Fall 2014

Lynn Enterline

Beginning with the two most important epics for Tudor translation and imitation - Virgil’s Aeneid and Ovid’s Metamorphosis - we will consider the intersections among classicism, educational institutions, gender, affect, and sexuality in 16th-century London. Epic discourse played a crucial role in Tudor debates about social, geographic, and national distinction; it was also fundamental to a literary phenomenon for which the period is often celebrated: the invention of dramatic character. Reading in light of institutional rhetorical practices – those imbibed in humanist grammar schools as well as at the Inns of Court – we will discuss a series of so-called minor epics alongside dramatic texts that bring “the matter of Troy” onstage. Most important for our purposes, a short-lived but intense vogue for “minor epics” began when Thomas Lodge, a law student at Lincoln’s Inn, published Scillaes Metamorphosis (1589). It sparked a rapid series of sexually explicit poems by lawyers and dramatists alike in which highly emotional speeches about love sometimes sound like dramatic soliloquies, sometimes like legal arguments, and sometimes both. At the same time, writers of epyllia launched a vigorous critique of epic teleology with important consequences for how we understand both subjectivity and sexuality in the period. All show a recognizably Tudor form of “discontent”: skeptical imitations of passionate ancient characters that undercut normative, end-driven representations of nationhood and useful masculinity from within the genre thought to consolidate these identities and from within the institutions that most benefited from upholding them. Adopting a comparative, trans-institutional perspective, the course examines what the so-called “minor epic” reveals about the classicizing terms that shaped debates about what counted as “male,” “female,” “English,” and “barbarian” discourse and feeling. Texts may include: the Aeneid, the Metamorphoses; Thomas Lodge, Scillaes Metamorphosis; John Marston, The Metamorphosis of Pigmalions Image; Thomas Heywood, Paris and Oenone; George Chapman, Ovid’s Banquet of Sense; Francis Beaumont, Salmacis and Hermaphroditus; James Shirley, Narcissus or, The Self-Lover; Marlowe, Hero and Leander and Dido, Queen of Carthage; Shakespeare, The Rape of Lucrece, Venus and Adonis, Othello, Hamlet, Antony and Cleopatra.

Rachel Teukolsky

This course will approach Victorian literary and cultural history from the angle of visuality. Historians often refer to a “pictorial turn” to describe the flourishing of visual culture in the 19th century, in objects that ranged from hand-held stereoscopes to panoramas to world exhibitions. We will consider the multi-faceted aspects of Victorian visuality, from the science of optics to the politics of empire. Our objects of study will include literary works remarkable for their visual play, such as Dickens’s Bleak House and Brontë’s Villette, as well as the aesthetic (and political) philosophies of John Ruskin and Walter Pater. We will explore some key archives of Victorian visual culture, including illustrated books, advertising posters, and representations of the Great Exhibition of 1851, usually considered the first World’s Fair. Class meetings will also consider Victorian photography, illustration, ekphrasis, criminality, empire, and decadence. For theories and histories of vision, we will look to W.J.T. Mitchell, Walter Benjamin, Jonathan Crary, Michel Foucault, Sharon Marcus, and Martin Jay, among others. The course, aimed at both specialists and non-specialists, will consider some basic questions: How to analyze an image? What is visual culture, and how is it related to the fine arts? What is the relation between politics and visuality in the 19th century?

English 355 (8155): Special Topics in English and American Literature: The Long Poem
Colin Dayan

This seminar focuses on the once de rigueur task of close reading. Reading will be intensive rather than extensive, and time spent writing will probably equal that spent reading. The seminar will veer toward a “workshop” approach, in which a few students (depending on class size) each week will make available their interventions. These writings will be the basis of our discussion. If you choose to take this class, you must know that participation is absolutely essential. (Let me add: we will also have a great deal of fun.)

The long poem—or what some call “the poetic sequence”—is a hybrid or heterogeneous genre, described by some as a loose and baggy mixture of poetry and prose or a compound of lyric “immediacy” and epic “inclusiveness.” We will discuss the odd genre-marriage of the form, as well as seek to understand what happens when history becomes part of poetry, a division that was not always as stark as we would like to think. Ezra Pound recognized this when he thought of the epic as a long poem that “contained history.” Another major consideration is the nature of the poetic “I” when a poet tackles this discontinuous or fragmented form. Edgar Allan Poe once declared: “A long poem is a
contradiction in terms,” and then he went on to write Eureka, with two titles added: “A Prose Poem” and “An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe.”

The formal and stylistic range of the poems read in the seminar asks that we confront the interplay between politics and poetry, racial or racially inflected poetic practice and cultural production. We will be concentrating on T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Adrienne Rich, Derek Walcott, Thylissas Morse and N. NourbeSe Philip, after our Whitman introduction (followed by our discussion of the “unreadable,” with Melville’s Clarel at the helm).

I encourage participants to consider – if time permits – the poetry of Hart Crane (The Bridge), Wallace Stevens (Auroras of Autumn), Charles Olson (Maximus), Harryette Mullen (Drudge), Jorie Graham (Materialism and Place: New Poems), and Anne Carson (Autobiography of Red). I will be available to talk with you about any other poets that you would like to study and write about.

English 355 (8155): Special Topics in English and American Literature: Proseminar: The Conflict of the Faculties 2.0
Scott Juengel

Among the final publications of Immanuel Kant’s lifetime was a curious little assemblage of essays called The Conflict of the Faculties (1798). Ostensibly aimed at protecting what we would now call the ‘academic freedom’ of the philosophy faculty from incursions by the Prussian state, the treatise proceeds to veer into discussions of the history of human progress, mysticism in religion, sleep disorders, and how best to refrain from “morbid feelings.” In other words, it captures the outsized ambitions and unsettling effects of life in the academy today. This proseminar derives its energies from Kant’s peculiar treatise in order to consider the state of our discipline in 2014. As the gateway course into the Ph.D. program, it is designed to reflect on a range of questions that tacitly give contour to nearly everything we do in this profession: What is the status of criticism/critique within the contemporary university? How best to think freely within an increasingly corporatized institution? What are the genres of scholarly expression and professional comportment necessary for success? How does the study of what we still call “English” bear the traces of its institutional history? What does the future hold for some of the structuring keywords of our discipline—periodization, national literature, field, the humanities, the archive, the book? How do we read and write and teach despite it all? How do we avoid morbid thoughts?

The Proseminar is limited to first-year graduate students only.

English 355 (8155): Special Topics in English and American Literature: Caribbean Fiction and Poetry
Vera Kutzinski

This course is a comparative survey of twentieth-century Caribbean literatures written in English, French, and Spanish (we will read the latter two in their English translations). Rather than assuming that ACaribbean@ refers to some sort of a priori cultural coherence, be it essentialist or geographical, we will explore the often very different ways in which writers steeped in the cultural traditions of Western Europe, West Africa, and the Americas have approached the idea of “Caribbeanness.” Our task will be to identify representational patterns and analyze the logic of convergences and divergences in both literary and scholarly texts. Three figures, or conceptual clusters, will help focus our conversations: (1) passages and other translations; (2) islands and/as nations; and (3) carnivals. Each figure opens up questions: How do we think and write about multi-directional movements (including linguistic translations) across the Atlantic and among island spaces? What sort of space is an island, and what does it mean for an island to repeat itself? Does carnival signify resistance to culturally dominant practices or accommodation to those practices? Does it signify differently to people of different genders and sexualities?

Readings will include (most) of the following: Robert Antoni, Carnival; Wilson Harris, Carnival; Miguel Barnet, Autobiography of a Runaway Slave; Dany Bébel-Gisler, Léonora; Kamau Brathwaite, The Arrivants; Tobias Buckell, Crystal Rain; Alejo Carpentier, The Kingdom of This World; Aimé Césaire, Michelle Cliff, Abeng; Maryse Condé, I, Tituba, Block Witch of Salem; David Dabydeen, Turner; Fred D’Aguiar, Feeding the Ghosts; Junot Diaz, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao; Rosario Ferré, The House on the Lagoon; Nicolás Guillén, selected poems; Nalo Hopkinson, Midnight Robber; Earl Lovelace, The Dragon Can’t Dance; Patrick Chamoiseau, Texaco; Daniel Maximin et al, AEloge de la créolité@ (In Praise of Creoleness); Derek Walcott, Collected Poems, 1948-1984.

Requirements: weekly short papers (750 words), brief presentations (mainly on anthologies of Caribbean literatures), and a final project, which may be a research paper or an annotated syllabus.
Fall 2014 Graduate Courses of Interest Offered in Other Departments:

French 362: Émile Zola and Charles Dickens: Naturalism, Realism, and Social Engagement  
Robert Barsky  
This course will introduce students to a group of seminal novels from Charles Dickens and Émile Zola, supplemented by essays and letters that discuss their respective approaches to social justice and the role that their literary work plays, or can play, to advance particular causes. Different facets of their writings will be discussed, including their respective methods of researching their subject matter, the style of their writing, as well as their concerns relating to contemporary oppression, violence, prostitution, alcoholism and social inequality. Students will also be introduced to the relationship between realism and naturalism, and will have occasion to explore the idea of the “public intellectual”, with particular reference to Zola’s “J’Accuse,” an open letter to the president denouncing the wrongful conviction of a Jewish officer of the French army for treason.

French 380: French Literary Theory  
Paul Miller  
In the seminar, instead of attempting an sweeping overview of the history of literary theory, we will read a selection of theoretical masterworks and attempt to define the uses and limits of theory in literary analysis. While an exhaustive review of theory is impossible, we will certainly touch upon an array of theoretical approaches to literary criticism with an emphasis on those with particular relevance to French and Francophone literature. In addition to some of the major theoretical texts of Marxism, Structuralism, Post-structuralism, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, the critique of colonial and post-colonial discourses, etc., we will focus on some of the great debates of intellectual history. Students will be required to write a series of short papers, give two presentations, and write a final research essay.

Political Science 308: Individual and Society in Modern Political Thought  
This course will explore one important theme in modern political thought—the relationship between the individual and society. To what extent is the individual shaped by his or her social and cultural interactions? How have political theorists historically addressed a critical tension between individuality and sociability? Modern political thinkers approach these questions by examining the impact of a range of collective practices on the identity and behavior of individuals—education, religious communities, cultural and social customs and manners, commerce, and democratic political institutions, among others. With this in mind, we will read widely in modern political thought, including groundbreaking works in moral and social psychology, educational treatises, and democratic theory. Potential authors include Rousseau, Smith, Marx, Mill, Thoreau, Nietzsche, James, and Freud.

Women's and Gender Studies 301: Gender and Sexuality: Feminist Approaches  
Nancy Chick  
Interdisciplinary introduction to the major debates, theoretical terms, and research methods in feminist, gender, sexuality, and queer studies.

Spring 2014

English 303 (7430): Graduate Fiction Workshop  
Lorrie Moore

English 304 (7440): Graduate Poetry Workshop  
Mark Jarman
The graduate poetry workshop will be focused on class discussion of poetry written by participants. Members should aim to complete 12 pages of their poetry for the course. Each class member will also present the work of a contemporary poet of their choice once during the semester. Discussion of the following books by visiting poets will also be included: World Tree by David Wojahn, Secure the Shadow by Claudia Emerson, New Collected Poems by Eavan Boland.
English Graduate Courses offered in 2014

English 305 (7450): Graduate Nonfiction Workshop
Peter Guralnick

This is a graduate workshop in creative nonfiction with a particular emphasis on the profile and long-form narrative piece. Three major pieces will be required, along with some brief additional exercises. Every student in the course will critique each of the papers in writing, and the class will consist primary of constructive discussion of the work. In addition, there will be reading of work by such writers as Gay Talese, Gary Smith, Janet Malcolm, Jonathan Lethem, Joseph Mitchell, Jack Kerouac, Ernest Hemingway, David Foster Wallace, and Alice Munro. Much of the focus of discussion will be on issues of characterization, narrative technique, selectivity of detail, and angle of perception—in other words, how to make a real-life story or profile come alive in much the same way that fiction narrative can. The implicit bond between reader, writer, and subject will also provide a jumping-off point, along with the proverbial Rashomon-like nature of truth. Most of all, the workshop should be seen as a kind of shared enterprise in which mutual enthusiasm for writing should lead to discussion that is as wide-ranging as it is lively and engaging.

English 307 (7460): Literature and the Craft of Writing
Tony Earley

English 316 (8410): Seminar in Romantic Prose and Poetry: Law, Narrative, and Romantic Literature
Mark Schoenfield

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive
But to be young was very Heaven! O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!
- Wadsworth, Prelude, Book IX

Accused of murder in Frankenstein, Justine is convicted because she cannot produce a persuasive narrative. Flummoxed by Mr. Collins, Mrs Bennett laments that an entail—a legal device devised to direct inheritance—results in no knowing which man an estate will go. Francis Jeffrey, declaring the authority of his Edinburgh Review, grounds it on the legal authority or precedent and tradition. Throughout the romantic period, issues of justice, property, and individual rights developed simultaneously with romantic aesthetics, theorizations of narrative persuasiveness, and proliferations of genres of the novel, poetry, and periodical prose. We will explore authors such as Godwin, Wordsworth, Byron, Jane Austen, Mary Robinson, Walter Scott, Charles Lamb, John Galt, James Hogg, and Francis Jeffrey, and consider how these authors engaged legal issues in their writing and how the pervasive legal cultures they inhabited shaped their works. Final papers may concern law and literature of any period.

English 337B (8138): Introduction to Literary Theory: Colonial Modernity
Ben Tran

Since the 1990s, scholars from various academic disciplines have employed the term “colonial modernity” to examine the entwined relationship between modernization and colonialism. While most of this scholarship understands the two enterprises as going hand-in-hand, our class will explore how modern thought and aesthetics in non-European contexts emerged both from and against the conditions of colonial modernity. We will consider multiple formations and implications of colonial modernity, while reevaluating modern literature and culture. In order to achieve these goals, we will consider colonial modernity’s relationship to aesthetic modernism, the prosaic, gender, history, nationalism, and revolution. This seminar will be comparative in nature, considering authors from different contexts, including Adorno and Horkheimer, Aimé Césaire, Pheng Cheah, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rey Chow, Frantz Fanon, Fredric Jameson, and Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

English 355 (8155): Special Topics in English and American Literature: Early African American Print Culture
Teresa Goddu

This course will focus on an emerging field within nineteenth-century U.S. literary studies: early African American print culture. We will explore the critical models shaping this field along with the methodological and archival methods upon which it is based. We will explore how questions of print culture studies—questions of the materiality, production, dissemination, and consumption of print forms—can teach us about early African American literature and how African American literature in turn transforms our understandings of print culture.
We will focus specifically on the slave narrative, examining it not only as a literary genre and cultural form but also as a marketable commodity. The course will introduce students to archival research as well as to the interdisciplinary methodology of the history of the book which maps the relationships between the materiality of the text (its publication history or status as a commercial commodity) and its meaning. Requirements will include weekly writing assignments and research exercises along with a final project that will ask students to prepare their own edition of a slave narrative.

Spring 2014 Graduate Courses of Interest Offered in Other Departments:

**American Studies 300: American Tragedy (in Theory)**
Jennifer Fay

This course concerns the unlikely intersection of American Studies, a resolutely modern and geographically located field of study, and tragedy, an ancient dramatic genre often viewed as incompatible with the modern world. By some accounts, tragedy is the ethical violence that befalls kings, queens, and their progeny in trials of sovereign power, and thus the United States’ “exceptional” democratic status may render a distinctly “American” tragedy both temporally and temperamentally impossible. With these challenges in mind, this seminar will trace the status of American exceptionalism within the institutional lifespan of American Studies (from its Cold War beginnings to our post-Americanist third wave), while exploring the efficacy of a theoretical and affective vocabulary rooted in the history of tragedy. Is America the exception to European tragedy? Is America the tragic exception to the promises of democracy?

Tragedy raises interesting questions about feeling and identity, especially in the context of our neo-liberal age. Is the tragic affect available to the common person, and can it be ordinary? What narratives are available when tragedy is not a catastrophic event but an ongoing state of affairs? How does the tragic narrative—of Oedipus and Antigone, for example—reflect gendered experience, and of what use are these narratives for us today? Is there a distinctly feminist tragedy? How might tragedy offer a useful paradigm as distinct from melodrama and trauma?

Alongside literary and cinematic works that begin to address these questions, we will likely read from a range of philosophically-inflected meditations on tragedy, from Plato and Aristotle, to Nietzsche, Freud, Benjamin, Butler, Berlant and Žižek. As we may discover, “tragedy” and “American Studies” are sufficiently hard to define that they may exist, in the most prosaic sense, only “in theory.”

**Women’s and Gender Studies 303: Queer Theory**
Kathryn Schwarz

History and development of queer theory. Key intellectual antecedents, significant theorists, and current trends. How sexuality interests with gender, race, class, nationality, ability, and religion.