

# Literature Core -- Fall 2020



## ENGL1080.01 **On the Margins**

**M W F 2**

This class will look at what it means to tell stories from a place of marginalization, both in terms of identity and location. Why do we write these stories, and to what end do we read them? What does it mean to think about identity from a place that is not central to conventional ways of thinking or being? To think through these questions and others, we will focus on works of nonfiction and memoir, discussing issues of nationality, gender, sexuality, and race through the words of our writers. This course also investigates the connection between writing from these historically marginalized positions from historically marginalized spaces -- borders, suburbs, and outskirts. *Chandler Shaw*

## ENGL1080.03 **Prisoners and Visionaries**

**T TH 10:30**

While the United States makes up 4% of the world's population, it imprisons 22% of the world's prisoners. This course takes the prison system as a starting point for investigating literary imagination. Many celebrated writers (Margery Kempe; Queen Elizabeth I; Ezra Pound; Martin Luther King, Jr.) were both prisoners and visionaries. Others (William Shakespeare, Octavia Butler) envision the world differently through visions of imprisonment. We will be guided by Michel Foucault's foundational analysis of the modern prison in *Discipline and Punish*.  
*Eric Weiskott*

## ENGL 1080.04 **Writing and Rewriting the Fairy Tale** **M W F 1**

Fairy tales consistently provide material for adaptations, spin-offs, and various other permutations. What is it about the fairy tale that lodges so deeply in the reading public's psyche? This class will explore the development of the fairy tale and how it has been written, rewritten, and adapted across genres and time periods. Working with different types of texts including poetry, drama, novels, short stories, and graphic novels, we will examine recurring elements of the fairy tale such as power structures, gender roles, and family relationships and how they have changed, shifted, and transformed as the stories are rewritten. *Rachel Ernst*

**ENGL 1080.06 Literary as Testimony****T Th 12**

This section of Literature Core will explore how literary texts bear witness to historical events and address social issues. Through the study of poetry, fiction, drama, and autobiography, we will examine how writers have used a variety of literary genres and forms to transform traumatic memories and the experiences of displacement and oppression into art. Topics include slavery and the Holocaust. Texts may include Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno*, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Tommy Orange's *There There*, and *The Laramie Project*. **Lori Harrison-Kahan**

**ENGL 1080.08 Belonging and Migration****M W F 11**

Migration is easily one of the most pressing concerns in the contemporary moment, as large numbers of refugees mass at borders and immigrants change the nature of the places where they are settling. What happens to ideas of belonging in the midst of such wholesale changes? Is there still a place for the concept of citizenship? What can literature offer to an understanding of this topic? These are some of the questions we'll be grappling with as we read literature from antiquity to the present. **Min Hyoung Song**

**ENGL 1080.09 Modernist Art: Literature, Painting, Film****M W F 12**

This section of Literary Themes focuses on the formal complexity in relation to dominant motifs of modernist art, in literature (Gide, Mann, Woolf), painting (Van Gogh, Picasso, Matisse, Klee, Dali), and film (Bergman, Fellini, Godard). We will read various definitions of "modernism," to discern what unites these twentieth-century genres. Psychoanalytic writing (Freud) and philosophy (Heidegger, Benjamin) that developed during the modernist era will also be studied. At least three analytical essays will be assigned; writing itself will be a primary focus. Students will visit the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, to make the experience of modern art real.

**Frances Restuccia****ENGL 1080.10 Literature, Society, and the Margins****T TH 12**

What does it mean to be part of a community, a society, a nation? And what does it mean to be excluded, to be on the margins of such a collective in one way or another? This section of Literature Core will explore the dynamic between these interrelated questions. As we pursue these themes, we will explore various literary genres—novels, short stories, poetry, essays—and techniques of literary analysis. Texts to be studied may include Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Patrick McCabe, *The Butcher Boy*, Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, and Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. **Marjorie Howes**

**ENGL 1080.11 Rule Breakers****M W F 9**

We will be looking at literature that deals with the act of breaking the rules and the social and moral consequences that result from rule breaking. And we will be looking at the way this is done in various literary forms. We have to begin with some key questions: Why and how, do societies create rules? Who enforces the rules and how are they enforced? Why do people decide to break rules? What are the social consequences of breaking rules? What are the individual consequences for the rule breaker? Do men and women deal with rules and rule breaking differently? *Bonnie Rudner*

**ENGL 1080.13 Immigrant Narratives****T TH 3**

Explores the theme of immigration in American literature, with a focus on contemporary novels and short stories. We begin with a classic immigrant narrative, Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers*, before taking up texts that revise, challenge, and re-write the genre's conventions. Texts may include: Chang-rae Lee's *A Gesture Life*, Junot Diaz's *Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, and Stuart Dybek's *Childhood and Other Neighborhoods*. *Tina Klein*

**ENGL 1080.14 Falling Asleep over the Aeneid****M W F 12**

This literature core class explores remixes and dream versions of history and literary tradition in different genres, from the famous revivifying revisionism of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Hamilton* and the startling economies of Alice Oswald's *Memorial (A Version of Homer's Iliad)*—through poetry by writers like Claudia Rankine, Robert Lowell, Emily Dickinson, and Lord Byron—to ingenious classics like Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Requirements include three critical essays, one piece of creative writing, and a final examination. *John M. Anderson*

**ENGL 1080.15 Alienation as Literary Motif****T TH 10 30**

This is a close-reading of literature course. Certain themes, alienation, for instance, or the role of women in society will be stressed, and examined. Narrative strategies, points of view, characterization, are discussed as well, as will the connection between literature and society as a whole; matters of aesthetics are also emphasized. Readings may include *Madame Bovary*, *All the King's Men*, *Where I'm Calling From* (Raymond Carver). There are quizzes, hourly exams and three 7 page essays. *George O'Har*

**ENGL 1080.16 Zen and Literary Writing****M W F 10**

This course provides an introduction to literary study by looking at how Zen (Chan) Buddhism has been represented, understood, and expressed through various forms of literature over the past 1400 years. We read works translated from Chinese and Japanese as well as works originally written in English. Literary genres will include haiku and other poetic forms, travel memoirs, short stories, and at least one novel. We will also consider the Zen koan as a literary form. No previous knowledge of Buddhism is required or expected. *Alan Richardson*

**ENGL 1080.17 Love and Other Difficulties****M W F 11**

In the classical era and up to the Renaissance, love was considered an appropriate topic for study, even academic study. The assumption was that just because we all have feelings that does not mean we know how to love, or to love well, and that therefore we need to study it, discuss it, practice it, in order to become better at it. This class will study various theories and practices of love via readings in Plato, Goethe, Eugene O'Neill and others, in order to learn how it's done. *Thomas Kaplan-Maxfield*

**ENGL 1080.18 Imagining the Future****T TH 9**

It's hardly any wonder that some of the funniest, weirdest, most awe-inspiring writing (think sci-fi, space-fiction, fantasy, utopias) emerges from our enduring fascination with unanswerable questions about our future. The mind-bending mysteries of the universe astound not just you and me, but the world's greatest writers and scientists. Our authors will guide us on voyages of exploration through the past and into the future. And it's all powered by the energy of imagination. "Knowledge is limited," wrote Einstein, "imagination encircles the world." This semester, we will try to encircle the future of science and society on waves of literary imagination. *Joseph Nugent*

**ENGL 1080.19 Literature of the Absurd: How Shall I Live? T TH 3**

Originally associated with forms of revolt against the dehumanizing hyper-rationality of the Enlightenment, the 'literature of the absurd' can now be seen more broadly as writing that investigates what it means to be human. Our class will encounter this difficult question in readings from Renaissance (Erasmus's 1509 *In Praise of Folly*) to Postmodernism (Sasha Sokolov's 1972 *School for Fools*); in literary forms that include novel (Kafka, Woolf, Sokolov), poem (Dickinson, Vvedensky), short story (Gogol, Kharmis), essay (Camus), oral history (Alexevitch) and ironic encomium (Erasmus); from the American (Dickinson), British (Woolf), German (Kafka), Russian (Gogol, Kharmis, Sokolov), and French (Camus) languages. *Thomas Epstein*

**ENGL 1080.20 Crossing Borders****M W F 3**

We will study literary texts of different genres that deal with experiences of border crossing. We will take “borders” to mean both spatial or geopolitical boundaries (e.g. between cities, states, countries) and boundaries based on social and cultural categories (e.g. gender, social class, race). We will be interested in the ways texts represent these borders and the people who inhabit these spaces and transgress these borders. How do literary texts creatively depict borders and border crossing? How do these texts imagine the way these borders shape peoples’ understanding of themselves, others, and the world? *Lorenzo (Alex) Puente*

**ENGL 1080.21 Philosophical Fictions****T TH 1:30**

In Literature Core, students explore the principal motives which prompt people to read literature: to assemble and assess the shape and values of one's own culture, to discover alternative ways of looking at the world, to gain insight into issues of permanent human importance as well as issues of contemporary urgency, and to enjoy the linguistic and formal satisfactions of literary art. Literature Core will strive to develop the student's capacity to read and write with clarity and engagement, to allow for that dialogue between the past and present we call history, and to provide an introduction to literary genres. This section of the course will focus on intersections between literature and philosophy: literature’s ability to address philosophical problems and philosophy’s use of “artistic” forms of presentation. *Rob Lehman*

**Enduring Questions Courses in English**

*The following classes fulfill the Literature Core. The partner course fulfills an additional Core Requirement as indicated. For first-years only.*

# Enduring Questions

## **ENGL1723.01 Feeling Like Ourselves: How and Why Literature Moves Us T Th 1:30**

**Corequisite:** PSYC1091.01 Thinking About Feelings: The Psychology of Emotion

Ever since Aristotle questioned why we enjoy tragedy, thinkers have puzzled over why literature moves us. Why do we care about Oedipus the King or Jane Eyre? Why do we laugh, cry, or shiver with pleasurable fear at stories we know aren't real? How do writers manipulate our emotions? More broadly, what can literature teach us about emotion in our own lives and decisions? By the course's end, students will have a richer understanding of literature's role in shaping and reflecting our emotions, together with a set of useful reading strategies that can be applied beyond literary studies. *Andrew Sofer*

## **ENGL 1725.01 Narrative and Myth in American Culture: The Case of Disney M W F 10**

**Corequisite:** COMM 1701.01 Social Norms and Values: The Case of Disney.

Storytelling and narrative have been central elements of communication since humans began to live in social structures. For hundreds of years, folk tales were adapted in order to influence social beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors. This literature core course will explore the history of folk tales and their movement around the world. After reading source material from Grimm, Perrault, Anderson, and others, we will focus on the ways tales have been altered by the Disney Corporation, in order to assess the impact of the movies on audiences. *Bonnie Rudner*

## **ENGL 1727.01 When Life Happens: Disability and the Stories We Tell T TH 10:30**

**Corequisite:** UNAS 1705.01 Psych Views Disability

This literature core course, paired with Prof. Penny Hauser-Cram's social science core course, *When Life Happens: Psychology Views Disability*, studies representations of disability in fiction, poetry, and memoir in an attempt to explore the following questions: How is disability defined and by whom? How do those with disabilities and their families view themselves and their place in society? How does society view them? What makes a life worth living? Specific to our literature course will be the questions: Who gets to tell the story? What literary and rhetorical techniques do writers use to represent disability? How do those literary methods vary in different historical periods? *Clare Dunsford*