English Graduate Courses offered Spring 2016

English 8155 – Special Problems in English and American Literature: Secularism and Minority Culture
Allison Schachter

This course traces the discourse on "minority culture" back to the emergence of the European nation-state and secular citizenship in the eighteenth century. How has the European secularist project shaped contemporary questions and ideas about minority identity and culture -- not only in Europe, but also in the post-colonial context of the Global South and the multi-cultural context of North America? We will read a range of theoretical texts that urgently question the boundaries of secularism, the construction of minority identity, and their relationship to literature and culture. Engaging with recent debates in anthropology, comparative and world literature, post-colonial studies, the course interrogates the various political, social, and aesthetic practices that inform both the expression of minority identity and the practice of secular culture. The course will begin with "the Jewish question" in eighteenth-century Europe and then will look at its relationship to "the Muslim question" of the twenty-first century. We will go on to examine how secular Europe discourses justify European and North American imperialism and are an important site of minority cultural production and political resistance.

English 8410 – Romantic Prose and Poetry: Periodical Culture: Fall of the Bastille to A Tale of Two Cities
Mark Schoenfield

The regulation of public discourse in Great Britain coalesced through the combined efforts of a range of institutions, the courts and periodicals crucially among them. Issues of personal identity, public property, rights of expression and assembly, the meaning of sanity, and the values of literature we adjudicated in the heteroglossic space of the periodicals and other ancillary prose. In this course, we will explore that space beginning with Caleb Williams and the English panic over the French Revolution, and conclude with Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities, serialized in the first issues of his All the Year Round. We will consider individual writers such as William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb, as they articulated visions of their social and private worlds, as well as the corporate voices of the Edinburgh Review, Blackwood's Magazine, and Fraser's Magazine. Making use of the British periodical and/or American Periodical database, we will conduct original research on topics of their own choosing and prepare an article-length essay based on that research. In addition, students will do collaborative presentations and individual response papers to shared materials.

English 8155 – Colonial Modernity
Ben Tran

Since the 1990s, scholars from various academic disciplines have employed the term "colonial modernity" to examine the entwined relationships between modernization and colonialism. While most of this scholarship understands the two enterprises as going hand-in-hand, our class will take a more nuanced approach. We will explore how modern thought and aesthetics in non-European contexts emerged both for and against conditions of colonial modernity. This will necessitate not only a more complicated understanding of modernity and colonialism, but also a reevaluation of modern literature and culture. In order to achieve these goals, we will consider colonial modernity's relationship to race, gender, and revolution. This seminar will be comparative in nature; we will study authors and thinkers from different intellectual traditions and contexts.

English 8155 – Special Topics in English and American Literature: Black Male Writers: The Troika Plus One
Hortense Spillers

Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin might arguably be thought of as the major African American writers of the post-World War II period, and as a result, the chief voices of black post-modernism. The youngest member of this literary combination, David Bradley, writing in the wake of his "elders" shows traces of the past as well as strides toward new ground. This course is devoted to a study of these figures and the "anxieties of influence" that make it possible for us to read them as a kind of "visionary company."