

Graduate Course Descriptions 2009-10

FALL 2009

ENG 615 Advanced Studies in Literary Theory: Feminist Media Studies

Carol Stabile

Feminist media studies has followed a different trajectory than that of feminist film studies and theory. This course begins with feminist media studies' departure from feminist film theory, particularly the sets of questions that feminist media studies originally raised about spectatorship, historiography, reception, context, and identity. Beginning with radio and television and concluding with feminist approaches to new media, the course will explore feminist media studies' engagement with theoretical traditions like semiotics, psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, Marxism, and cultural studies, as well as its complex methodological trajectory.

ENG 630 Renaissance Literature: The Faerie Queene

George E. Rowe

We will examine most (but not quite all) of Spenser's massive poem within the following contexts: 1) personal (as Spenser's attempt to create under Elizabeth I a cultural space that granted influence and perhaps even political power to poets); 2) historical (as the quintessential English example of the unstable set of attitudes and practices typically gathered under the heading "Christian Humanism"); 3) generic (as a janus-like hybrid of epic and romance motifs and concerns); and 4) theoretical (in relation both to various notions of allegory and allegorical interpretation and to recent critical investigations of sexuality and the body). Two short papers + one long paper.

ENG 660 American Literature: Contemporary American Literature

Elizabeth Wheeler

A survey of American poetry, short stories, plays, speeches, memoirs, and novels from 1940-present. Authors read include Eugene O'Neill, Joseph Heller, Sylvia Plath, Martin Luther King, Jr., Toni Morrison, Sandra Cisneros, Art Spiegelman, and Jeffrey Eugenides. This seminar incorporates readings from the Ph.D. examination list and welcomes students studying for the exams as well as any graduate student interested in contemporary American literature. We will consider a variety of theoretical frameworks and critical perspectives and a variety of methods for teaching these contemporary classics [a very American oxymoron!]. The class also has a strong focus on students' independent research.

ENG 670 Modern Lit: The Environmental Imagination in Contemporary Literature & Media

Allison Carruth

Can we identify an "environmental imagination," to cite Lawrence Buell, in the period of postmodern and postcolonial literatures, on the one hand, and transgenic organisms and virtual realities, on the other? If so, how do writers and media artists imagine the nonhuman environment at a time when the core concepts of Western environmentalism and ecology are undergoing a thorough critique? This seminar will address these questions by considering contemporary literature and media in dialogue with three key concepts: biodiversity, biotechnology, and environmental risk. In doing so, we will consider how ethical and ecological principles inflect the environmental imagination in the period since 1960. Focusing on the Americas, our primary texts will include novels, digital poems, films, gene artwork, and popular science writing. We will also read several theorists/critics in depth, including Ulrich Beck, Lawrence Buell, N. Katherine Hayles, Ursula K. Heise, and Dana Phillips.

ENG 690 Introduction to Graduate Studies in English

Elizabeth Bohls/ Karen Ford

Required for Ph.D. students, optional for M.A. students. A rigorous introduction to scholarly writing and speaking through the process of conceiving, researching, writing, and revising one long paper and presenting this work as a conference-style paper at the end of the term. Introduces key terms and concepts of literary and cultural theory and issues in the profession of scholarship and teaching in higher education. Faculty members will make guest appearances to discuss readings important to their intellectual formation. Requirements: two short papers, an oral report and a longer paper.

ENG 691 Composition Theory: K. Burke

John Gage

The purpose of this seminar is to explore in depth the philosophy of language developed by Kenneth Burke over his career. He is arguably the most important rhetorical critic of literature in the 20th Century, and a fascinating character

whose theories of symbolic action have influenced critical theory, aesthetics, sociological thought, political and economic science, and the philosophy of language. He is sometimes portrayed as a precursor to deconstruction, but we'll see about that. We will read (or read from) *Counter-Statement*, *Permanence and Change*, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, *A Grammar of Motives*, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, *Language as Symbolic Action*, and *The Rhetoric of Religion*, along with some uncollected essays. Students are encouraged to make connections according to their own interest, in weekly writings and a final essay, having first tried to take Burke at his word.

ENG 695 Film Studies: Film Performance & Racialized Sexualities

Priscilla Ovalle

This course explores performance within the cinematic frame. We begin with an introduction to the formal and cultural analyses of film, paying careful attention to the conventions of genre, racialized/sexualized representation, and bodily movement. By focusing on Hollywood film, we will identify how complex and overlapping identities like race, gender, sexuality and class are embodied within and about the United States. We will also explore methods of critique that engage hegemonic representations and their ideological core without overlooking the agency and power of the performer. Course lectures and discussions will primarily center on readings and screenings of popular films, but may also include television programs, publicity, reviews, etc. Coursework will be organized around research, writing, and pedagogical methods related to our theme.

FLR 681 History & Theory of Folklore Research

Daniel Wojcik

WINTER 2010

ENG 615 Advanced Studies in Literary Theory: Queer Theory & its Discontents

Michael Hames-Garcia

This course will address critical theories of sexuality, with an eye toward their intersections with each other and with theories of class, coloniality, gender, race, and ethnicity. The academic field of "queer theory" was christened in the early 1990s and citation practices quickly ensconced a holy trinity of foundational theorists: "Foucault, Sedgwick, and Butler." This course will study the emergence of queer theory (including texts by these three theorists), but alongside other intellectual traditions that preceded, emerged alongside, followed, and/or overlapped with it: e.g., lesbian feminism, women of color feminism, transnational feminist theory, gay liberation theories, queer postcolonial studies, and queer of color critique. Many of the readings are textually dense and presume some previous knowledge of literary theory and/or continental philosophy. Students should therefore plan to devote some extra time to reading for this course. Texts might include the following: Foucault's *History of Sexuality*; Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*; Butler's *Gender Trouble* and/or *Bodies That Matter*; Muñoz's *Disidentifications*; Garber's *Identity Poetics*; Stoler's *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*; Johnson and Henderson's *Black Queer Studies*; Ferguson's *Aberrations in Black*; and/or Frye's *Politics of Reality*.

ENG 620 Medieval Literature: Chaucer & Dante

Warren Ginsberg

We will examine works by the two greatest poets of the Latin Middle Ages, Dante and Chaucer, as well as some of the modes of criticism that have been brought to bear on them. From Dante we will read *Vita Nova* and selections from the *Commedia*; from Chaucer, we will read some early works that show Dante's influence ("The Book of the Duchess," "The House of Fame"), and *Troilus and Criseyde*, and selections from *The Canterbury Tales*. We will read Dante in translation (with facing Italian for the *Comedy*), Chaucer in Middle English.

ENG 645 18th Century Literature: The Eighteenth Century in/and Theory

Elizabeth Bohls

Theorists of various stripes have seen the eighteenth century as a time of significant change – epistemological, social, cultural and political – for Britain and Europe. We will read theoretical materials alongside primary literary texts in three areas of interest. We'll first trace the modern public sphere, whose transformation Jürgen Habermas locates in London coffeehouses and Paris salons, through the periodical essays of Addison and Steele; Mary Wortley Montagu's travel letters epitomize a gendered counter-public. The Atlantic world cuts across nation-states and continents, joining them in networks that circulate bodies, goods, and ideas. Paul Gilroy and Joseph Roach theorize the consequences of transatlantic circulation, which we'll consider on the examples of John Dryden's *Indian Emperor* and Alexander Pope's "Windsor-Forest." Ian Baucom's recent *Specters of the Atlantic* draws on Marxist and postcolonial theory to posit the voyage of the *Zong* – the slave ship that in 1781 jettisoned 132 live slaves for insurance purposes – as epitomizing a logic

of violence and capital central to Atlantic modernity in the “long twentieth century.” Finally, theorists such as Gilroy and Roxann Wheeler have fruitfully historicized the modern concept of “race” in ways we will test through readings of *Robinson Crusoe* and Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative*.

ENG 650 19th Century Literature: Thoreau’s Modernities

William Rossi

This seminar will attempt to combine sharp focus on a single author’s career with a broad contextual frame of analysis applicable to other writers of his time, place, or philosophical orientations. We will study Henry Thoreau’s major writings in relation both to the American Transcendentalist movement in which they were written and to defining moments in the history of their 19th, 20th, and 21st century reception. At the same time, we will be concerned to assess how Thoreau’s books and essays register, resist, and redirect the various forces of modernization they seek to engage, including the diverse ideals associated with political autonomy, specialization, science, and especially secularization.

Primary readings may include: *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (selections), “Civil Disobedience,” “Slavery in Massachusetts,” “Walking,” *Walden, Cape Cod*, “Wild Apples,” “Autumnal Tints,” and “The Succession of Forest Trees,” among others.

ENG 660 American Literature: Cultural Studies in the Borderlands

David Vazquez

As the Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa argues in her landmark *Borderlands/La frontera*, “Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates.” This theory of culture suggests that the “version of reality” that operates in the borderlands is slightly askew from the versions that exist in mainstream culture. This course takes Anzaldúa’s characterization of culture in the borderlands as a jumping off point to consider border cultures of all kinds (physical, theoretical, spiritual, etc.). In addition to the U.S./Mexico border, we will also consider borders between such realms as the physical world and cyberspace, male and female, gay and straight, and a variety of other encounters with difference. In accordance with this eclectic approach, we will examine a variety of academic and popular culture sources, including literary texts (both theoretical and fictional), popular films, music, and visual culture in order to understand how border culture constitutes a complex space of resistance for a variety of people. We will examine work by Anzaldúa, Chela Sandoval, Louis Althusser, Jean Baudrillard, Helena María Viramontes, Sandra Cisneros, John Rechy, Ramón Saldívar, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, the Wachowski Brothers, Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland, and a variety of visual artists, some of whom are anonymous.

ENG 670 Modern Literature: Writing Queer 1880-1960

Mary Wood

This seminar will explore transatlantic queer modernism as it developed during this crucial period when the writings of Krafft-Ebing and other sexologists were gaining popularity and challenging the dominance of religious discourse over sexuality. We will examine conversations among texts and writers in the context of changing understandings of sexuality within modernism on the one hand and present-day re-readings by queer theorists on the other. Selected writers will include Sui-Sin Far, Djuna Barnes, Oscar Wilde, Andre Gide, Herman Melville, Nella Larsen, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, excerpts from *The Ladder*.

ENG 670 Modern Literature: W.B. Yeats: Man, Mage, Myth

Mark Quigley

This seminar will examine the prolific writing and remarkable cultural legacy of W.B. Yeats. We will explore the long trajectory of his half-century poetic career as he moves from the romantic nationalism of the Celtic Twilight to the modernism of his later career. Considering his role as the central figure of the Irish Literary Revival, we will reflect on his approach to the question of how to develop a distinct national literature within the context of a late-imperial paradigm and how this, in turn, shapes the contours of writing and culture in the postcolonial era. How might we understand Irish writing “after Yeats” and in what ways might the Irish “Counter Revival” and the ongoing debates over Yeats’s legacy illuminate some of the broader struggles within postcolonial literary aesthetics, both in Ireland and elsewhere? As part of this exploration, we will look at Yeats’s dramatic works and his often controversial role in founding and developing the world-renowned Abbey Theatre. We will also look at selections from Yeats’s mystical and autobiographical writing as a means of tracing some of the broader sources giving rise to his intricate theories of history and aesthetics and the ways both shaped his politics in ways that were at once fascinating, strange, and disturbing.

ENG 670 Modern Literature: Evolution & the Modern

Suzanne Clark

Readings: Darwin, and texts by figures who were arguing about the theory of evolution and working out its implications: William James (*Varieties of Religious Experience*), anarchist evolutionary theorist Pyotr Kropotkin (*Mutual*

Aid), together with well-recognized modernist texts differently influenced by the Darwinian revolution and by the materialist and pragmatist turn (for example: Eugene O'Neill, Gertrude Stein, Willa Cather, Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Zora Neale Hurston, Ursula Le Guin). Texts from other writers will help us understand developments: Freud, Skinner.

Assignments: Class presentations, annotated bibliography, research paper.

This class will pursue an investigation into how Darwinian evolution entered into the rhetoric and discourses of 20th century modernism and modernity. In the 19th century one effect of Darwin could be seen in the “Death of God” effected by naturalism and a materialist science—the fatalism of naturalist writers from Zola and Hardy to Jack London, the radicalism of Nietzsche.) Another was certainly to buttress the case for Spencerian cultural evolution, or “progress”. However, as this class will trace, the revolutions in poetics and the arts associated with twentieth century modernisms were “new” with a difference; in an anarchism of style and often of politics, cut loose not only from 19th century moral considerations, but also from traditional formal structures of literature, and emulating scientific skepticism about causal narrative. The turn to the “modern” found cultural, literary and religious history taking up the objective methods not of theology but of science. The turn was perhaps to the materiality of art—to paint, forms, language, bodies, the technical reproduction of movement in film. It was not only anarchic, but—especially in the (Darwinian) influence of William James—*pragmatist*, as Louis Menand’s *Metaphysical Club* demonstrates.

Evolution carries into the modern both a revolutionary, anarchic freedom from narrative, especially from narratives of progress, and a dangerously credible idea of evolutionary “fitness” that joined cultural and biological evolution together and produced efforts to improve the human that involved eugenics and racism. Race is at the center of debates. Finally, note that the arts and the new technologies of representation—photography and especially film—count a great deal in this history. The “modern” is a rupture with the traditions and proprieties of representation. That rupture is visible in the way insects and animals are illustrated—not in the moralizing narratives of emblem books and bestiaries, but as objects laid out for maximum visibility from all perspectives. I’d argue that modern art is influenced by scientific and technical illustration—see, for example, the work of Max Ernst—and, of course, by the entry of art into what Walter Benjamin called “the Age of Mechanical Representation.” So you will be encouraged to take this into account, to conceive of projects that include the visual.

ENG 695 Film Studies: Cinema & Modernity

Michael Aronson

Already my eyes and ears too, from force of habit, are beginning to see and hear everything in the guise of this rapid, quivering, ticking mechanical reproduction. I don’t deny it; the outward appearance is light and vivid. We move, we fly. And the breeze stirred by our flight produces an alert, joyous, keen agitation, and sweeps away thought...Outside there is a continuous glare, a incessant giddiness: everything flickers and disappears...All this furious haste is not natural, all this flickering and vanishing of images; there lies beneath it a machine that seems to pursue it, frantically screaming.

- Pirandello, *Shoot! The Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio, Cinematograph Operator* (1915)

This seminar seeks to explore the thesis that “modernity can best be understood as inherently cinematic.” The modern impulse gave us captivating technology and dark anxiety, rampant mobility and a world filled with strangers, the futuristic city and a fragmentation of experience individual and collective. Into this amalgamation of cultural, technical, and philosophical richness came the movies—the quintessence of modernism—with a vast public appeal and a jarring new vision of what life could be.

Whether by displaying new gender and class identities, by describing relations between the individual and the state, or by illuminating the speed and freneticism that was rapidly becoming a part of everyday life, this seminar will historically analyze and critically assess the relationship between the emergence of film and the broader culture of modernity as it developed in the late 19th and early 20th century.

SPRING 2010

ENG 620 Medieval Literature: Oral Lit: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern

Martha Bayless

This course will explore old and new examples of the oldest form of literature: literature composed, told, and transmitted orally. Texts will include the *Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, the Old Irish epic *The Tain*, and modern examples such as jokes, urban legends, and the work of storytellers such as Garrison Keillor and Spalding Gray. In particular we’ll examine the ways memory and cognition shape form and narrative. The course will involve both literary analysis and readings and experiments in cognition. Although the literature comes from many periods, the course will emphasize medieval literature and therefore fulfills the medieval requirement.

ENG 645 18th Century Literature: Ballad Revival and the Emergence of Ethno-Poetics **Dianne Dugaw**

This course will consider the emergence in 18th-century Britain of a literary and scholarly study, collection, and imitation of popular songs. This movement had important repercussions for literary study and practice, including the shaping of Romanticism and the development of children's literature. In addition, it marked the beginnings of an ethnographic approach to cultural materials and the study of the traditional expressive arts of ordinary people. This course traces this movement in literary works of the period and in successive analytic approaches to the study of traditional and popular collective forms. In addition to reading anonymous popular ballads and tales, we will study works by such authors as John Gay, Joseph Addison, Anne Finch, James Macpherson, Thomas Percy, Samuel Johnson, James Boswell, and Robert Burns. Work for the course will include a midterm essay, a reading journal, a seminar presentation, and a final paper.

ENG 650 19th Century Literature: The Discourses of Bleak House **Richard Stein**

Sometimes regarded as Dickens' greatest novel, *Bleak House* has been at the center of critical discussion of his work for the past few decades. Reasons are not hard to find. The novel situates itself among some of the most urgent social questions of the period and experiments with some of its most innovative fictional forms. This seminar, then, explores *Bleak House* as an extraordinary novel and as a nexus of contemporary discourse---on the city and its underworld, on women, on crime and detection, on philanthropy, and on the law. Readings will include nineteenth-century writing by Ruskin and Mayhew, Collins and Barrett-Browning, and twentieth-century theory from Benjamin, de Certeau, and Foucault. With all of this, students registering for the course should plan to read *Bleak House* at least once before the beginning of the term and at least once again during the seminar itself.

ENG 660 American Lit: Debating Multiculturalism: The Case of Asian American Literature **David Li**

This seminar studies the theory and practice of multiculturalism in relation to the reconstruction of American literary studies. We shall investigate the rise of multiculturalism with the advent of late capitalism, by posing the overarching question of how the unprecedented migration of capital, people, and technology on a global scale influences the transformation of the nation-state, and accordingly the notions of national culture. By reading both its creative and theoretical texts, we shall construct the brief history of Asian American literature as a particular case through which to illuminate the parallel development: the critical shift in literary and cultural studies from an "identity politics" to a "subjectless discourse" corresponds closely to the political shift from (a nation-state centered) liberalism to (a globally disseminated) neoliberalism. In these contexts, "multiculturalism" has become a vexed term, sometimes helpful and most times hazy, capable of contesting dominant culture on the one hand, while on the other hand, liable to conflating the aesthetic and political and concealing the roles of class and capital.

The mapping of Asian American literary studies and the reading of its dynamic texts will help a better appreciation of its formal inventions and political tensions. It will also complicate our understanding of the location of the "literary" in the world at large. For this reason perhaps the seminar would be uniquely suitable for students whose interest may vary in different national literatures, periods, and genres, but whose intellectual curiosity about the literary culture in general remains identical.

ENG 670 Modern Literature: Sciences of Modernism **Paul Peppis**

This seminar considers intersections between literature and science from 1880 to 1945 by reading a selection of modernist literary texts that engage "scientific" concerns alongside a selection of modern science texts (most of which are little known today, but were widely read at the time). Primary readings include literary texts by Zora Neale Hurston, Mina Loy, Rebecca West, and Virginia Woolf, and science texts by the anthropologist Ruth Benedict, the psychologist Bernard Hart, the physicist James Jeans, and the sexologist Marie Stopes. Primary readings will be supplemented with readings from recent criticism and theory in literature and science studies. The seminar requires an in-class presentation, a short paper, an annotated bibliography, and a conference length seminar paper.

ENG 695 Film Studies: Cinema and Postcoloniality **Sangita Gopal**

* Descriptions for 500-level courses are available at: <http://www.uoregon.edu/~engl/undergraduate/courses/>