

ENG 400 Seminars

Summer 1, 2018

Teaching Shakespeare in the Secondary Classroom & Beyond

Dr. Pauline Schmidt

Shakespeare is an essential - yet challenging - author, particularly when he is introduced in various middle and high schools. This seminar, specifically designed for English Education majors, will explore four of Shakespeare's most popular plays: *Hamlet*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *Macbeth*; and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We will examine the ways in which these plays are taught at different levels of education, I will model pedagogical strategies while we have embodied, dramatic experiences. We will read the work of educational specialists who believe that we learn best by doing; that the arts organically get infused into the teaching of literature, especially drama. By examining cutting edge scholarship on multimodality, process drama, and new literacies, you will design and craft your research paper for the course.

Summer 2, 2018

Theorizing Activism and Activist Rhetoric

Dr. Seth Kahn

This course investigates the rhetorics that activists use in their work as educators, organizers, and mobilizers. We will approach activist rhetoric from three directions.

- We will consider an array of theories of persuasion and deliberation, theorizing rhetoric as the basis upon which democracy depends.
- We will take a case-study approach to several activist campaigns, some of which you will select as part of your research for the course (e.g., environmental, human rights, reproductive rights, health care reform, education reform).
- We will study the first-person accounts of activist rhetoricians, who describe their own activist work, and how they understand rhetoric's place in it.
- Research projects may result in either critical/rhetorical analyses of a specific activist campaign; or elaborated arguments that theorize activism, or activist rhetoric. I'm also open to possibilities that haven't occurred to me yet.

Interested students can learn more about my research (and activist) interests from the English Department website.

Fall 2018

Race and Space: Afrofuturism and Speculative Representations of Blackness

Dr. Michael Burns

Race and Space will engage texts of various genres (including novel, short story, film, and music) to explore how the Black experience is represented within and related to the literary and cultural aesthetic of Afrofuturism, which considers human relationships to outer space and speculative

futures. One motivating question for the course will be: In what ways do these speculative literary and cultural representations of race inform our understandings of the Black experience? Further, as we stand on the verge of colonizing Mars—the very idea should give pause—what is the contribution of the humanist? How might more careful considerations of literary and cultural texts that address issues related to race beyond terra firma inform our thinking about the human condition and human rights in this world?

Interested students can learn more about Dr. Burns’s research interests from the English Department website.

Truth & Authenticity in Contemporary Creative Nonfiction Dr. Kristine Ervin

This course will explore the slippery nature of the creative nonfiction genre, with its blurred and blurring boundaries; with its swirling questions surrounding Truth/truth, facts, memory, subjectivity, and aesthetics; and with its often implied contract with its readers. Students will engage with contemporary creative nonfiction texts (memoir and the personal essay) and with current scholarship regarding the central questions of the genre. Additionally, students will investigate the ways in which the postmodern perspective, with its attention to multiplicity and fragmentation, informs the genre’s definitions and complexities. Along with exploring the subject of truth and authenticity through a formal research project, students will also practice in the art of writing creative nonfiction, thereby pushing the line of inquiry through multiple lenses to answer or to complicate the question: “What does truth in nonfiction mean and does it even matter?”

Will the Revolution be on Snapchat? Understanding the Rhetorics of Online Participation Dr. Andy Famiglietti

It has become a commonplace that online media “empower” ordinary people to participate in the creation of texts that broadcast media allowed them to only consume. While both celebrations and condemnation of that participation abound, real understanding of what a participatory media environment means for us as writers, readers, and citizens is scarce. This course focuses on building your understanding of the origins and implications of online participation as a rhetorical situation. We will read scholars from a variety of disciplines who explain the historical origins of online participation, the cultural and technological forces that have shaped participatory media, the rhetorical strategies that users employ within this environment, and the political and social implications of these strategies. You will go beyond the literature, and consult online primary sources to write case studies exploring the ways activists, scholars, journalists, and others engage with the opportunities and challenges of participatory media. A multi-modal writing project will give you the opportunity to apply what you've learned during the class to a political or social issue meaningful to you.

For further information about Dr. Famiglietti’s research interests, consult his listing in the English Department faculty directory, or his personal webpage: www.copyvillain.org

The Phenomenon of Chica Lit Dr. Erin Hurt

This course contextualizes the literary genre of chica lit (Latina chick lit) within various literary, critical, and social movement. The protagonists of these novels are mostly upper-middle class, college-educated second-generation Latinas whose concerns about culture and identity matter as much, if not less, than love lives and careers. This representation of Latinidad differs from, and positions itself against, canonical Latina literature. To show students how this genre intervenes in the field of Latina literature, the course will examine literary works that focus on “conventional” themes such as social protest, poverty, immigration, and assimilation. The course will then move to the generic conventions of chick lit and chica lit. The course will end by reading chica lit novels alongside third wave feminism and postfeminism. Throughout the course, students will be asked to trace the ways in which literary Latinas define themselves and their culture, and the ways in which class and genre affect these representations.

Monsters, Medicine, Media **Dr. Kristin Kondrlik**

Fears of scientific progress and gaps in medical knowledge, coupled with social and cultural changes, have often manifested in the appearance of “monstrous” figures: from Frankenstein to Slenderman. These “medical monsters” have been shaped by the technological evolution of print, visual, and digital genres. Drawing on frameworks from print and digital culture studies, students will analyze how textual genres shaped and were shaped by society’s attitudes about medicine in the last two centuries. This course examines various genres, including newspapers, medical journals, radio dramas, movies, online forums, and even the design of haunted houses. We will read four novels (*Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *The Haunting of Hill House*, and *World War Z*), watch three movies (*Get Out*, *Freaks*, and *The Night of the Living Dead*), and discuss interactions between medicine and print and digital media with relationship to “monstrous” figures such as Jack the Ripper. Students will be able to complete a research project on the “monster” of their choice.

Interested students can find further information about Dr. Kondrlik on her personal website (kekondrlik.wordpress.com) or the English Department website.

Lives in Fiction and Nonfiction: Race, Gender, Ethnicity, and Language. **Dr. Bill Lalicker**

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao (2007) tells how a Dominican-American college student nerd’s adventures in love and popular culture have heartbreaking consequences when the fraught politics of his ancestral land intersect with a curse originating where indigenous culture meets European colonialism. Diaz’s narrator observes Oscar (and cultural positions on race and gender) in multiple languages and dialects, with historical footnotes in academic discourse. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (2010) investigates race in America through the life of an African American woman whose cells, taken without her permission, were reproduced after her 1951 cancer death to be traded and sold to create cell lines establishing most of the life-saving cancer research of the past six decades, without her family’s knowledge or remuneration. Skloot’s riveting, sensitive first-person search for the facts, framed by interactions with the Lacks family, reveals struggles of trust originating in differences of race, class, and dialect, but struggles that bend toward truth and justice. We’ll explore how each award-winning book—one fiction, one nonfiction—illuminates complex discursive representations of racial, gendered, and ethnic identity.

Postmodern Aesthetics **Dr. Paul Maltby**

This course will explore the aesthetics of postmodern culture from the interdisciplinary and conjunctural perspectives opened up by cultural studies. Attention will focus on artistic innovation, the social conditions that have enabled the emergence of postmodern art, the status of art and artists in the postmodern period, the relationships between postmodern art and postmodern theory, and the political and ideological implications of postmodern aesthetics and lifestyle. Part I of the course will examine postmodern fiction: avant-pop writing in the postmodern media culture (Mark Leyner); postmodern strategies of self-reflexiveness (Grace Paley, Tim O'Brien, Donald Barthelme); postmodern detective fiction (Paul Auster); postmodern feminist autobiography (Carol Shields); black postmodernism (Ishmael Reed). Part II of the course will examine the television aesthetics of postmodernism (e.g. self-reflexiveness, genre-splicing, parodic intertextuality), with a special focus on the landmark series *Twin Peaks*, adult animated sitcoms such as *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*, comic science fiction such as *Mystery Science Theater* and *Rick and Morty*, and experiments in music video by Spike Jonze, Michel Gondry, and Chris Cunningham. Part III of the course will examine other postmodern aesthetic tendencies, namely: conceptual art (Kosuth, Hammons, Banksy, Christo, Holzer); postmodern camp and kitsch (Pierre et Gilles, Murakami, Koons); the nostalgic sensibility (e.g. the heritage industry and retrochic fashion); postmodern currents of music (John Zorn, Michael Nyman, Steve Reich, Talking Heads); the aestheticization of everyday life (e.g. commodity aesthetics, promotional culture, and lifestyle). (N.B. Postmodern Film is taught as a separate seminar.)

Literature and Culture of the Civil Rights Era **Dr. Andrew Sargent**

The Civil Rights/Black Power era of the 1950s-70s was a watershed period in US history, with a legacy that continues to be felt—if not fully understood—today. While many of us have a passing familiarity with the era's iconic players and images, our aim in this class will be to achieve a deeper understanding of the period by examining key works of literature and culture that sought to shape the black freedom struggle as it unfolded and to assess the movement's aims, achievements, and shortcomings in the decades after. To that end, we'll be digging into speeches, novels, plays, autobiographies, poems, and other works by Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Harper Lee, William Melvin Kelley, Claudette Colvin, Anne Moody, Amiri Baraka, Alice Walker, and many others. We'll also discuss photographs, documentaries, and recent feature films (such as *Night Catches Us* and *The Butler*) that help us visualize the movement's complexities and contradictions. Paying special attention to how the Civil Rights era exists in memory—particularly in the Black Lives Matter era—our critical approach will blend cultural studies, critical race theory, and whiteness studies, along with attentive close reading and discussion of our primary texts. Students will come out of this class with a richer grasp of the racial politics of both the 1960s and today; greater confidence in expressing their ideas in writing and in oral presentations; and valuable experience in conducting original research. Students interested in learning more about Dr. Sargent's research interests are encouraged to view his faculty profile on the English Department website: https://www.wcupa.edu/academics/sch_cas.eng/aSargent.aspx

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