

## Spring 2010 - COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

COURSE NO: **5300-001**

DAY & TIME: **W 6-9.00pm**

COURSE TITLE: **CRITICAL AND LITERARY THEORY**

INSTRUCTOR: **MAY**

DESCRIPTION: This course will cover a wide range of methodological and theoretical approaches to literary and cultural criticism. We will begin with a reading of Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, and work our way through a number of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century literary theorists and cultural critics. The aim of the course is to familiarize students with various trends and methodological tools useful for the practice of English studies.

TEXTS: *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (Ed. Leitch), *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music* (Nietzsche)

COURSE NO: **5311-001**

DAY & TIME: **M 6-9.00pm**

COURSE TITLE: **FOUNDATIONS OF RHETORIC AND COMPOSITIONS**

INSTRUCTOR: **J. WARREN**

DESCRIPTION: The foundations of rhetoric and composition reveal some cracks. Rhetoric took a hit from Plato and has since had to defend itself against accusations that it is at best empty and ornamental and at worst manipulative and propagandistic. Meanwhile, composition as we know it emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when colleges grudgingly began to offer a first-year course to complete the writing instruction students should have received (so the thinking went) at the secondary level. Even now, as rhetoric and composition studies have become legitimate research fields, and as Rhet/Comp has become a "hot" field in English studies, most Rhet/Comp courses are taught at the introductory level by instructors who are poorly paid and often poorly trained. In this course we'll survey the history of rhetoric with an eye towards its influence on composition, and we'll survey the history of composition as an outgrowth of the rhetorical tradition. By the end you should have a fairly thorough understanding of how Rhet/Comp came to be.

TEXTS: *The Rhetorical Tradition* (Bizzell, Herzberg)

COURSE NO: **5322-001**

DAY & TIME: **W 6-9.00pm**

COURSE TITLE: **AMERICAN ROMANTICISM AND NATURE**

INSTRUCTOR: **MATHESON**

DESCRIPTION: American Studies scholar Perry Miller famously called the United States "nature's nation," implying not only that early American wilderness was often contrasted with settled and civilized Europe, but also that many Americans imagined their national identity in terms of a unique relation to the natural world. This course explores ideas about nature in nineteenth-century American literature, especially American Romanticism, often associated with new ways of thinking about and valuing the natural world, even as it was beginning to come under pressure from an expanding human presence. We will read such writers as Thoreau, Whitman, Dickinson, Poe, and Melville, exploring the porous boundary between nature and culture. We will also

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consider some earlier American precursors, including naturalists William Bartram and John James Audubon, looking particularly at Audubon's extraordinary ornithological paintings (as well as other early American naturalist artwork). One particular focus throughout the course will be the distinction between humans and animals. Nineteenth-century America was a time in which the very notion of species was being negotiated, with profound implications for how humans thought of themselves, as well as how they conceived of other animals. We will read Melville's novel *Moby-Dick* as an extended meditation on human attempts to make sense of animal otherness, and on the troubled, often violent history of relations between humans and nonhuman animals. The course will end with Sarah Orne Jewett's regionalist fiction as a late response to these Romantic rethinkings of our relation to nature, and an anticipation of twentieth-century ideas about the loss or preservation of natural environments and their threatened inhabitants, human and nonhuman.

TEXTS: *Travels of William Bartram* (Bartram), *Nature and Other Essays* (Emerson), *Walden* (Thoreau), *Leaves of Grass* (Whitman), *Moby-Dick* (Melville), *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (Jewett)

COURSE NO: **5324-001**

DAY & TIME: **R 6-9.00pm**

COURSE TITLE: **ROWSON/SEDGWICK/STOWE**

INSTRUCTOR: **HENDERSON**

DESCRIPTION: This course examines the writing and careers of three of early America's most important and influential women writers: Susanna Rowson, Catherine Maria Sedgwick, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Each of these authors has experienced a revival of critical interest in the past few decades, spearheaded by feminist critics and accompanied by invaluable recovery work. We will read not only the most famous and best known of each author's novels, but also delve into some of their lesser-known works, including non-novelistic writing such as advice literature, pedagogies, periodical publications, etc. The course will provide an introduction to each author but will also engage with larger, field-defining questions about recovery, canonicity, and the predominance of the novel.

REQUIREMENTS: In addition to the standard seminar paper, students will complete a recovery project on an un-published or out-of-print text by one of these three writers.

TEXTS: *Charlotte Temple* (Rowson), *Reuben and Rachel* (Rowson), *Hope Leslie* (Sedgwick), *A New England Tale* (Sedgwick), *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Norton Critical Edition (Stowe), *Pink and White Tyranny* (Stowe)

COURSE NO: **5350-001**

DAY & TIME: **W 6-9.00pm**

COURSE TITLE: **CLASSICAL RHETORIC**

INSTRUCTOR: **RICHARDSON**

DESCRIPTION: Since the rhetorician offers to speak and to write about everything, and the philosopher tries to think about everything, they have always been rivals in their claim to provide a universal training of the mind.

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---P.O. Kristeller, "The Humanist Movement"

When Kristeller suggests that "the rhetorician offers to speak and write about everything, and the philosopher tries to think about everything . . .," our attention should be drawn not to the apparent object of both inquiries – the "everything" – but to the modes, the methods, the processes assumed for such investigations. That is, philosophers think. Rhetoricians speak and write.

Often, the result of this assumption is that philosophy is given priority over rhetoric, since one must have knowledge in order to disseminate/demonstrate and rhetoric proper is mostly the ability to organize knowledge and make it presentable. Rhetoric dresses knowledge up for an audience, makes truth attractive for polite circles. At least, that's one assumption.

This course is an introduction to the earliest traditions of rhetoric. But as we follow the grand recit of rhetoric from the Sophists to Augustine in some sense, a journey from display to interpretation – we will consider what these texts allege regarding the definition and limits of rhetoric and its relationship to/with other (ancient and contemporary) critical systems. What are the differences (if any) between rhetoric and other systems that claim a body of knowledge (philosophy, religion, politics)? Can the differences (if any) be expressed in terms of suppositions about what words (should, can) do? Toward the end of the session, we will be looking at some examples of late antique Rabbinic exegesis with an eye (or ear) toward discovering how the tradition may fit with the study of classical rhetorics.

Explicit here is the belief that the old folks are still useful, and the enduring significance of Classical rhetorical theory in and for contemporary thought will be a constant platform for discussion.

Toward these goals:

- \* Each student will produce a single-page, single-spaced response to the reading each week (depending on the tech, we may turn this into less formal blog postings).
- \* Each week, one student will present a three-page, double-spaced position statement on the readings and will lead our discussions via questions s/he has prepared.
- \* By roughly the middle of the session, each student will have produced a short (5+) exploratory paper on whatever topic s/he has chosen. Topics are relatively open, but must be approved in advance. This is in some ways a prospectus that will need to state precisely what you are intending, how you are going to do it, and should include a preliminary bibliography. A presentation version of this will be presented to the class later.
- \* Finally, at the end of the semester, each of you will submit a (15-25 page) paper on some aspect of Classical rhetoric discussed during the semester.

TEXTS: *Aristotle on Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (Aristotle, trans George A. Kennedy), *On Christian Doctrine* (Augustine, trans. D.W. Robertson), *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory*

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(Handelman), *Against the Sophists* (Isocrates, trans. George Norlin)

COURSE NO: **5380-001**

DAY & TIME: **M 6-9.00pm**

COURSE TITLE: **NEON-NOIR: FUTURE-NOIR FILM AND  
CONSTRUCTS OF THE CITY** INSTRUCTOR: **GUERTIN**

DESCRIPTION: Jerold J. Abrams argues that where film noir used to explore the 'space' of the post-War city, that aesthetic has now been translated into examinations of the 'time' of the distant future and remote past (Conard 7). Debates range as to whether film-noir was "a visual style, a tone, a genre, a generic field, a movement, a cycle, a series – or just a helpful category" of urban, post-World War II consumer culture (crimeculture.com). Was it simply an escapist way of evading the past as Frederic Jameson claims or consumer culture's way of expressing the "anxiety, [...] alienation and entrapment" (8) of the urban condition in plots with "nonlinear plots, subjective narration and multiple viewpoints" (3) as Lee Horsley argues? Growing out of post-World War II disaffection, German Expressionism and pop culture interpretations of Freudian theory, the style has experienced a revival in recent years as science fiction film (inspired by Philip K. Dick) has merged with postmodern concerns and cyberpunk aesthetics to interrogate dissolving binary categories and the erosion of certitude. We will study six films – *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner*, *Brazil*, *Dark City*, *Strange Days* and *Minority Report* – and critical theory to investigate the role of futuristic cityscapes in bringing a range of social and political issues to the fore.

TEXTS: *Detours and Lost Highways: A Map of Neo-Noir* (Hirsh), *The Philosophy of Neo-Noir* (Conard)

COURSE NO: **6332-001**

DAY & TIME: **R 6-9.00pm**

COURSE TITLE: **MODERNISM** INSTRUCTOR: **FARIS**

DESCRIPTION: This course provides an advanced introduction to the canonical texts of European Modernism, with an emphasis on the early years of the twentieth century. This is a period generally thought to contain a particularly dense concentration of innovation in literary form--the isms of the avant gardes. These innovations have continued to influence literary and critical production into the contemporary period. One might say that these are many of the texts you need to have read in order to understand much of modern and contemporary literature and criticism. We will deal with some poetry and theatre, but our main focus will be on fiction. In addition, frequent comparisons between literature and painting will increase our understanding of modernism in the arts. Topics for discussion will include stream of consciousness narration, colonialism and its (post-colonial) critics, Nietzsche's Apollo and Dionysos, Freudian fictions and the "discovery" of the unconscious, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in painting and literature, Surrealism, Primitivism, Expressionism, Existentialism, the absurd, and feminist critiques of modernism.

REQUIREMENTS: Readings; participation in seminar discussion; 2 papers--one long (20pp) and one short (5 pp); two oral presentations--one of which will be on the final paper, and one

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leading of a discussion on a critical article.

TEXTS: *Mrs. Dalloway* (Woolf), *The Wasteland* (Eliot), *Death in Venice* (Mann), *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad), *Swann's Way* (Proust), *Notes from the Underground* (Dostoyevsky), *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (Pirandello), *The Stranger* (Camus), *Ulysses* (Joyce), *Selected Poems and 4 Plays* (Yeats), *Waiting for Godot* (Beckett), *The Jewish Wife and other Short Plays* (Brecht), *The Immoralist* (Gide), *Selected Poems* (Rilke); *James Joyce's Ulysses* (Hart & Hayman). Selected critical readings. Consideration of visual artworks by Cezanne, Gauguin, Matisse, Mondrian, Monet, Munch, J.M.W. Turner, Giacometti, and others.

COURSE NO: **6335-001**

DAY & TIME: **T 2-5.00pm**

COURSE TITLE: **MEDIEVAL BODY**

INSTRUCTOR: **STODNICK**

DESCRIPTION: The body has been a topic of intense recent interest in the humanities. The thrust of this work—typified, for instance, by the scholarship of Elizabeth Grosz--has been directed toward exploding traditional notions of the inert, mute body controlled by the master consciousness of selfhood and subjectivity, and investigating instead how the body, medical discourse, architecture, and technology are entangled and mutually constituting. How much, though, is this materialist body a modern phenomenon inextricably tied to our chemical-ridden, technology-saturated contemporary environment? What happens when we subject this body to the category of history?

In order to address these questions, we will read primary texts from the medieval period, learn about archaeology and art, and gain a background in body theory. Because the medieval body, just like its modern counterpart, impinges on multiple discourses and environments, our reading will range widely in different genres, including religious treatises, history, hagiography, poetry, and drama. We will also not neglect the material evidence, familiarizing ourselves with burial practices, contemporary diseases, diet, magical belief, and religious artifacts.

TEXTS: Course pack

COURSE NO: **6370-001**

DAY & TIME: **T 6-9.00pm**

COURSE TITLE: **POSTHUMANISM: HUMAN / ANIMAL / ENVIRONMENT**

INSTRUCTOR: **ALAIMO**

DESCRIPTION: There is now a rich tradition of posthumanist thought centering on the cyborg and other technological transformations of the human. This course traces a different posthumanist trajectory beginning with Darwin's *Descent of Man*, but flourishing more recently, in cultural studies, animal studies, environmental studies, science studies, science fiction, trans-species art, and various subcultures. These posthumanisms unravel the boundaries of the human as such by emphasizing continuities between humans and other animals as well as interchanges between humans and the environment. These posthumanisms emphasize material agency, evolutionary forces,

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human-animal kinship, and other connections across species. The course will feature the work of Donna Haraway and Cary Wolfe, but also include readings by Deleuze and Guattari, Bruno Latour, Elizabeth Grosz, Karen Barad, Hiroki Azuma and others. Along with the theoretical essays we will read an autobiography, a novel, science fiction and maybe a “furry” novel. We will also discuss visual art, film, videos, and web sites as we analyze what “becoming animal” means to theorists, scientists, artists, and various subcultures. The course will take a cultural studies approach to the topic of posthumanism, considering the philosophical, ethical, and political ramifications of different manifestations of the posthuman – whether they exist in theory, literary texts, visual art, film, video, popular culture, or subcultures. The course will begin with a brief introduction to cultural studies as an academic movement and methodology.

TEXTS: *The Descent of Man* (Darwin), *The Harway Reader* (Haraway), *What is Posthumanism?* (Wolfe), *The Great Ape Project: Equality Beyond Humanity* (Cavalieri and Singer, eds), *Becoming Animal: Contemporary Art in the Animal Kingdom* (Thompson), *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals* (Azuma), *Body Toxic* (Antonetta), *Animal's People* (Sinha), *Darwin's Radio* (Bear), *Lilith's Brood* (Butler), *The Year of the Flood* (Atwood)