CRN#  Spring 2014 Literature Cornerstone Course Descriptions

40275  ENG 100-A, COR: War and Gender in Literature and Film
40276  ENG 100-B, COR: War and Gender in Literature and Film

Prof. A. Opitz

How do cultures and societies as well as individual artists narrate the experience of war and what it means to be a soldier? We will explore how writers and filmmakers have addressed the tensions between societal expectations and the reality of war, as well as the challenges they see in telling stories about what are essentially often traumatic experiences. How does trauma or memory affect the stories we tell about war? What is the relationship between the ‘front’ and the ‘home’, between those who serve and those who don’t? In addition, we will discuss societal gender norms and expectations and the insights we might gain about how these norms operate in a particular society by looking at them in the context of war. How, in other words, does the experience of war a society goes through crystallize what that society thinks of the role of men and women, of “proper” masculine behavior, of what makes a “real” soldier (aka a “real” man), and so forth. In order to explore these and other questions, we will study poetry, short stories, letters, novels, as well as films dealing with World War I, Vietnam, and more recent wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Likely texts include the “Trench Poetry” of World War I, short fiction by Ernest Hemingway and Tim O’Brien, letters written by soldiers fighting in Vietnam, recent “war bloggers,” and films such as Full Metal Jacket, Platoon, Jarhead, and Black Hawk Down. Only open to students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

40277  ENG 100-C, COR: Altered States: Literature and Intoxication
40278  ENG 100-D, COR: Altered States: Literature and Intoxication

Prof. S. Kane

Various types of altered states of consciousness have long been reflected in Western literature. Changes to identity - not just states brought about by alcohol or drugs, but also spiritual or other intensely emotional experiences - have been a broad theme explored by many authors, from Homer’s lotus eaters to the enchantments of Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream to contemporary confessional memoir. In this course, we will explore the many ways in which altered states have been represented by authors, ranging from the celebratory to the repentant, and the ways in which they construct or challenge the identities of authors, characters and audiences. We will also consider the acts of writing and reading as themselves challenges to conventional identity. Only open to students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

40279  ENG 100-E, COR: Literature in Translation?

Prof. J. Golden

Many of the texts that you read in your core courses are translations into English. What exactly does it mean to read a text in translation? We will ask and answer that question, using these 19th-century texts: Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du mal/Flowers of Evil; Flaubert, Madame Bovary; Tolstoy, Anna Karenina. Only open to students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

40280  ENG 100-F, COR: Literary Evolutions

Prof. K. Bennett

This course explores how literature evolves over time and across discourses. Close readings of core texts and their offshoots will offer insight into the concepts of adaptation, intertextuality, and cultural capital. Throughout, we will analyze how authors revise key literary themes in the context of poetry, prose, drama, music, film, the graphic novel, and television. Only open to students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

40281  ENG 100-G, COR: Americans Abroad

Prof. S. Gracombe

For more than 200 years, American writers have been fascinated with Europe as both place and idea. France and Italy in particular have become rites of passage, locations of Culture, sites of reinvention for American authors and their fictional creations. Why? How have writers from Henry James and Ernest Hemingway to James Baldwin and Patricia Highsmith constructed European identity? And how have such constructions both influenced and been influenced by understandings of American identity? In particular, we will consider the way gender, race, sexuality, and aesthetic taste intersect with representations of nationality. Over the course of the semester, we will investigate these questions by reading texts that traverse the past two centuries: primarily novels and short stories, supported by films, travel narratives, and theories of national identity. Only open to students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.
ENG 100-H, COR: Seven Nobel Laureates  
Prof. M. Borushko  
In this course students will read from and write about the work of seven recent winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature who write in English. The seven laureates whom we will read are from various parts of the globe, but their recognition by the Nobel Committee suggests that their work speaks not just about its place of origin but to something beyond national borders. Is this perhaps what is meant by "world literature"? We'll explore this question and others via the fiction of South Africans Nadine Gordimer and J. M. Coetzee, American Toni Morrison, and Trinidadian-born Briton V. S. Naipaul; the poetry of Seamus Heaney of Ireland and Derek Walcott of Saint Lucia; and the plays of London-born Harold Pinter. Naturally, we'll read and discuss their Nobel lectures, too, as well as other prose works wherein our writers discuss why they write, for whom they write, and what they imagine the role of literature to be in the world. Only open to students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

ENG 100-I, COR: Island Living/Island Leaving  
Prof. S. Cohen  
This seminar will explore the literature of islands. This will be a semester-long inquiry into how the unique conditions of island living shape literature and culture. We will study texts about castaways, pirates, tourists, islanders, and adventurers in order to discern what makes stories about islands so compelling and enduring. Only open to students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

ENG 100-J, COR: American Gothic  
Prof. G. Piggford, CSC  
This course explores the unsettling and uncanny elements in American literature. We will investigate the typical settings of gothic texts, including the wilderness, abandoned institutions (churches, asylums, prisons), and homes. Over the course of the semester we will meet the denizens of such locations and consider what disturbs the American dream. Only open to students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

ENG 100-K, COR: Literary Evolutions  
Prof. K. Bennett  
This course explores how literature evolves over time and across discourses. Through close readings of core texts and their offshoots, we will explore the concepts of adaptation and intertextuality. We will examine how authors revise key literary themes in the context of poetry, prose, drama, music, film, and television. Only open to students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

ENG 100-M, COR: Strange Intimacies: Knowing Other Minds in Literature  
Prof. E. Idsvoog  
“What is it then between us?” Whitman asks at a crucial turning point of his poem “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.” This course will examine how a selection of writers from the English and American literary traditions have addressed this question; they ask how much can be known and how much must remain unknown about the inner lives of others, and how we can act ethically towards each other given the fact of our separateness.

At the center of the course are three astonishing achievements in the representation of individual consciousness: Jane Austen, Henry James and Virginia Woolf will often leave us feeling that there’s little we can’t know about other minds. On either side of this central unit on the novel of consciousness, we’ll study texts as interested by strangers as by lovers, and often in the estrangements that can exist even at the heart of intimacy. Authors will likely include Beckett, Hardy, Ibsen, Shakespeare, Whitman, and Wordsworth. Only open to students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

ENG 110-A, FYS: Island Living/Island Leaving  
Prof. S. Cohen  
This seminar will explore the literature of islands. This will be a semester-long inquiry into how the unique conditions of island living shape literature and culture. We will study texts about castaways, pirates, tourists, islanders, and adventurers in order to discern what makes stories about islands so compelling and enduring. Only open to First-Year Students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

ENG 113-A, FYS: Machine Culture  
Prof. W. Peek
This course explores the representation of technology as created by artists from ancient Athens to the 21st century. Questions we will pursue: is technology the friend or foe of humanity? Will machines enable our perfection or enhance our flaws? Should our machines be more or less like us? Only open to First-Year Students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

40692  ENG 125-A, FYS: The Imaginary Primitive
Prof. J. Green
Our seminar will focus on how the modern idea of Western "civilization" took shape in response to the image of the non-European, "native." Specifically, we will examine the "primitive" (and the related figures of the "cannibal," the "savage," and the "barbarian") in British and French literature and visual art as the essential—if often invented—figure at the heart of modern concepts of empire, subjectivity, aesthetics, ethics, and culture. Although much of our work will concentrate on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we will begin by examining several foundational early modern and Enlightenment-era texts to see how images of first contact between so-called "natives" and European explorers influenced more contemporary discourses of anthropology, biology, social science, psychoanalysis, and imperial politics. Readings will examine several key contact zones between European and non-European peoples: Africa, India, Oceania, and the Middle East. Our semester will end with a section devoted to contemporary responses to European constructions of racial 'Otherness' from the Sudan, France, and England. Authors to be covered include William Shakespeare, Michel de Montaigne, Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rudyard Kipling, Paul Gauguin, Joseph Conrad, W. Somerset Maugham, E.M. Forster, George Orwell, Marjane Satrapi, Tayeb Salih, and Zadie Smith. We will also look at art by Gauguin, Jean-Léon Gérôme, Man Ray, and Pablo Picasso, among others, as well as films such as Cannibal Tours and Dirty, Pretty Things. Only open to First-Year Students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.

40693  ENG 128-A, FYS: Wonderlands
Prof. L. Scales
A portal opens to another world: what wonders will we find there? In this course, we will travel down rabbit holes, through secret doorways, across borders, and back in time, encountering the stuff of dreams—and sometimes nightmares. Along the way, we will ask what these alternate realities tell us about our own world and our own imaginations. Texts may include: Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, J.M. Barrie’s Peter and Wendy, The Wachowski’s The Matrix, Neil Gaiman’s Coraline, Hayao Miyazaki’s Spirited Away, Guillermo Del Toro's Pan’s Labyrinth, Octavia Butler’s Kindred, and short works by Margaret Cavendish, Jorge Luis Borges, Ray Bradbury and Adrienne Rich. Only open to First-Year Students that have not completed the Literature Cornerstone requirement.