Course Description & Outcomes

The tradition of Western thought, guided for 2500 years by classical thinking deriving from Plato, established numerous ideals to which all members of Western societies were expected to adapt their lives. Little explicit philosophical attention was paid to an individual’s developing his or her own, individual self as a goal worth acknowledging or achieving. It was simply assumed that the needs of society and of the given person were identical. (This is still, to an extent, and not incorrectly, assumed.)

The nineteenth century, however, witnesses several breakthroughs—in literature, politics, psychology, philosophy—toward recognition of the need of many humans “to become who they are” (rather than become the fulfillment of a social prescription) and of the validity of fulfilling this need. But it remains for the twentieth century to produce a systematic account 1) of the deleterious effects of failing to look beyond society’s requirements and toward the fulfillment of one’s own potential, and 2) of what the means might be for becoming who one is. This account is Being and Time.

Being and Time made its author, Martin Heidegger, the West’s most celebrated thinker within two years of its publication. It has not only never gone out of print but continues to spawn legions of readers (literary and cultural critics, preachers, priests, psychoanalysts, sociologists, and others) who “let [themselves] learn” from it, as well as scholars of its method, the beauty of which is to avoid a methodology, avoid rules. This is not a “how to” book. The individual is left to the individual.

This work, since it grounds the literary-critical movements of post-structuralism and deconstruction, makes familiarity with it imperative for literary critics. It thus represents the primary reading of this course.

A part of a second, later Heideggerian text, the Parmenides, also figures in the course, as do brief selections from the most recent, and exhaustive, reading of Heidegger to date—this by one of the three most influential Heidegger critics in the US (and probably the world), Stanford’s Thomas Sheehan.
What these texts offer is examined by this course’s students and instructor, both in class and in writing, for its potential to provide understandings, first of all, directed toward the individual student’s own “becoming,” and, second, toward the understanding of literary works of the student’s choosing.

Given the close in-class readings the course’s students and instructor make of these texts, the written summaries of them that students write, and the relationships to personal and literary understandings students and instructor discover via these readings and summaries, course outcomes are expected to yield usable understandings of challenging theoretical texts and the demonstrated ability to read and write across them to these understandings.

Texts:

Papers: Approximately five one-page papers.
Quizzes. Rare and announced.

FALL 2016 GRADUATE CLASSES

ENGL 5300 Theory & Practice
W 6-8:50 pm
Instructor:
This version of ENGL 5300 has two main goals. The first is to give MA and PhD students a strong framework for knowledge of world literary history. The second is to explore current trends in literary theory and current conversations in literary scholarship, via five literary texts: Shakespeare’s play Measure for Measure, the stories of Jorge Luis Borges, the poems of Emily Dickinson, SE Hinton’s novel The Outsiders, and a fifth that will be unique to each student and chosen in consultation with the class. Important secondary goals will be to explore how English and allied departments function in contemporary US higher education, and to demystify some of the institutional structures that channel the academic production of knowledge.
ENGL 5326, Whitman and Dickinson
TH 2:00-4:50 pm
Instructor: Henderson

This course explores the poetry of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson by addressing the central questions and debates that define Whitman and Dickinson Studies, respectively. We will use our study of Whitman and Dickinson to gain an understanding of 19th century American poetry more generally, addressing such phenomena as manuscript poetry, abolitionist poetry, Civil War poetry, and the influential image of the poetess. The course will also emphasize methods and techniques for teaching poetry. Assignments include bi-weekly poetry explications; a teaching presentation; one short analysis essay; and one research essay/seminar paper. This course counts for the Women and Gender Studies Certificate.

ENGL 5359: Argumentation Theory
M 6-8:50
Instructor Warren
This course provides support for GTAs teaching ENGL 1302 for the first time and prepares students to teach written argumentation more generally. Students complete the same major assignments as ENGL 1302 students and acquire instructional materials intended to help undergraduates grasp key argumentation concepts. Despite this pedagogical focus, the majority of the seminar will be spent reading those argumentation theorists who have been most influential in composition, including Aristotle, Perelman, Toulmin, Rogers, and Burke. The course also includes some exposure to more recent argumentation theory.

ENGL 5360 – Contemporary Critical Theory Hermeneutics
Online course
Instructor: Krajewski

This course will be cross-listed with PHIL 5392 and PHIL 4381. The focus for the course will be hermeneutics. Hermeneutics has to do with the very nature of interpretation itself as well as the scope and significance of interpretation/understanding. Think of hermeneutics as a site of operations deep within the most subtle, intricate, and overlooked levels of common language. Hermeneutics has a long history, reaching back at least as far as ancient Greece. Its guiding figure is Hermes, god of language and of thieves, and reportedly the most mischievous of the Olympian gods. Keeping in mind that heritage, we will explore, among other topics, non-normative modes of discourse, including the unsaid, the hint, the spell, and ponder linkages that exceed the capacities of interpretive models, explicit and implicit, governing the world of the Posties (posthumanists, postmodernists, postcolonialists, postfeminists, postgenderists, postcyberians).
A new focus was brought to bear on hermeneutics in the West’s modern period, in the wake of the Reformation with its displacement of responsibility for interpreting the Bible from the Church to individual Christians generally. Please note that this will not be a course in biblical hermeneutics, though readings will include the tensions between Maimonides and Spinoza about understanding scripture, and historical and philological considerations in biblical study (applicable to textual study in general) via the work of Bart Ehrman.

This course will focus on differing theories and concomitant practices concerned with “semiotics,” “encryption or figuration,” “intention,” “reading formations,” “esotericism,” “visual ideology,” “rebellion or revolution,” “legal hermeneutics,” and “translation.” Crucial are possible relations between fiction and non-fiction, and among philosophy, theology, psychoanalysis, and political theory. Other authors may include: Althusser, Benjamin, G. Bruns, Anne Carson, Stanley Cavell, J. Drucker, Eco, Gadamer, C. Ginzburg, Gramsci, Heidegger, Husserl, Henry James, Jameson, Kafka, Karatani, Nicole Loraux, Lacan, Lenin, Nietzsche, Iain Pears, de Romilly, D. Sayers, Shakespeare, Shestov, Gertrude Stein, G. Waite, Žižek. The web space for the course can be found here: [http://brucekrajewski.net/courses/ENGL5360](http://brucekrajewski.net/courses/ENGL5360)

ENGL 5389: Topics in Teaching Composition
Th 6:00-8:50
Instructor: Warren

The main objective and first priority of this course is to prepare new GTAs to teach ENGL 1301 for the first time this semester. To that end, the course is strongly practical, with students completing the same major assignments as ENGL 1301 students, trying out various styles of commenting on student writing, norming their grading procedures to align with program standards, and developing in-class activities to support the growth of undergraduate writers.

A secondary objective of this course is to familiarize students with the history, theory, and research that constitute composition studies. As the semester progresses, students learn contemporary “best practices” for composition teaching, and the ENGL 1301 and 1302 curriculum is examined as an attempt to embody said practices.

Taken together, the dual emphasis of this course should help students develop a philosophy of composition teaching and prepare them to teach first-year composition at a wide variety of institutions.
ENGL 6335: Early Modern Women and Literary Production  
T 2-4:50 pm  
Instructor: Tigner

In this course, we will be reading early modern women’s texts, both in published and in manuscript form, to consider the cultural and political nodal points of gendered writing in a highly patriarchal society. Most women’s writing courses have been primarily concerned with tradition literature: poetry, non-fiction prose, plays, and novels written by women who have formed the canon in this period, as established by feminist scholars in the 1980s and 90s. We will be reading these genres, but also next to this canonical view of women’s literature we will also be exploring other kinds of writing, such as diaries, receipt books (what the early moderns called cook books), commonplace books and letters to investigate a larger sense of literacy, writing and the concerns of women in this period. This class will participate in two related digital humanities projects: Early Modern Recipes Online Collective (EMROC) run by a group of international scholars interested in recipes and with Early Modern Manuscripts Online (EMMO) which is the project of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC. In both of these cases, students will be transcribing and coding the manuscripts to create accessible databases. Students will also study 16th and 17th century handwriting (palaeography) so that they will have the skill set to work in the digital archives. This course counts for the Women and Gender Studies Certificate.

ENGL 6340: Heidegger  
W 6-8:50  
Instructor: Luanne Frank

Dear reader: You could find yourself bored by the following course description to the point of opening a vein. I would have been at your stage of this game. A possible reason for the feathers in your mouth: key words here—“being” and “truth”—until one encounters them in Heidegger, can seem lifeless, washed up, threadbare, with little resonance on the page. With each mention you may deflate a little more. Heidegger, in many of his works, re-invests these words with the life that the philosophical tradition since Plato—in its admirable search for absolute, for something more reliable than life or human beings to depend on—had allowed to seep out of these words.

But it is typically not the meaning of such words that brings us first to Heidegger. It is rather the locus of their grounding and the direction in which Heidegger would point each of us. We ourselves turn out to be these words’ groundings, we and our languages—these, not sets of heaven-sent abstractions. And it is to ourselves, our becoming who each of us, as a unique individual, is, or has the potential to be, to which Heidegger shows the way. To become who one is far from a unique goal, but Heidegger brings the idea of doing so to catch fire as perhaps no philosopher had before him. He made it seem not merely possible, but imperative, and his doing so in Being and Time would yield great names in the Post-Structuralist movement: Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Herbert Marcuse, and their intellectual children.
and grandchildren, each of whom called the largely purist Western tradition into question in her or his own way (as had Heidegger) and broke through its constrictions. Heidegger’s thought also inspired the work of his best-known student, Hans Georg Gadamer, who re-invigorated “hermeneutics” as a literary-critical byword. These are some of the reasons we read Heidegger in an English department. Though not every literary critic reads him, contemporary criticism is unthinkable without him.

The present course on Heidegger, arguably the most prominent thinker of the 20th-century West, focuses first on a single, basic work of his, *Being and Time*, his magnum opus, which had made him the best-known philosopher in Europe within two years of its publication and would lead to an ongoing attempt on his part at a wholesale reformation of Western thought, an attempt that has to a large extent succeeded, though not as he might have hoped and not without being called into question. We shall look at some of the questions directed at it after our examinations of *Being and Time*. The course will also read Heidegger’s *Parmenides*, one of the most significant of many of his later works, and will also look at examples of other of Heidegger’s briefer, also especially well-known works, collected in the volume *Pathmarks*.

These works together will allow us to note, along with much else, Heidegger’s repeated focus on the themes of the human individual as the basis of all knowing, on Truth and its relation to Being, and on the startling nature of Truth. One entertains the hope that by the close of this course, we, its participants, will be almost ready to begin to read Heidegger.

Requirements: Five one-page (11- or 14-inch, single-spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman) papers and a term paper of the student’s choice

