

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
FALL 2008 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**ENGL 501: HISTORY OF LITERARY AND CULTURAL THEORY: INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL METHODS**

**Joseph Allen Boone and Rebecca Lemon, Tuesday, 2:00-4:20 pm Course Number 32770D**

This course, taken by all entering Ph.D. students in English, serves as an introduction to critical communities, ranging from the communities of writers/theorists/artists we will engage in class, to the community of the class itself and graduate school more broadly. Professors Boone and Lemon will foster an atmosphere at once convivial and challenging, shaping an entering class of as-yet-unknown individuals into a working group of intellectual colleagues and peers. As part of this process, we will approach some fundamental concepts in literary and cultural theory through a set of focal points. These focal points concentrate on both fresh and allegedly stinky theories – what's in, what's out, and what's at stake in deciding what's in and out? In addition to exploring a wide range of theories and methodologies, we also hope to increase students' knowledge of research methods and the range of resources, from the textual to the archival, shaping literary scholarship, as well as expose students to current faculty scholarship and dissertations being written in the department. Readings, discussions, practicums, class activities, and presentations by guest visitors will be complemented by assignments including class presentations, response papers, and a variety of other writing assignments.

**ENGL 510: MEDIEVAL ENGLISH LITERATURES AND CULTURES: Deferred Pleasures in Medieval Literature**

**David Rollo, Tuesday, 2:00-4:20 pm Course Number 32778D**

Following her meeting with Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe believed herself to be the privileged participant in a universal economy of remunerative suffering: the more she was slandered, threatened with rape, accused of Lollardy and had chamber pots emptied on her head, the greater the invested reward that awaited her in heaven. Though many critics have dismissed Margery's testimony as no more than the ravings of an addled mind, her preoccupation with investment, accumulation and ever-deferred joy reflects a widespread medieval concern with the deferral of pleasure (often accompanied by a willful pursuit of pain), and this, in turn, reflects a widespread literary strategy of the era whereby narrative closure and the pleasure it may bring are withheld (and, indeed, on occasion denied altogether).

The course will be on, precisely, the reader's implication in narratives of misery, obfuscation, torture and longing. The obvious medieval construct that brings all these themes together has, for better or worse, become known as "courtly love." This, the desire for pleasure that can only ever be pleasurable if its consummation is indefinitely foreclosed, will be the focus of the first third of the term. As background reading we will consider, in translation, a few troubadour lyrics, since, differences in language notwithstanding, the culture of pre-Albigensian Occitania came definitively to influence the next three hundred years of western European literary production. Central to the

next couple of weeks will be that massive narrative of lyric desire, *Le Roman de la Rose* (again, not composed in English, but absolutely canonical and, for that reason, on our reading list). We will read all of Guillaume de Lorris' original (the first 4028 lines of the conjoined text), but will adopt a selective approach to the 17,500 lines of Jean de Meun's apparently — but only apparently — digressive continuation and consider only the discourses of Ami, Faux Semblant and Genius, as well as the allegory of coition that draws the poem to a close. Some attention will also be given to Jean's debts to Alain de Lille's treatise on written and sexual pleasures, the *De planctu Naturae*.

The middle of the term will be devoted to Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*, *The Clerk's Tale* and *The Man of Law's Tale*, all of them performative mediations on narrative poetry and the first also a parodic commentary on aspects of the *Rose*. Among the topics of analysis will be the themes of digression, deferral, and sadism, and the reader's position vis-à-vis the object of suffering. *The Man of Law's Tale* will also serve as a prelude to that other late-medieval story of ever-impending rape, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, which we will read as a secularized variation on the conventions of female hagiography and analyze alongside some of the more celebrated *Saint's Lives* (certainly Christine and Catherine, perhaps also Euphrosina). Torture and the pornography of ever-deferred martyrdom will be our primary concerns. Finally, all of the themes considered in the earlier part of the term will be reappraised in the light of late medieval Arthurianism, with a particular emphasis on the narrativity of Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* and the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

The major requirements are straightforward and predictable: students will speak in seminars, give a formal presentation and write a fifteen to twenty page paper. There is also a minor requirement, though one that has been added by popular request: readings from Middle English literature will be accompanied by some in-class exercises on Middle English grammar (nothing difficult, just an outline of the differences between the language of Chaucer and the language we speak today). In addition to the texts mentioned above, the reading list will include: Simon Horobin and Jeremy Smith, *An Introduction to Middle English*; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, The History of Sexuality* (excerpts); Caroline Bynam, *Jesus as Mother*; Elaine Scarry, *The Body In Pain*; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Gérard Genette, trans. Jane Lewin, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*; Andreas Capellanus, trans. John Parry, *The Art of Courtly Love*.

## **ENGL 535: LITERATURES AND CULTURES OF THE ROMANTIC PERIOD: The 1790s**

**Margaret Russett, Monday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course Number 32895D**

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. It was a period of euphoria and despair; of radical democracy and brutal repression. Indeed, perhaps no single decade has been more turbulent for those who lived through it, or more momentous in its long-term consequences, than the 1790s in Europe. Dominated, both at the time and in the later historical record, by the French Revolution and the meteoric rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, this was also the period in which the feminist and abolition movements took

hold in Britain—even while the Tory government, continuously at war with France after 1793, pursued a repressive domestic policy exemplified by the Treason Trials of 1794. As the culminating decade of a century also remarkable for rapid increases in literacy and the consolidation of print culture, the 1790s witnessed the birth of “literature” (and even “theory”) from the political and philosophical ferment of the period. This seminar will attempt to grapple with the diversity and complexity of late-eighteenth-century political expression, and—especially—with the novelty and variety of the literary experiments that arose from, and helped define, the “spirit of the age” that inaugurated modernity. Focusing mainly on writing in English, we will also read (in translation) selected essays by German and French authors such as Immanuel Kant (*Project for a Perpetual Peace*) and Benjamin Constant (*Of the Effects of Terror*) that altered the intellectual climate of the times. Major authors and works to be considered include: Jane Austen (*Northanger Abbey*); William Blake (*Songs of Innocence and of Experience*; *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*; *America*; *Europe*); Edmund Burke (*Reflections on the Revolution in France*); Samuel Taylor Coleridge (*The Watchman*; *Consciones ad Populum*; “conversation” and “mystery” poems); Olaudah Equiano (*The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*); William Godwin (*Political Justice*, *The Adventures of Caleb Williams*); Mary Hays (*Memoirs of Emma Courtney*); Matthew Lewis (*The Monk*); Mary Wollstonecraft (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*); and William Wordsworth (*A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*, *Salisbury Plain*, *The Ruined Cottage*, *Lyrical Ballads*). We will also read selections from some other important political texts, by writers such as James Mackintosh, Thomas Paine, John Thelwall, Helen Maria Williams, and Wollstonecraft, that shaped the “revolution controversy” and its aftermath. As this list should make obvious, our approach will be broadly interdisciplinary, negotiating among philosophy, visual art, and intellectual, social, and literary history. Participants will be asked to report on, and write brief papers about, a significant historical “context” as well as one week’s secondary (critical/theoretical) readings, and to write an approximately 15-page seminar paper focusing on one or more literary/philosophical text(s).

**ENGL 560: Early American Literatures and Cultures**  
**Anthony Kemp, Tuesday, 4:30-6:50 p.m. Course Number 32784D**

A study of the declension/transformation of American colonial culture, particularly New England, into Enlightenment nation, and further into the counter-Enlightenment Transcendentalist myth of nature’s nation. The course will focus on the national mythology embodied in histories, poetry, autobiographies, and will address particularly the question of how religious culture—trans-Atlantic Puritanism—transforms into Romanticism, and what traces show through in the palimpsest of American modernity. Therefore, the first half of the course will examine the forms of colonial culture; the second will follow the vectors of these into the American Renaissance and on into the present. Authors to be considered include William Bradford, John Winthrop, Roger Williams, Nathaniel Ward, Thomas Hooker, John Cotton, Increase Mather, Mary Rowlandson, Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor, Cotton Mather, Edward Johnson, Joshua Scottow, Franklin, Emerson, Melville, Henry James.

## ENGL 650: MULTICULTURAL LITERARY STUDIES

Judith Jackson Fossett, Friday, 2-4:30 p.m. Course number 32799D

### SCENES OF SLAVERY

In this seminar, we will primarily address the preeminent form of literary production emerging out of the institution of New World slavery—the slave narrative before legal Abolition throughout the Americas and various neo-slave narratives (both prose and poetry) that have been produced since. With particular interest to their literary, historical, theoretical and discursive modalities, we will concern ourselves with these scenes—multisensory tableaux that operate at the level of the visual and aural notably—in which tensions in African-American culture between oral (form of speeches, sermons, songs such as hollers, spirituals, blues) and written (prohibitions on literacy) also play themselves out. If, as been argued, the scene of slavery is unimaginable, what constitutes the oscillation between the invisibility and inaudibility of the form on the one hand and the hypervisibility, eroticism, corporal violence and pornography of its traffic on the other? What of visual images from Runaway Ads to modern film? Why does the legacy of ‘slavery’s past’ remain such a rich creative vein for contemporary literary production? What is the relation of that ‘legacy’ to its actual past? What are the relevant hermeneutics? What then constitutes a black literary tradition, canon, audience?

Required Texts (may include the following)

Olaudah Equiano, The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African

Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of a Slave

Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

Juan Francisco Manzano, Autobiography of a Slave

Hannah Crafts, The Bondwoman’s Narrative

Harriet Wilson, Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black

Melton McLaurin, Celia, A Slave

Nat Turner (with Thomas Gray), The Confessions of Nat Turner

Paul Laurence Dunbar, The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar

Robert Hayden, Collected Poems

Edward Jones, The Known World

Ishmael Reed, Flight to Canada

Toni Morrison, Beloved

Caryl Phillips, Cambridge

Charles Johnson, Oxherding Tale

Octavia Butler, Kindred

Alice Randall, Wind Done Gone

Nancy Rawls, My Jim

Maryse Conde, I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem

### Selected Films

In addition, we will regularly discuss a range of theoretical, critical and historical texts that foreground these larger issues of slavery, historicity, cultural production including work of Hortense Spillers, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Edouard Glissant, C.L.R. James, W.E.B. DuBois, Saidiya Hartman, David Scott, Fred Moten, Henry Louis Gates, Paul Gilroy, Valerie Smith, Orlando Patterson, Vince Carretta, Lindon Barrett, Ann Fabian, Stephen Hahn, Eric Foner, Marcus Rediker and others.

I am **eager to hear your ideas and encourage your input** on these primary texts listed above and secondary texts or issues that may interest you. Please contact me via e-mail ([fossett@usc.edu](mailto:fossett@usc.edu)) if you have suggestions (please include "ENGL650" in the subject line). If there is interest, I am happy to meet in late April to discuss the syllabus.

**ENGL 660: STUDIES IN GENRE: Poetic Language in the Information Age**  
**Marjorie Perloff, Wednesday, 2-4:30 p.m. Course number 32800D**

Twenty-first century poetics marks a departure from the personal expressivist lyric of the Modernist tradition. In the conceptual, concretist and constraint-based poetics of the present, we witness a tradition that comes down to us from such diverse "poets" as Samuel Beckett, Marcel Duchamp, John Cage, Ian Hamilton Finlay, and Robert Smithson, via such Language poets as Charles Bernstein and Susan Howe, to such contemporaries as Laurie Anderson, Christian Bok, Caroline Bergvall, and Kenneth Goldsmith. This seminar will examine the pleasures and problems of this "poetry in the expanded field."

After initial joint work on the earlier poets, students will engage in their own projects, drawn from the list below. Each student will write a weekly response paper, lead one week's discussion, and produce a (hopefully publishable) term paper.

**Reading List** (optional since much of the material can be accessed online)

Samuel Beckett, *THE COMPLETE SHORT PROSE* (Grove, 1997) \_\_\_\_\_,  
*COLLECTED SHORTER PLAYS* (Grove 1996)

Marcel Duchamp, *THE ESSENTIAL WRITINGS OF MARCEL DUCHAMP*  
(Thames and Hudson, 1975).

John Cage, *Silence* (Wesleyan, 1961)

Mary Ellen Solt, *Concrete Poetry* (Indiana, 1970)

Harry Mathews, *Oulipo Compendium* (Exact Change, 1998)

Robert Smithson, *Collected Writings* (California, 1996)

Susan Howe, *The Midnight* (New Directions, 2008)

Charles Bernstein, *Content's Dream* (Northwestern) and *Shadowtime* (Sun & Moon)

Christian Bök, *Eunoia* (Coach House, 2001) and *Crystallography* (Coach House, 2003)

Caroline Bergvall, *Goan Atom* (Krupskaya 2001)), *Fig* (Salt, 2005)

Kenneth Goldsmith, *Soliloquy* (Granary 2001), and *The Weather* (Make Nice, 2005).

**ENGL 695: GRADUATE FICTION FORM AND THEORY: Workshop and Intensive Reading**

**Marianne Wiggins, Tuesday, 2:00-4:20 pm Course Number 32802D**

This fiction workshop class will combine writing with analysis of form in fiction, with an emphasis on structure. Sample readings will include "*The Dead*" by James Joyce; "*The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*" by Junot Diaz; "*Out Stealing Horses*" by Per Peterson; "*Divisadero*" by Michael Ondaatje; "*Austerlitz*" by W.G. Sebald; and the Professor's own novel, "*The Shadow Catcher*".

**ENGL 696: GRADUATE POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP**

**Mark Irwin, Wednesday, 5:00-7:20 p.m. Course Number 32803D**

"Reason forgets, the imagination never," Peter Handke said. In this course we will chart the imagination and the notion that new content requires new form. Using contemporary models, including those of John Ashbery, Anne Carson, W.S. Merwin, Jorie Graham, and many younger poets, we will hopefully engage new poetic strategies and risks in our own work. Critiques will focus on how subject finds form, and how, according to Freedburg, "the surprise, the tension are in the concept." We will set individual goals and new objectives by risking more of "the self" in the poem, and in longer, discursive poems. Memorability, imagination, and emotional amplitude will be stressed, and several examples from contemporary painting and music will be applied. Numerous essays on craft and form will also be discussed, and rewriting will play an integral part of this workshop.

**Course Requirements:**

Portfolio of at least 5 extensively revised poems, including one longer poem.  
Completion of translation, perspective, and range of emotion exercises,  
& regular attendance of workshop.

**Some texts:**

W.S. Merwin. *Migration: New & Selected Poems*. Copper Canyon Press. 2005  
ISBN: 1-55-659-2183

Yves Bonnefoy. *On the Movement & Immobility of Douve*. (Xerox)

Peter Handke. *Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*. NY: F,S&G. Paper  
ISBN: 978-0-374-53106-5

John Ashbery. *A Wave*. New York: Random House, 2003 reprint. Paper

Anne Carson. *Men in the Off Hours*. Vintage Paperback \$12.00. ISBN: 0-375-70756-5

Srinkanth Reddy. *Facts for Visitors*. University of California Press, 2004.

Bin Ramke. *Tendrils*. Omnidawn. 2007

Charles Wright. *The World of the Ten Thousand Things*. F, S & G, 1990.  
ISBN: 0-374-52326-6

Xeroxed poems of many younger poets: Olena Davis, Laura Kasischke, Forrest Gander, D.A. Powell, Richard Siken, Thomas Sayers Ellis, G.C. Waldrep, Larissa Szporluk, etc.

**ENGL 697: GRADUATE FICTION WRITING WORKSHOP**  
**T.C. Boyle, Monday, 2:00-4:20 p.m. Course Number 32804D**

This course provides a forum for writers to present their work for class interpretation and to assess the effects of their techniques on an audience of willing and engaged readers. Depending on the size of the class, each student will have the opportunity to present from two to three original works of fiction per semester—either short stories or chapters from a longer work—according to an agreed-upon schedule. All students will be required to read and comment in writing on the workshop pieces. During the class sessions, we will examine student work with the same interpretive rigor we will devote to the readings from professional writers; the hope is that the student writer will be able to learn something of the effects of his/her work on an audience, with an eye to improving it. Our readings will be in contemporary fiction, both the short story and novel.

**Book list:**

*The Road*, Cormac McCarthy  
*Fiskadoro*, Denis Johnson  
*Doubletakes*, ed. T.C. Boyle