

Spring 2019

MLAS 6100: “The Global Circulation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*”

Instructor: Professor Celso Thomas Castilho

Location: 200 Benson Hall

Days and Time: Tuesdays, 6:30-9:00 p.m.

Dates: January 15-April 16

This course explores how the study of the international circulation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* can help us think more critically about slavery in its cultural and intellectual terms, and about the role of literature in fostering a wider field of global exchange about slavery, race, gender, and empire. That is, through a reckoning with this seminal literary work of the nineteenth century, the political and literary contexts from which it emerged, and its countless and mostly enthusiastic adaptations in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa, I believe that we can start to ask new questions about this text’s meaning in the context of the US. We can also probe the print-culture and performative dynamics that enabled its rapid circulation as a means of bringing into clearer focus the existing, polylingual and trans-Atlantic literary discussions about slavery. Getting at, and analyzing the contours of this field of exchange about slavery promises to reveal greater insight into both the histories of antislavery and the history of slavery’s persistence, which were themselves embedded in the broad and interrelated processes of political-economy, state-making, and literary formations.

The first part of the term focuses mainly on *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* itself. Our attention will then turn to its broad international reception in the middle weeks of the semester. Finally, in the last unit, students will write a research paper (in consultation with the instructor) on either a specific dimension of its circulation, or on other contemporary fictional works from or about the US that also shaped and was shaped by this global intellectual history of slavery.

Celso Thomas Castilho is a historian of Latin America and the Atlantic world, with areas of specialization in modern Brazil, comparative slavery and emancipation, and print culture, the public sphere, and intellectual history. His first book, *Slave Emancipation and Transformations in Brazilian Political Citizenship* (2016) analyzed the problem of political citizenship through a focus on how the public debates over abolition set in motion a related set of debates over the terms and forms of political participation. The book received three major prizes, and it was in the context of researching Brazilian abolitionism that he discovered the popularity of Uncle Tom theater in 1870s and 1880s Brazil. His current book project is a study of the circulation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in Latin America, where he probes the story’s resonance in book, serial, and theatrical form in four key cities: Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, Lima, and Buenos Aires. The goal of the book, beyond expanding the nationalist and Eurocentric horizons with which most associate the story, is to write an intellectual history of Atlantic slavery from the perspective of Latin America. He has two scholarly articles forthcoming in 2019 related to this project, including one published in Spanish on Uncle Tom theater in 1850s Mexico City.

MLAS 6100: “Genre Cinema”

Instructor: Professor Lutz Koepnick

Location: 201 Buttrick Hall

Days and Time: Wednesdays, 6:00-9:30 p.m. (includes screening)

Dates: January 16-April 17

This seminar explores the role of genre as a powerful means of mainstream cinema to tell compelling stories and structure the viewer's identification. Even though genres such as the melodrama, the western, the romantic comedy, the musical, the science fiction film, the horror film, or the thriller are often seen as quite predictable staples of dominant filmmaking, they also inspire and allow for considerable formal experimentation and thematic departure. This seminar examines the logic of some of the most important genres of Hollywood filmmaking while at the same time emphasizing the creative possibilities of working with certain genre expectations. We discuss such classic representatives of certain genres as *Imitation of Life*, *Stagecoach*, *His Girl Friday*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Double Indemnity*, and *42nd Street*, and then juxtapose these paradigmatic examples with more contemporary films reworking or pushing the limits of the classical genre system such as *Far from Heaven*, *Once upon a Time in the West*, *Blade Runner*, *Dancer in the Dark*, and *Breathless*.

Lutz Koepnick is the Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of German, Cinema and Media Arts at Vanderbilt University, where he also chairs the Department of German, Russian and East European Studies and serves as the director of the joint-Ph.D. program in Comparative Media Analysis and Practice (CMAP). Koepnick has published widely on film and film history. He is, among other, the author of *Michael Bay: World Cinema in the Age of Populism* (2018); *The Long Take: Art Cinema and the Wondrous* (2017); and *The Dark Mirror: German Cinema between Hitler and Hollywood* (2002).

MLAS 7340: Capstone Workshop

Instructor: Professor Mark Schoenfield
Location: 301 Buttrick Hall
Days and Times: Wednesdays, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
Dates: January 16-April 17

This course provides students with the opportunity to embark on an independent research projects in which they pursue interests sparked by their course work in MLAS. As the capstone project for the degree, it allows students to apply their creativity and analytic skills to an issue or problem of their choice, which emerges from prior coursework or represent a departure from that work for which their MLAS training has prepared them. Final projects can take many forms, from research papers to web sites to creative writings or performances. In addition to submitting the final project, there will be a presentation night at which students discuss their work. Because each student will be working on different projects, the course will meet less frequently than usual MLAS courses, and the meetings will concern such topics as research methods and revision techniques. Students will work in small groups, will have opportunities for interviewing experts in their field, and will share their work with one another in a supportive "get-it-done" environment. Students will bring an abstract (500-600 words) of their current ideas for their project to the first class and should feel free to contact Professor Schoenfield (mark.schoenfield@vanderbilt.edu) prior to the Spring Semester.

Mark Schoenfield specializes in British romantic literature and literature's connections to other social institutions, particularly law. His two books are *The Professional Wordsworth: Law, Economics, and the Poet's Contract and British Periodicals and Romantic Identity: The "Literary Lower Empire,"* the 2010 winner of the Colby Prize for outstanding contribution to research in 19th century periodicals. He is currently working on a book on Romantic-Era litigation and literature. When he directed the English Honors program, Mark guided many classes through independent research and writing, and is excited about getting to work with MLAS students on their capstone projects once again, having taught the inaugural Capstone course and several subsequent iterations.

MLAS 6700: “Modernist Experimentation in Literature and Painting” (Core Course)

Instructor: Professor Mark Wollaeger

Location: 308 Buttrick Hall

Days and Times: Mondays, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Dates: January 14-April 22

What does it mean to perform aesthetic as opposed to scientific experiments? “Modernism” names a massive outpouring of aesthetic experimentation across the arts and across Europe in the late 19th C and early 20th C, and in this course we will study not only major modernist literature (poetry and fiction) by writers such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and T. S. Eliot but also the broader culture from which modernist writing emerged, paying particular attention to modern painting by Cezanne, Matisse, and Picasso. Modernism is a retrospective umbrella term – the writers and artists themselves did not use it before the 1930s, well after some of the chief instances of what are now considered modernist classics were created. Our goal will be to tease out a cultural logic that connects seemingly diverse literature, painting, and “-isms” (naturalism, impressionism, cubism, futurism, etc.) by studying them in the context of contemporary manifestos, philosophy, psychology, and politics. In practice, then, we’ll aim both for a big picture sense of modernism as a set of sprawling, messy movements and for a detailed understanding of representative works. We will also ask how modernism’s legacy of aesthetic experimentation continues to inform our culture today.

Seminar discussion is the best way to work through the challenges that modernism poses to casual reading or viewing: what at first may seem opaque comes to seem rich yet still strange; that’s where a lot of the fun comes in.

Students are responsible for completing reading and viewing assignments and coming in prepared for discussion. As this is a core course, one short diagnostic writing assignment will be followed by a research project to be presented first as a 20-minute presentation in class, and later as a 10 page research paper due the last session of the course. I will also ask you to prepare an annotated bibliography.

Mark Wollaeger is Professor of English at Vanderbilt University, where he has served as Director of the College Writing Program and Director of Graduate Study. His areas of teaching and research are modernist literature and culture, global comparative modernisms, with specializations in modern fiction by Conrad, Joyce, and Woolf, and in film, interarts collaboration, and digital humanities. He has served as President of the Modernist Studies Association (MSA) and has run book prize committees for both the MSA and the Modern Language Association; he is also co-founder of the Oxford University Press book series *Modernist Literature & Culture*. Professor Wollaeger has won prizes for his teaching at both the graduate and undergraduate level, and also won the Chancellor’s Research Award.

He has published books on Joseph Conrad and philosophy, and on modern British narrative and propaganda. His essays have focused on figures such as the installation artist Hans Haacke, D. H. Lawrence, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, and on issues such as comparative analysis, and the strategic deployment of modernism and liberal arts in the Cold War. He is also editor of three collections: *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*; *James Joyce’s “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man”: A Casebook*; and *Joyce and History*.