rather than simply a survey of different methodological approaches to the genre and its history, we are
hoping to raise broader questions about the efficacy of genre theory; the centrality of the novel in modern experience; the recent reclamation of theories of mimesis, character, plot, etc.; and the current state of the novel in an age of information systems.

In addition to the four literary texts, the readings will likely include works such as Lukács, Forster, Auerbach, Bakhtin, Benjamin, Leavis, Kermode, Watt, McKeon, Said, Armstrong, Brooks, Doody, Jameson, Miller, Moretti, and others.

N.B. Students wishing to enroll in Eng. 823 will need to talk to Lisa Noelp about admission, as the course is cross-listed with other departments and requires an override.

ENG 850/991C Black Popular Culture and the Performance of Politics
001 TU 4:10-7:00 Ellis

As the field of African American literary studies continues to broaden its scope to include aspects of black popular culture, scholars and students are faced with many new and exciting challenges. Most significantly, the study of African American literature, particularly in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, has increasingly meant critically exploring themes across different representational mediums as a means for better understanding African American culture as a whole as well as for making sense of how structures of power and knowledge shape the world. In this regard, this seminar will set out to address issues of representation in literature, film, television, music as they directly relate to the lived experiences and political realities facing black people throughout the world.

This course is fundamentally designed as a late twentieth/early twenty-first century African Diaspora course that moves transnationally between the Caribbean, Europe, Africa and the United States. In this broad context, we will explore how the performance of politics is carried out through a "nexus of identity markers" such as race, gender, sexuality and class. Looking to a broad range of cultural texts, our central objective will be to consider the performative and political possibilities of representation throughout the African Diaspora.

ENG 885 History of Literary Criticism
001 W 4:10-7:00 Amiran

An introduction to graduate study and to the profession. We will study professional work and resources that exemplify current critical interests and methods, including writings in culture studies, deconstruction, historicism, psychoanalysis, and queer studies, and discuss these works' strategies. How do these essays work, what do they assume, how do they develop their arguments, what do they think worth arguing about, how do they handle textual and theoretical
material? We will workshop our own essays and discuss ways to improve them. The course will also cover literary journals, conferences and conference papers, databases, publishing, and other resources essential to graduate study.

ENG 886/992I Cinema and the Poetics of Exile  
001 M  4:10-7:00  Fay
"Strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience," exile, Edward Said remarks, is a condition of terminal loss which has been transformed into the most potent motif of modern culture, one that throws into relief the stakes of nationalism, statelessness, language, nativity, revolution, and the very basis of identity and self-possession. This course proposes to read the condition of exile and modern violence through the oeuvre of three exilic directors, tentatively Roman Polanski, Atom Egoyan, and Emir Kusturica in dialogue with theories written about (or in the condition of) exile, which will likely include Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer, Agamben, Derrida, Said, Naficy, and others. We will also mine psychoanalysis (Freud on Moses and Monotheism, Kristeva on the abject, Caruth on unclaimed experience) to unpack the connections between political exile and the psychic scars of dispossession. Finally, following from a recent collection of essays edited by Egoyan and Balfour entitled Subtitles: On the Foreignness of Film (MIT, 2004), we will consider the foreign film itself as an exiled object whose foreignness as marked by the subtitle, the editors remark, impress us with matters of difference, otherness, and impossibility of translation.

ENG 891/992 Special Topics in American Literature  
001 M  7:10-10:00  Michaelsen
This course is an Introduction to the Theory of the Literatures of the Americas, with the accent on North/South relations. We will be examining materials written from the time of the conquest to the present day, in order to think about the original dream of “America,” to ponder whether such an entity has ever existed, and to consider, finally, whether it has a future. We begin with a few of the most well-known foundational statements: the logbooks of Christopher Columbus, John Winthrop’s secular Puritan sermon, “A Modell of Christian Charity,” selections from Alexis de Tocqueville’s Democracy in America, Jose Enrique Rodo’s Ariel, and Roberto Fernandez Retamar’s “Caliban.” Along this path, we want to think about those moments where “America” is brought into particular focus: the European claim to the land mass during the period of the conquest; the foundations of modern rule embodied in the Monroe Doctrine; the U.S.-Mexican War and the Establishment of the Mexican/U.S. border; the attempt to share or democratize the space of the Americas through the twentieth century invention of the Organization of American States. We will read widely in literature and theory, reading literature as theory, theory as literature. Some possibilities: Garcilaso de la Vega’s Royal Commentaries of the Incas, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz’s La Respuesta a Sor Filotea and related texts, William Hickling Prescott’s The Conquest of Mexico, Jose Carlos Mariategui’s Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality, Alejo Carpentier’s The Lost Steps, Miguel M. Mendez’s Pilgrims in Azlan, and Rigoberta Menchu’s I, Rigoberto Menchu. We wrap up the semester with a look to modern scholarship, and the ways that “America” has been understood in recent and prominent versions of area studies. In particular, we will examine closely Walter D. Mignolo’s Local
Histories/Global Designs: Colonially, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking. Ileana Rodriguez’s Women, Guerrillas, and Love: Understanding War in Central America, and Alberto Moreiras’s The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies. Requirements for the course include two research-style class presentations and a final research paper on a related topic area.