

Spotlight: New faculty and new courses for fall 2017

Two **new faculty members** will join us next fall: Angela Ards, who has been teaching at SMU, will be working to develop a new minor in journalism at Boston College, and Jonathan Howard, expecting his PhD from Duke this spring, will be teaching both in English and AADS.

In the fall, Angela will teach one course in English:

Fake News: What's It Good For?

The term “fake news” has captivated popular consciousness seemingly overnight, but stories that present reader fantasies and fears as current events stretch across history, under various guises: medieval “false prophecies”; Russian *kompromat*, Orwellian Newspeak; *The Onion*. Drawing on literature, film and journalistic case studies, this course examines the history and uses of fake news, from state propaganda designed to control and deceive to hoaxes and satire designed to fool, amuse, and make better readers. Sample texts: 1984 (George Orwell); *Enemy of the People* (Henrik Ibsen); Essays by H L Mencken, Edgar Allan Poe, Janet Cook, and Nik Cohn; *Satire and Dissent* (Amber Day); Bob Roberts, dir Tim Robbins.

Jonathan Howard, “**Black Nature:” Race and Ecology.**

This course conducts a survey of black literary engagements with the natural world. We will make our way through a recent anthology of black nature poems entitled *Black Nature*, as well as selections from slave narratives, fiction, and some theory. The questions guiding our inquiry will be: What stories do we tell about nature? How are the stories we are able to tell about nature informed by race? And how do these stories shape our understanding of what it means to be human? The dominant tradition of nature writing posits a romanticized and innocent “nature” imagined as separate from, and in many cases subordinate to, the priorities of human being. This course, however, is primarily interested in the account of nature and the human arising out of the black experiences of those who, once considered no more than livestock, were the nature over which their masters ruled, and thus, could not as easily theorize their humanity apart from nature.

In 2017-18, the Department will pilot 4 new **grad/undergraduate seminars**, giving undergrads the chance to work intensively on a focused subject matter with MA and PhD students, and allowing graduate students a wider array of courses across a range of fields. In the fall, these two seminars are:

Mary Crane, **Knowing the Other in Early Modern England**

In sixteenth and early seventeenth century England, people confronted new ideas, new areas of the world, and new peoples that changed their understanding of knowledge itself: what it was, where it came from, how it could be used, and how to determine its truth value. In this course we will read primary sources that reveal how humanist education, the Protestant reformation, the new science, new ideas about gender and marriage, expanded trade, and the “discovery” and colonization of the new world transformed what counted as knowledge. We will also read literary works from the period that were shaped by these issues, ranging from Thomas More’s *Utopia*, selections from Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, plays by Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson and Cary, and poems by Donne and other writers. (Fulfills pre-17th century requirement)

Carlo Rotella, **Experimental Writing for Scholars**

What we learn in academia doesn't always have to lead to writing the usual scholarly papers, articles, and monographs. In this graduate-undergraduate workshop-style course, we try out a variety of alternative forms presented to us by journalism, the essay, and other traditions: magazine profile, newspaper op-ed, interview, explainer piece, personal essay, review essay, anecdote, memoir, humor, obituary, and more. Our objective is to expand our repertoire of ways to write about what we learn in the classroom, the library, the archive, and out there in the world, and also to expand the audience our work can reach.

In addition, the department will offer **2 Advanced Topic Seminars** for undergraduates in fall 2017. Small courses that meet once a week, these seminars are helpful for students who want close engagement with an instructor and other students, as well as those interested in pursuing a senior thesis, graduate school, or wanting deeper engagement and greater focus on a particular literary period or idea.

Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, Advanced Topic Seminar: **Enslaved Africans, Castaways, Rakes, & Harlots”: 18th Century Texts and Their Modern Adaptations**

What happens not only to well-known characters but also to form, genre, and narrative technique when modern writers take up the earlier stories? In this seminar we read and compare 18th century works (including *Robinson Crusoe*, *A Harlot’s Progress*, and *The Beggar’s Opera*) to their modern versions in order to explore this question and others. Our modern texts include novelistic interpretations, movies (“Castaway and “The Martian”), one opera, and some musical theater. In this small class, our emphasis will be on creating a supportive learning environment where

literary and historical issues can be explored in depth. (Fulfills pre-1900 requirement)

Maia McAleavey, Advanced Topic Seminar: **Reading Like a Victorian**

How were Victorian novels first read? By candlelight and gaslight, aloud to family members and in pubs, and most of all, serially. Most nineteenth-century novels first appeared in inexpensive weekly or monthly installments. In this course, we will read “like Victorians” by reading four long Victorian novels in their original serial parts: Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* and Anthony Trollope’s *Framley Parsonage* (both of which appeared between 1859 and 1861) and Charles Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend* and Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Wives and Daughters* (both serialized from 1864 to 1865). Reading serially, and simultaneously, we will also analyze the illustrations and advertisements that accompanied these books as they appeared in a world new to mass literacy. (Fulfills pre-1900 requirement)

Other new or re-imagined electives for fall 2017 include:

Kalpana Seshadri, **Eco-Fictions: World Economy and the Meaning of Nature**

The calls for climate justice and environmental ethics, though motivated by climate science, emerge largely from our everyday experiences with our environment. Here imaginative works of fiction and non-fiction, poetry, art, and cultural history provide inspiration. By focusing on the environment as a global (not merely an American) issue we shall study classic and contemporary works from around the world that raise awareness about the significance of human action upon the planet. The course will include a variety of genres and media such as film, art, theory, fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction. (Crosslisted with Environmental Studies)

Christina Klein, **Asian American Film**

This course focuses on feature and documentary films made by and about Asian Americans, exploring film both as an art form and a medium for Asian American experiences and identities. Topics will include racial and gender stereotypes, "whitewashing," sexual identities, and the role of cinema in the Asian American political movement.

Lori Harrison-Kahan, **Scribbling Women and Suffragettes: Human Rights and American Women’s Writing, 1850-1920**

This course focuses on American women writers who engaged questions of difference and justice and played pivotal roles in social reform, ranging from movements for women's and indigenous rights to abolitionism and labor activism. How did nineteenth-century women use print culture as a forum for political debate and a means of democratic participation prior to the Nineteenth Amendment? How did women writers work within the sentimental tradition and contribute to new developments in science fiction, literary journalism, and realism? Authors include Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Jacobs, Maria Ruiz de Burton, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Zitkala-Sa, and Sarah Winnemucca.

Robin Lydenberg, **Making it Weird**

This course follows the radical trajectory of several writers and artists from early work that merely challenged traditional forms to later projects weird enough to unsettle our basic ways of thinking and seeing. Possible readings will take us from Gertrude Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* to the strange poetics of *Tender Buttons*; from Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* to elusive monologues such as *Rockabye*; from William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* to the often impenetrable cut-up novels; from Marcel Duchamp's cubist paintings to the mysteries of *The Large Glass*. All of these figures test the limits of how far experimentation can go.

Kelsey Norwood, **Shakespeare: Exploring Potentiality in Adaptation and Performance**

(Fulfills the pre-1700 requirement)

In this class, we will read and discuss Shakespeare's plays with an emphasis on their status as performable and adaptable texts with a variety of potential interpretations. How were these plays performed in Elizabethan England, and what shape do they take today? How might conventions of contemporary film and television empower us to reinterpret Shakespeare's genre and style? In addition to traditional readings and assignments, this course will involve in-class performance experiments and a creative project.

Colleen Taylor, Queens, Cathleens and Wild Irish Girls: Women in Irish Literature Before 1900" (shortlisted title, "Wild Women in Irish Lit.")

Fulfills pre-1900 requirement.

This course explores pre-1900 Irish literature and culture from the unique perspective of the Irish woman. Women came in all shapes and forms in early Irish and English writing: queens, faeries, hags, vampires, and, most importantly, writers themselves. We will study how Irish women helped formulate the novel, asking questions like, what is the relationship between history and sexuality, imperialism and literature, myth and reality,

the “wild” native woman and the Landlord? Selected authors include: Sydney Owenson, Maria Edgeworth, W.B. Yeats, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, and Elizabeth Gaskell.

Nell Wasserstrom, **Apocalyptic Modernism**

The concept of apocalypse signifies a thinking of “the end” and an uncovering, an unveiling, or revelation. Apocalypse, then, marks both the end and the beginning of... what? Focusing on apocalypse in relation to historical events, as well as in relation to literary form, this course explores the apocalyptic tone that permeates the philosophy, fiction, and poetry of the pre-World War I and interwar years. How does this tone shift from the pre-war 1910s to the post-war 1920s? And from the post-war 1920s to the pre-war 1930s? Writers may include Mann, Yeats, Eliot, Woolf, Benjamin, and Freud.

Finally, the department will continue to offer several 1 credit courses, great if you need to pick up an extra credit or want to sample a topic or author in a 10 week, once-weekly course. In Fall 2017, we have a new offering:

Aeron Hunt, **War Stories** (1 credit)

From grim duty to heroic glory; from righteousness to criminality; from comradeship to PTSD: the experience of war and the stories told about it have for centuries been varied and complicated. This course will focus on fiction spanning the nineteenth century up to the present--with some nonfiction, poetry, and film in the mix--exploring how stories have engaged the moral, political, and psychological complexity of war.