ENGL1080 - Literature Core  
Fall 2017

ENGL1080.01 American Experiments  
M W F 10
American literature is defined by its commitment to experimentation. Walt Whitman turned his paper sideways, to capture the breadth of American experience. Henry James and Edgar Allan Poe revolutionized what we think of as “ghost stories.” James Weldon Johnson questioned the line between poetry and music. And Emily Dickinson made mischief with rhymes that matched, but only on a slant. Although these authors in many ways found tradition insufficient, their work reflects intimate knowledge of and experience with the writers who came before them. This course explores the development of the American literary idiom as a conversation (and sometimes a debate) among passionate and informed artists. Authors include Mark Twain, Phillis Wheatley, Allen Ginsberg, William Faulkner, among others. Allison Adair

ENGL1080.02 Literature of Service  
T TH 3
Through a close examination of literary works that take service as a topic, this course explores the ethical and political considerations that service implies. Some questions we will consider include: What is the relationship of art to service? How does service shape the self? How does gender, class, race, and religion shape the experience of service? How does service mediate the relationship of individuals to communities? We will look at texts that explore service in relation to religion, work, war, and society. Authors may include John Milton, George Bernard Shaw, Charlotte Brontë, Jamaica Kincaid, Tracy Kidder, Phil Klay, and Ben Fountain. Aeron Hunt

ENGL1080.03 Reading Wilderness  
T TH 1:30
In this section of Literature Core, we will read literary works reflecting historical and contemporary American attitudes toward “wilderness”: from a need to “conquer” and “settle” it, to feeling spiritual kinship with it, to realizing that we are changing it irrevocably. Key questions will be, how is the American psyche complexly influenced by both a fear of, and a love of, what is “wild”? What meanings have we assigned our landscapes, and how have those meanings shifted? We will read selections of native American myth, and whole or excerpted works by Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, John Muir, Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway, Rachel Carson, Annie Dillard, Leslie Marmon Silko, Bill Bryson, W. S. Merwin, Gary Snyder, Mary Oliver, Gretel Erlich, Michael Pollan, and others. Suzanne Matson

ENGL1080.04 Philosophical Fictions  
T TH 10:30
Ever since Plato banned poets from his perfect Republic, there has been a rivalry between literature and philosophy. This does not mean, however, that literature and philosophy have simply gone their separate ways. In this course, we will examine the intersections between literature and philosophy, literature’s ability to address philosophical problems and philosophy’s use of ‘artistic’ forms of presentation. Topics will likely include the relationship between truth and beauty, the nature of the human self, and the possibility of the ‘good life.’ Readings may include works of philosophy and literature by Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Pope, Mary Shelley, Henry James, and Beckett; as well as writings by some contemporary figures. Robert Lehman
ENGL1080.05 Metamorphosis  
In this course we will explore the idea of metamorphosis in literature, with close analysis of transformations that confuse the distinctions between male and female, animate and inanimate, human and animal. Texts will include the classical mythology in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the magical changes of heart and body in Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Kafka’s psychological examination of changes within the domestic family in *Metamorphosis* (as well as a graphic novel adaptation of that novella), Ionesco’s political allegory of change in *Rhinoceros*, and Louise Erdrich’s Native American narrative of sexual and social transformations in her novel *Tracks*. There will be a midterm and final as well as several take-home and in-class essays.  
*Robin Lydenberg*

ENGL1080.06 Misfits  
Literature is full of misfits, outsiders, drifters, square pegs—characters who struggle to find or escape their place in the world. In this course we consider a variety of literary approaches to telling these characters' stories, imagining the social and cultural contexts in which they move, and working out the dynamics of possibility and constraint. Likely texts include Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, Don De Lillo's *Libra*, Annie Proulx's *Accordion Crimes*, Quevedo's *The Swindler*, Joan Didion's *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, and Hunter Thompson's *Fear and Loathing In Las Vegas*.  
*Carlo Rotella*

ENGL1080.07 Education and its Discontents  
What does it mean to be educated—as opposed to merely knowledgeable? How do our educational institutions damage as well as develop us? We will explore how writers use various literary forms to explore the promise and pitfalls of formal education. Our texts will include novels, short fiction, plays, and at least one film. There will be two papers; a final; several "pop" quizzes; and a group presentation. This course includes graphic content and language and presumes class participation.  
*Andrew Sofer*

ENGL1080.08 Literature of Travel and Migration  
This section of Literature Core focuses on literature of travel, migration, and exile. We will read novels, short stories, essays, and poetry by and about people crossing borders and encountering unfamiliar cultures. We will begin with travel narratives from the early modern period, when Europeans first crossed the Atlantic for the Americas, and end with a science fiction novel imagining travels to other planets in the future. In addition to developing critical reading practices, the course will also focus on strengthening students’ writing skills.  
*Adam Lewis*

ENGL1080.09 Love and Other Difficulties  
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, 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*
ENGL1080.10 Terrifying Texts  
M W F 1
This section of Lit Core explores the “darker” side of literature: Murders, Mysteries, and Mayhem! From sensational novels to gothic poems, stories of deception to letters of betrayal, how does literature capture the frightening qualities of human culture and imagination? How is society critiqued and questioned by twisted, eerie plots? How do texts of the supernatural, the mysterious, subvert traditional literary styles and create their own versions of reality? Texts may include “Bluebeard,” “The Raven,” *The Monk, Frankenstein, Dracula, The Handmaid’s Tale*, along with other poems, short stories, and essays, spanning early modern to contemporary periods.

*Emma Hammack*

ENGL1080.11 Relationship of philosophy and art  
T TH 1:30
This section of Literary Themes will focus on the relationship of philosophy and art. In the first week, we will discuss the question “What is art?” and spend some time on writing about it. Looking at the philosophy/art intersection from the vantage point of philosophy, we will take up Martin Heidegger. As a follow-up activity to this phase of the course, students will visit the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (in October), to think about painting in Heideggerian philosophical terms. Students will be asked to locate a particular painting that can be interpreted philosophically, and a one-page informal essay will grow out of that experience. For the rest of the semester, we will concentrate on at least one short story (by Henry James), modern novels, and a contemporary film (or two), bringing in more philosophy as well as some psychoanalytic theory to enrich our interpretations. Several formal, thesis-driven essays will be required; writing well will be one of our primary concerns.

*Frances Restuccia*

ENGL1080.12 Spiritual Journeys  
M W F 1
Where are you going, and how do you get there? We often describe life itself as a journey or a road that we travel on. Similarly, the idea of the journey is one of the most pervasive motifs in literature: a character’s physical wanderings often stimulate changes that are internal and spiritual as well. In this course we will explore how works of English literature portray such characters’ travels, exploring journeys that are physical and metaphysical, geographical and spiritual, natural and even supernatural. We will read stories, poems, and plays from different time periods and informed by different religious perspectives -- Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox as well as agnostic and atheist. Authors covered may include Margery Kempe, Christopher Marlowe, John Donne, George Herbert, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Virginia Woolf, C. S. Lewis, Graham Greene, Flannery O’Connor, and others.

*Laura Sterrett*

ENGL1080.13 Living Traditions  
T TH 12
This literature core course will study how pairs of authors have dealt with the same “timeless” genres, subjects and themes, and how those various elements have evolved over time. Works to be read are Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* and Marge Piercy’s *Woman of the Edge of Time*, *Beowulf* and John Gardner’s *Grendel*. Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, James Weldon Johnson’s *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* and Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, and *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* and Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior*.

*Philip O’Leary*
ENGL1080.14 Immigrant Narratives  M W F 11
Explore the theme of immigration in American literature, with a focus on contemporary novels and short stories. The course begins with a classic immigrant narrative, Anzia Yezierska’s Bread Givers, before taking up texts that revise, challenge, and re-write the genre's conventions. We will read Chang-rae Lee’s A Gesture Life and Junot Diaz’s Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, before concluding with a pair of texts that examine the link between immigrants and terrorists: Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist and Janet Reitman’s Rolling Stone article about the Boston Marathon bombers. Assignments include a quiz and three 5-page papers.
Christina Klein

ENGL1080.15 Literature of the Fantastic  M W F 1
This course will examine literature that explores themes of “the fantastic.” We’ll consider that term rather generally, and use it to frame our discussions of William Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, Kurt Vonnegut’s Slaughterhouse-Five and other novels, plays, poems and short stories. Ultimately, this exploration will lead us to questions about why writers use invented or skewed realities to explore political, social, cultural or theological issues, and whether these texts’ fantastic nature might even allow writers to reach “truths” that are otherwise unattainable.
Chris Boucher

ENGL1080.16 Zen and Literary Writing  M W F 12
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 will 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

ENGL1080.17 Capitalism and Resistance in Am. Lit.  T TH 9
The U.S. has long thought about the intertwining of economics and politics; however, it was not always a given that free-market capitalism and democracy should go hand-in-hand. Drawing mainly on American writers from the colonial era to modernity, this course focuses on the idea of the individual as defined by capitalism and the ways various thinkers have resisted that definition. Literary writers may include Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, William Bradford, Frederick Douglass, T.S. Eliot, and William Carlos Williams. Philosophers such as Karl Marx, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault will play a central role in our understanding of subjectivity.
Alex Moskowitz

ENGL1080.18 Stories of the Apocalypse and the End of the World  M W F 9
In contemporary tv, film, and literature, we are fascinated by stories of the apocalypse. From The Walking Dead to The Last Man on Earth, Oryx and Crake to Zone One, these stories of disaster, social collapse, and survival seem to enthral us. Yet such stories are not new. In this course, we will be investigating texts from a variety of historical periods and in a variety of literary forms that share an interest in imagining the apocalypse and its aftermath. We will wrestle with questions concerning how and why we tell these stories and how historical, cultural, and artistic context impact representations of the apocalypse. Potential authors include: W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Tony Kushner, Haruki Murakami, and Octavia Butler.
Kristin Imre
ENGL1080.19 Alienation as Literary Motif  T TH 1:30
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'Hara

ENGL1080.20 Writing War  M W F 10
This section of the Literature Core focuses on literary texts that examine the subject of war. What does it mean to take up a complex and brutal experience like warfare in a work of literary art? How do representations of war change across literary periods and genres? We will study recurring themes like nationalism, duty, valor, violence, and the physical and psychological toll of war, both for soldiers and for those not directly involved in combat. Authors studied include William Shakespeare, Tim O'Brien, Kurt Vonnegut, Rebecca West, and J.M. Coetzee, among others.
Linda Martin

ENGL1080.21 Twisted Tales  T TH 10:30
Exploring "Twisted" Structures, Behaviors, Themes
In this course we will explore "twists" in literature (fiction, primarily)—twists of plot (that surprise us), themes (that challenge us), and structures (orderly structures and those that are unexpectedly ordered). Sometimes, the "twists" are multiple, and we will take special care to note thematic and moral implications as well as the structural designs of "twisted tales." The course aims to help you: enhance your understanding of literature's meanings and structures; amplify your skills of analysis; expand your role in discussion; increase your skill and fluidity as a writer.
Eileen Donovan-Kranz

ENGL1080.22 Personal Insight in English Literature  T TH 9
Literature is often concerned with understanding the individual in context, in the context of her/his personal experience or in social, political or cultural context. Very often such understanding crystallizes in a moment of insight, when elements come together and a new pattern emerges. Such insight can be experienced by a character within a novel, for example, or it can be one experienced by the reader about the character. Literary insight may also furnish the reader with the capacity for greater insight in her/his own experience. The course will explore these issues through various literary genres – novels, short stories, poetry – and techniques of literary analysis.
James Murphy

ENGL1080.23 Living with Death  T TH 3
Memento mori: "Remember that you must die." From Greek tragedy to experimental fiction to protest poetry, literature confronts the bleak reality of human mortality. Writers return time and time again to a nexus of unresolved questions about Death, which this course explores: How do we come to terms with death? How do we understand the experience of death itself? What is the nature of grief—and how is it circumscribed socially? What afterlives do we imagine for the dead? How can we find hope while respecting that ancient dictum, memento mori? By reading across the centuries, we will discover the ways that contemporary writers like Marilyne Robinson, Atul Gawande, and Claudia Rankine are in conversation with their forebears (including Sophocles, Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, and Virginia Woolf). This course will also feature A Girl Is a Half-formed Thing by Eimear McBride in conjunction with the novelist's Lowell Humanities Series lecture in October.
Trista Doyle