

SPOTLIGHT ON ENGLISH ELECTIVES
Fall 2018

AADS2350 Blackness and the Problem T TH 9

Cross listed with ENGL2350

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois famously observes that to be black is to serially confront a question: "How does it feel to be a problem?" This course undertakes a survey of African American Literature as an ongoing mediation on the "problem" of being black, from the advent of racial slavery through to its contemporary afterlives. Reading broadly across a black literary tradition spanning four centuries and multiple genres, we will consider how black writers represent the "problem" of being black not merely as an unwelcome condition to be overcome, but an ethical orientation to be embraced in refusal of an anti-black world that is itself a problem.

Jonathan Howard

ENGL3221 "Time Travel: Historical Fiction, Alternative Pasts" T TH 10:30am

What is at stake in reimagining history through fiction? In this course, we will consider the development of the genre of historical fiction, and investigate four important settings for historical novels: the Middle Ages (Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant*); the Jacobite uprisings in the Scottish Highlands (Walter Scott's *Rob Roy* and Diana Galbadon's *Outlander*); the Napoleonic Wars (chapters on the Battle of Waterloo from Stendhal's *Charterhouse of Parma*, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, and Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*); and American Slavery (Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Colson Whitehead's *Underground Railroad*). Topics will include the claims of realism and the powers of fantasy, the relationship of space to time, and the politics of fiction.

Maia McAleavey

ENGL3303 Tolstoy and Dostoevsky (In Translation) T TH 3

All readings in English translation.

Conducted entirely in English. For a Russian-language version of this course see SLAV3163 (SL308), when it is offered.

A comparative study of two giants of world literature and their opposing perceptions of reality, art, and civilization. A reading of their principal novels and short prose, with a focus on psychological, moral, and religious questions and in light of twentieth-century literary theory.

Maxim Shrayer

ENGL4016 Reporting Civil Rights T TH 12

Cross listed with AADS4016

JOUR2016

Fulfills the Cultural Diversity requirement

This course explores first-hand accounts from the front lines of movements to advance social justice, from the 1960s direct-action campaigns that toppled Jim Crow to broader issues such as education and labor, housing and prisons. Sample texts include the following: *Reporting Civil Rights*, Library of Congress; *Common Ground*, J. Anthony Lukas; *Nickel and Dimed*, Barbara Ehrenreich; *American Hunger*, Eli Saslow; *Evicted*, Matthew Desmond; *New Jack*, Ted Conover; *13th*, dir Ava Duvernay.

Angela Ards

ENGL 4301 Outcast Ireland: Paupers, Penitents, Patients T TH 1:30

Why were 798 infant remains buried at the Tuam Mother and Baby Home? Why was Philomena Lee separated from her infant son? Why did over ten thousand women enter Magdalene Laundries after 1922? What did State, Church, and society know? What legacies stem from this history? How does a society come to terms with a history of gross human rights violations?

This interdisciplinary course considers the roles played by institutions in Irish society since the formation of the State. We study the history of institutional provision, both as a legacy of empire and an apparatus of social control throughout the twentieth century, e.g., Industrial Schools, Magdalene Laundries, Mother and Baby Homes, and “Mental Hospitals.” We examine legislation and social policy informing social phenomena contained by these institutions, e.g., poverty, illegitimacy, single motherhood, ‘deviancy’, illness, etc. We analyze how literary and cultural representations (e.g., fiction, drama, poetry, film, memoir, journalism, and testimony) contribute to making visible aspects of Irish society typically hidden from view. And, we evaluate the significance of human rights advocacy campaigns, survivor organizations, and the State’s response to demands for justice, redress, and memorialization.

This course is linked to a two-day conference to be held at Boston College (Nov. 1-3, 2018) entitled “Transitional Justice, Truth-telling, and the Legacy of Irish Institutional Abuse” that will bring scholars from Ireland, Spain, Canada, the UK and Ireland to campus. Students will interact with guest speakers and will display research during the event.

James Smith

ENGL4801 Literature, Contagion, and Quarantine W 4:30-6:55

Prerequisite: With permission of the instructor

Can literature offer ethical inquiry into issues elicited by contagion? This course explores representations of epidemic, quarantine, and personal liberty through narrative nonfiction, novels, physician memoirs, and films. Readings may include texts by Daniel Defoe,

Albert Camus, Bram Stoker, Abraham Verghese, Randy Shilts, and Emily St John Mandel. Topics will include epidemic and the rise of public health; quarantine, immigration, and xenophobia; contagion outbreaks and accounts of “patient zero;” science fictions of earth after pandemic. Assignments will likely include a critical paper, short writing exercises, and final (collaborative) presentations. (This course counts as an advanced elective for Medical Humanities minors.)

Amy Boesky

ENGL4990 From Page to Pod: Making Literature Public TH 4-6:30

Prerequisite: With permission of the instructor

Cross listed with JOUR2290

In this practical, collaborative, and project-driven course, we’ll celebrate the Irish comic novelist, journalist, playwright, and tv-scriptwriter, Flann O’Brien. Exploring O’Brien’s archives, we’ll research, document, and curate those works for a Spring ’19 exhibition in the Burns Library – but more: scripting and recording our own podcasts, we’ll carry O’Brien’s satirical bite to a broader American public. O’Brien is as contemporary as *The Onion*, as absurd as *Beckett*, as smart as...well...you. Along the way, we’ll map out the future of literary studies (and your own role in the Public Humanities). The seminar will be challenging – but fun. All disciplines made welcome.

Joe Nugent

ENGL5006 Seminar: School's Not Everything: Education & African-American Literature T TH 1:30

Fulfills the Cultural Diversity requirement

This course explores moments of school and education in African American literature. From Frederick Douglass’ 1838 narrative to Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, we will examine representations of African Americans’ ongoing-fight for equal educational opportunities (i.e. black colleges, Brown v. Board of Education, affirmative action) alongside black literature’s many depictions of stolen education, hidden classrooms, and resistances within traditional school settings. Additionally, we will attend to black writers’ awareness of the schooling force of language and literary genres and the various ways their own texts emerge as schools and pedagogies that challenge the cultural-political ideologies enacted in American schools.

Allison Curseen

ENGL6006 Beckett (G/UG) Tuesday 2:00-4:25

This graduate/undergraduate course introduces a major Irish writer, arguably the most important playwright of the twentieth century. At once vivid, cerebral, and darkly funny, Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) produced an extraordinary body of work that has left an indelible trace on Irish and English letters. Reading a range of Beckett’s fiction and drama from throughout his career, we will place Beckett in his biographical, geographical, theatrical, and historical contexts. We will also question some of the

critical mythology that has grown up around Beckett's *oeuvre*. Texts will include *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, short fictions early and late, and several plays for television. Work will include a class presentation, a short project, and a final long essay for which original archival research in the Burns library's extensive Beckett collection is an option. No previous familiarity with Beckett's work is required--all are welcome.

Andrew Sofer

ENGL6007 Desire in the Novel (G/UG) T 7-9:25

Fulfills the pre-1900 requirement for undergraduates.

Desire, for this course on the history of the novel, will lead to formal questions: the construction of plot, the creation of character and calibration of sympathy, the genre's complex modalities of narration and perspective. Does the tradition offer a progressive elaboration of techniques for representing psychology or interiority? What possibilities does its mapping of social relations adumbrate for how such relations might change? Developing a critical vocabulary for the careful reading of fiction, and focusing especially on free indirect style (represented thought), we will move between a series of 18th- through 20th-century novels and theoretical accounts of the genre.

Kevin Ohi

ENGL6008 Contemporary Literature About the Environment (G/UG) TH 2-4:25

The current growing interest in environmental issues is reflected in contemporary literature across genres, including fiction, journalism, life-writing, poetry, and film. This course examines this literature, and connects it to contemporary scholarship exploring what the humanities can offer to debates surrounding urgent ecological concerns. Race in particular will remain an important feature of the course's discussions.

Min Song

ENGL7784 Studies in Early Modern Poetry (G/UG) F 2-4:25

Fulfills the pre-1700 requirement for undergraduates

This course directs attention to the literary history of poems composed during the overlapping lifetimes of three major English poets. It will explore Shakespeare's sonnets and narrative poems and some telling features of their history; Donne's erotic, religious, satirical, and social verse; and the extraordinary generic range found in the volume titled *Poems of John Milton* (1645). Consideration of recent theoretical and practical developments in editing early modern poetry, including some impacts of digital humanities, will be featured midway through the course.

Dayton Haskin

ENGL8849 Romantic Texts and Contexts (G/UG) W 7-9:25

Fulfills the pre-1900 requirement for undergraduates

This course "Romantic Texts and Contexts" provides graduate students with an advanced introduction to the scholarly and critical study of poetry published in the British Romantic era (1780-1834). It is appropriate both for students who have had some undergraduate course work in the field and those who are relatively new to British Romanticism. We will read novels and poems in various genres (lyric, narrative, and dramatic) and in relation to various ways of contextualizing literary works. Authors will

probably include Wollstonecraft and Austen, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, and selected women poets (Smith, Hemans, Robinson).
Alan Richardson

We will also offer 2 ONE CREDIT courses:

ENGL3316 Incendiary Poetics: Whitman and Ginsberg (T 4:30)
(1 credit course)

Incendiary Voices: Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and Ginsberg's *Howl*. This seminar will focus on the long poems of Walt Whitman and Allen Ginsberg, whose work arguably changed the course of American poetry. We'll look at the structure and content of the poems through close reading, with additional short readings to provide context and demonstrate both how revolutionary were the poems themselves, and the ways they continue to talk to each other about American ideals and exceptionalism. Students will be expected to lead discussions on self-selected topics, and to participate fully in dialogue about the poems, the poets, and their times. Short papers, one longer final paper of 5-7 pages.

Susan Roberts

ENGL3001 Walking *Infinite Jest* (TH 4:30-6:55)
(1 credit course)

David Foster Wallace describes Enfield, Massachusetts – an important setting in his 1996 novel *Infinite Jest* – as “a kind of arm-shape extending north from Commonwealth Avenue and separating Brighton into Upper and Lower, its elbow nudging East Newton’s ribs and its fist sunk into Allston...”. Sound familiar? In this course, we’ll conduct a Bostonian’s reading of Wallace’s opus. Students will be required to write weekly critical reading responses, and should be prepared for the course’s non-traditional structure: weekly meetings will sometimes be canceled in lieu of weekend on-site meetings in Brighton and Boston.

Christopher Boucher