

# YC Department of English

## Spring 2020 Course Offerings

Our courses invite students to deepen their writing, reading, and critical thinking skills. We welcome interested students from all majors to join our community.

If you're wondering which Spring 2020 English courses are right for you or have questions about the English major or minor or the Writing minor, contact the Chair of the English Department, Professor Rachel Mesch: [mesch@yu.edu](mailto:mesch@yu.edu). For information about the Media Studies minor, contact Professor Elizabeth Stewart: [estewart@yu.edu](mailto:estewart@yu.edu). They would be happy to meet with you.

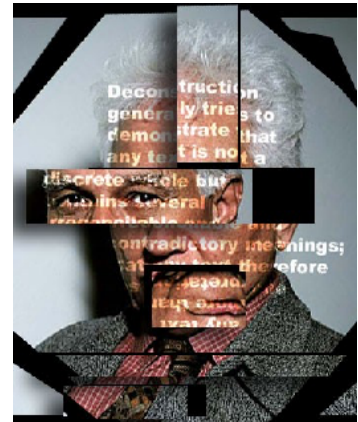
### Required for English Majors

#### INTERPRETING TEXTS WI—PROFESSOR PAULA GEYH

ENG 2010 SECTION 331 T/R 3:00 - 4:15

*For new English majors and minors and Media Studies minors. May be taken at the same time as FYWR. Fulfills the YC Writing-Intensive requirement.*

This writing-intensive “gateway” course for English majors and minors, Media Studies minors, and other serious students of literature and film is an introduction to some of the key interpretive approaches that define current studies in these fields. Its goal is for you to become a more knowledgeable, insightful, and accomplished interpreter of and writer about literature, film, and other arts. In the course, you'll learn key ideas of what literature and film are and do, and fundamental concepts and paradigms used for interpreting them. You'll learn how to use concepts from theoretical texts in conjunction with “close-reading” of literature and film to produce compelling analyses of these works.



Course texts will include Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*; Plato, *Republic*; Aristotle, “Poetics”; Shakespeare, Sonnets; Barthes, “From Work to Text”; Phillips, *A Humument*; Wellek and Warren, “Nature and Modes of Narrative Fiction”; Freud, *Outline of Psychoanalysis*; Lacan, “The Mirror Stage”; Bradbury, “The Veldt”; Marx and Engels, excerpts from *1844 Manuscripts* and “The Communist Manifesto”; Woolf, excerpts from “A Room of One’s Own”; Cixous, excerpt from

*Sorties*; Reeser, excerpts from *Masculinities in Theory*; Lynn, *Texts and Contexts*; Villarejo, “Language of Film”; Dickens, *Great Expectations*; and Chaplin’s *Modern Times*.

In collaboration with the YC Writing Program director, this course has been approved for a Writing-Intensive designation and will fulfill your YC W-I requirement. Throughout the course, you’ll be honing your writing skills by writing short response papers (ranging from one paragraph to two pages) and four formal essays of varying lengths, several of which will be based on the response papers. You’ll get feedback on your formal essays via grading rubrics and comments on how you can improve your writing, and you’ll have an opportunity to revise and resubmit one of the essays. We’ll also be devoting parts of some classes to addressing various writing issues.

## Advanced Writing

*Counts towards the Writing minor. English majors take at least one and as many as three advanced writing courses. Students may count one Advanced Writing course towards the English minor. Pre-requisite: FYWR 1020.*

## WRITING FOR THE WORKPLACE: TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION—PROFESSOR DAVID PURETZ

ENG 1680 SECTION 241 M/W 4:30 - 5:45

Today’s professionals need to communicate more frequently, more rapidly, more accurately, and with more individuals than ever before. This course will help prepare you for it.

In this course, you will develop the skills and qualities shared by successful workplace communicators.

You will practice collaborative writing with in-depth group projects. You will become more proficient with digital and cross-platform communication, including social media and online content creation and management. And you will learn the art of *simplifying the complex*—writing about technical information for non-technical audiences, i.e. managers, coworkers, clients, donors, governmental bodies, the general public, etc.

This work will involve: summaries/responses of peer-reviewed technical articles, field research including interviews with professionals in the field, application letters, memos, segmented research proposals, grant proposals, and feasibility reports. The final class project will include a team technical report and team presentation.



## **PLAYWRITING—PROFESSOR BARBARA BLATNER**

ENG 1725 SECTION 361 T 6:45 - 9:15

*Prerequisites: Eng 1020 or 1020H*

Acting out stories before an audience is an ancient ritual that celebrates and illuminates our humanness. Playwrights, crafters of stories for the stage, have the unique thrill of hearing their words spoken and their narratives played out by actors.

This course welcomes both aspiring and experienced playwrights. Each week, you will be assigned to write new scenes designed around specific prompts, and to read and study

plays by Churchill, Cathy Chiesa, Wilson, Baker, Parks, Pinter, Shakespeare and others. Class time will consist of exercises on dialogue, conflict, story arc, setting and character, improvisations that explore plot structure, discussion of readings, and feedback sessions where you will cast and direct your scenes for the class to hear. We will look at how a play travels from page to stage and how collaboration functions at all levels of production. We will attend a professional play reading and hopefully, one fully produced show. The semester will conclude with a public presentation of your final short play project. Class participation, a polished ten-minute script, and a portfolio of revised work will constitute a final grade.

This course will sharpen your observational, storytelling and collaborative skills and thereby grow your writing in any genre, as well as enhance your job candidacy in multiple fields, including theater and performing arts, film, television, and the advertising and promotional industries.



### **Literature**

*Pre-requisite: FYWR 1020.*

## **GLOBAL SHAKESPEARE—PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY**

ENG 2033 SECTION 561 R 6:45 - 9:15



Bohemia, Athens, Troy, Egypt, Venice, Illyria, Scotland, Cyprus, the Bermudas: Shakespeare’s plays abound in different settings, both familiar and determinedly “foreign.” In this class, we will explore how such settings—as dramatic landscapes, as regions of cultural contact, as contested or colonized national spaces—inform our sense for the imaginative resources of the early modern stage (the name of playhouse for which Shakespeare wrote was, fittingly, the Globe) and illuminate England’s place within a shifting European world-system. A major concern of the course will be European colonialism in the so-called “age of discovery,” and the discourses of national identity and cultural otherness that both sustained and subverted England’s efforts to establish new markets and colonies abroad. No experience with Shakespeare or early modern theater is expected, though more advanced students are certainly welcome. This course counts as the required pre-1700 course for English majors. Requirements: Regular postings to an online discussion forum, in-class collaborative performances of scenes from our plays, two short critical essays, a final project, and (hopefully) at least one Shakespeare-themed excursion in NYC.

## **THE (NINETEENTH-CENTURY) FRENCH NOVEL (IN TRANSLATION)—PROFESSOR RACHEL MESCH**

ENGLISH 2188 SECTION 231 M/W 3:00 - 4:15

*Counts as the required non-British literature course for English majors.*

This course will consider the French novel as it developed over the course of the tumultuous nineteenth century following the French Revolution—a period of tremendous change in France and across Europe. We will examine how multiple forces of that change—war and shifting governmental structures, industrialization, the explosion of consumer culture and the mass press, the development of science and technology, interest in medicine and psychology, shifting gender roles, and a fascination with the everyday—influenced this literary form. As we make our way from Balzac to Zola by way of Hugo, Sand, and Flaubert, we will examine the relationships between romanticism, realism, and naturalism as they took their unique form in the French context. We will also look to French painting, poetry, and short stories



to enrich our understanding of how the novel emerged as the dominant literary form during this time.

## **LITERATURE & PSYCHOLOGY—PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART**

ENG 3589, cross-listed with PSYCH 4932 SECTION 341 T/R 4:30 - 5:45

This course explores poetry and prose in relation to neurosis, psychosis, and the psychology of mystical experience and gender; it also explores diagnostic narratives and narratives of recovery. These intersections of literature and psychology are structured along 5 main lines:

1. Meaning-making and story-telling as the key to psychological coping with and perhaps recovery from trauma: the work of Viktor Frankl, psychologist and Holocaust survivor. Texts: Art Spiegelman, *Maus*; Folman, *Waltz with Bashir*
2. The psyche as “text”: literary analysis and psychoanalysis both attempt to make sense of “texts”: literary texts, on the one hand, and “psychic texts” (psychological make-up, symptoms) on the other. Freud showed us that psychoanalysis, like literature, is linguistically and narratively constituted. Texts: Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, *The Wolf Man*, Lacan tbd
3. Carl G. Jung’s work on collective unconscious experience in mythology and mystical texts: imagery, mythologems, and archetypes. Texts: Ovid, Nerval
4. First-person narratives of insanity and recovery, and third-person “authoritative” narratives of “madness.” Texts: Plath, poems; Freud case histories; Shaffer, *Equus*; Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde*; James, *Turn of the Screw*)
5. Literature, psychology, and gender struggles. (Ovid; *Silence of the Lambs*)



### **Literature Courses Fulfilling Core Requirements**

*English majors and minors may count two such courses towards their requirements. Pre-requirement: FYWR 1020.*



## **BOOKS ON BOOKS/FILMS ON FILMS (INTC)— PROFESSOR PAULA GEYH**

ENG1001H

SECTION 341

TR 4:30-5:45

What do literature and film tell us about themselves and each other? What are the elemental forms and structures of literary and filmic narrative? What approaches might one use for the analysis of literature and film? How is reading a novel or short story different from “reading” a film? By addressing these questions, this course will help students to develop a deeper understanding of how narrative literature and film work and how they’re related (or aren’t).



The course will begin by considering the relationship between truth and fiction, and some ideas about what “art” is and does. We’ll examine the roles of readers, film viewers, authors, directors, and critics. We’ll explore the forms and structures of literary and cinematic storytelling, and how these elements come together to produce meaning. Finally, we’ll briefly survey various approaches used by scholars and critics to analyze literature and film.

Course texts will include Calvino, *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler* and Zusak, *The Book Thief*. Films will include *The Wizard of Oz*, *Sherlock Jr.*, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, *Stranger than Fiction*, *Singin’ in the Rain*, and *Cinema Paradiso*. Critical texts will include Plato, *The Republic*; Wilde, “The Decay of Lying”; Wellek & Warren, “The Nature and Modes of Narrative Fiction”; Lynn, *Texts and Contexts*; Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*; and Spadoni, *A Pocket Guide to Analyzing Film*.

Two papers and two exams.

## **DIASPORA LITERATURE (COWC)—PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART**

ENG 1002

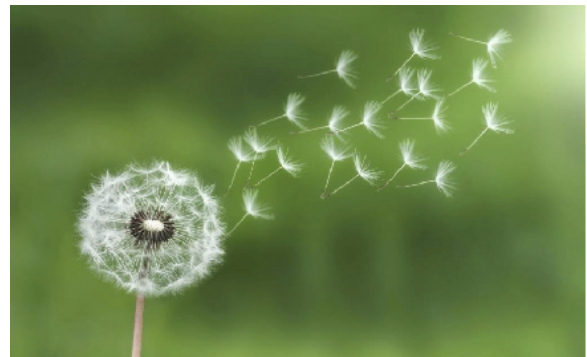
Section 331

T/R 3:00-4:15 pm

*Counts as COWC requirement.*

This course explores literature about diaspora: “diaspora” as the abandonment of home, whether voluntary or enforced, and a search for a new home, new opportunities, and new beginnings, even as the home of the past lingers in the imagination, in memory, and in desire.

The twenty-first century has so far been characterized by massive and often chaotic displacements of peoples seeking refuge from violence, famine, and persecution in their homelands or are simply seeking opportunities for economic survival in an increasingly globalized and politi-



cally turbulent world. The twentieth century, the century of totalitarianism and genocide, had already seen seismic shifts in populations fleeing ethnic cleansing, political persecution, and specific events such as WWI and WWII, the Holocaust, African decolonization, the Indian partition, various regime changes, and nation-building. Literature and film in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have recorded the histories and fictionalizations of such diasporic experiences. The two oldest and far-reaching global diasporas were the Jewish and the African. Both were painful, both produced flowering cultural expression, and both continue to develop, centuries later, to this day.

**Texts** include: W.G. Sebald, *The Emigrants* (German migration to the US and UK), Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation of a Beheading* (Russian migration to the US), V.S. Naipaul, *A Bend in the River* (African migrations), Dinaw Mengestu (American Ethiopian novelist and journalist), Julie Otsuka, *When the Emperor Was Divine* (Japanese American), Hisham Matar, *The Return* (Lybian American), Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation* (Jewish American); some **film**.

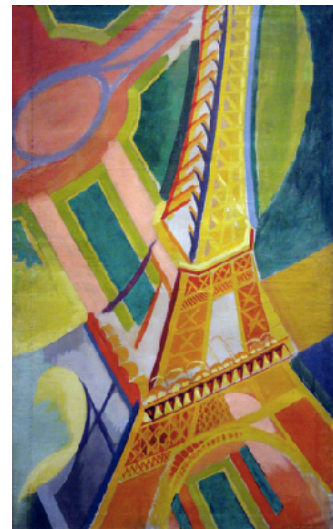
**Requirements:** short written responses, midterm take-home, final exam.

## PARISIAN VIEWS (INTC) WI — PROFESSOR RACHEL MESCH

ENG 1005 SECTION 211 MW 1:30-2:45

This course explores the ways that nineteenth-century Paris inspired artistic creation through its cultivation of a variety of new ways of *seeing*, which led in turn to new forms of entertainment. The artistic products of this rich and imaginative time were in many ways responsible for contemporary mass culture and our lingering fascination with the real. Thus, as we consider the wide variety of new desires, seductions and fascinations for which Paris itself seemed wholly responsible, we will also not fail to notice the deep and lasting impact of those practices on our current modes of entertainment and pleasure... from cinema to celebrity culture to reality TV.

We explore this fascinating history to our own cultural tastes through novels and poetry but also through the impressionist paintings that vividly documented urban change. In addition, we consider the overlapping ways through which innovations in photography, early cinema, architecture and various kinds of public exhibits (from the wax museum to the Paris morgue) addressed and channeled the feelings of excitement and anxiety around the new points of contact that the modern French city offered. Juxtaposing poems with paintings, novels with maps and photographs, we compare the different idioms through which these forms of expression attempted to respond to a shared set of questions about how to interpret the rapidly changing urban landscape. In the process, students come to understand their own city in a new way, with assignments that ask them to explore New York itself as an urban spectacle which offers, as did nineteenth-century Paris, a daily feast for the eyes.



Requirements: class participation; weekly blog posts; mid-term paper; group presentation; final paper.

## **FRANCE AND ITS OTHERS (CUOT) — PROFESSOR RACHEL MESCH**

ENG 1009 SECTION 241

MW 4:30-5:45

While the notion of a cultural “melting pot” is central to American society, French society has been structured around a distinctly French notion of universalism: the idea that there are core universal values that must supersede those of any minority subculture. Thus, although Americans regularly embrace multiple identifications--as African-Americans, or Jewish Americans, for example--in France that double alliance is largely experienced as a tension.



This class traces the roots of that tension by examining ways that otherness has inspired and troubled the French imagination through literary, historical and philosophical readings by major French writers from the 1500s to the present day. From Montaigne’s cannibals to the noble savages of Enlightenment texts, from Zola’s “J’accuse!” to the story of Babar, from the female other to the other as Jew to the other as Jewish female, we will explore the myriad ways through which France’s imagined others serve as manifestations of a cultural fascination with and anxiety about difference in its many forms. As we analyze the various intellectual conflicts that have arisen from the quest to understand what is deemed different, foreign, exotic or strange, we will also trace a struggle to define and circumscribe notions of French identity, selfhood and authority. Finally, at the semester’s end, we will use what we have synthesized from these thinkers to consider contemporary debates in French society about the place of religious and ethnic difference in the public sphere.

Requirements: Active participation based on weekly readings; three short writing assignments; final exam.



**FACE-TO-FACE: COMPLEX MODERN IDENTITIES IN CONTEMPORARY FILM (COWC) (WI) — PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART ENG 1026H SECTION 361 T/R 6:45 - 8:00**



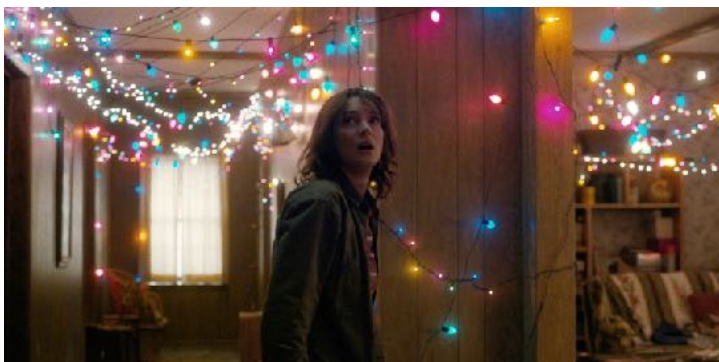
The basis of identity is to a large extent visual, and images are the bricks and mortar of what we eventually come to think of as cultural identity. As Aristotle claimed, we learn to become ourselves by imitating what we see (on the stage) in front of us—for us, the film screen—and we become ourselves by imitating our cultural ideals. This course explores the role cinematic images play in creating narratives about a multiplicity of cultural identities. Aristotle also insisted that it is the “ideal” character created on the stage who will aid in creating “ideal” citizens. In other words, Aristotle knew that

the visual/verbal arts—in his case, theater, in our case film—have not only a representative function, but an ideological one as well. But cinematic images, like images in the other arts, have also held the function of “naturalizing” certain structures of oppression and domination as well as challenging them. This course will explore how American and foreign film represents various racial, class, gender, ethnic, and national identities, and how they reproduce and challenge those representations at the same time. While the course pays attention to both cognition and affect in our reception of film, it will emphasize the study of affect in cinematic identification, projection, and enjoyment.

Requirements: class participation, short responses, 2 critical essays.

**STRANGER THINGS: THE ART OF THE UNREAL (INTC) — PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY**

ENG 1034 SECTION 231 M/W 3:00 - 4:15



Reality is not always probable, or likely. --Jorge Luis Borges

In this interdisciplinary core class, we will study how literature and other media can usher us into a claimed actuality very different from the external world as it is collectively perceived or experienced.

rienced. At least initially, then, the issues we confront will be epistemological in nature—that is, they will concern how art challenges or otherwise defines the limits of what we can know and understand; and yet we will also try to push beyond familiar theoretical frameworks (e.g., Plato, Freud) by examining modern philosophical accounts of literary aesthetics. This work will guide us through a broad range of textual forms and discourses, from classical epic to contemporary film and television, all variously marked by the ramifying proximity of the alien and the familiar, by moments of estrangement and epistemic disruption. To reference the shadowy parallel dimension from the popular television miniseries “Stranger Things,” think of the course as a class trip to the Upside Down and its analogous settings, as afforded by engagements with classical poetry; medieval romance; Arthurian legend; fantasy literature; mystical and visionary writing; magical realism; abstract expressionism; and, by the end of the term, science fiction. We will supplement this diverse assemblage of material with critical and theoretical readings intended for a general student audience. Requirements will include regular responses to an on-line discussion forum, short response papers, at least one critical essay, and a final paper/collaborative multimedia project.

## **FRONTIERS AND BORDERS: TRAVEL WRITING THROUGH THE AGES (CUOT)—PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY**

ENG 1036 SECTION 241 M/W 4:30 - 5:45



In this class, we will explore an assortment of literary and historical texts all broadly defined as “travel writing.” Our investigation begins in classical antiquity, with material focused on the westward migration of refugees following the Trojan War. Turning to later periods, it then examines how crusades, pilgrimages, mass expulsions, and explorations to the far reaches of the known world reflected—and shaped—medieval notions of cultural difference; key here is the account of Italian merchant adventurer Marco Polo. Next, we consider the age of discovery, and the role maps and other geographic conventions played in early modern representations of the

Atlantic, perhaps most notably in Shakespeare and his contemporaries. After considering these and other sources (e.g., selections from Ibn Battuta, Jonathan Swift, Mark Twain, Freya Stark, and Jamaica Kincaid), the semester concludes with travel narratives that frame the experience of the refugee, the migrant, and the asylum seeker. Implicit in all these cases is the idea that travel writing is not just an aesthetic or stylistic choice but also an attempt to grapple with the complexities of historical experience. Hence our focus on its changing contexts; major topics include race, slavery, colonialism, religious difference, emigration, empire, commerce, tourism, and the exotic. In addition to critical essays and presentations, students will have the opportunity to write their own travel narratives.

Visit <http://www.yu.edu/yeshiva-college/ug/english/> to find out more about the YC English Department and its faculty and the English major and minor. Visit <https://www.yu.edu/yeshiva-college/ug/writing> to learn about the Writing minor, and <https://www.yu.edu/yeshiva-college/ug/media-studies-minor> for information about the Media Studies minor.