

# YC Department of English Fall 2016 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 Fall 2016 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 Lauren Fitzgerald [fitzger@yu.edu](mailto:fitzger@yu.edu). She would be happy to meet with you!

## Required for English Majors

**SENIOR COLLOQUIUM** PROFESSOR LAUREN FITZGERALD  
ENG 4001 SECTION 481 W 8:15–9:45PM  
*For English majors with senior standing.*

In this first half of our two-semester senior “capstone” course, students lead seminar-style discussions about a set of texts that English Department faculty have chosen together (TBA), culminating in individual Senior Oral Exams in which students present what they have learned over the year. It is required for the completion of the English major.

## Advanced Writing

*Counts towards the Writing minor. English majors take at least one and as many as three advanced writing courses. Pre-requisite: FYWR 1010 or 1020.*

**WRITING THE ESSAY** PROFESSOR LIESL SCHWABE  
ENG 1409 Section 241 MW 4:30–5:45PM

The essay has both an established literary history as well as an expanding contemporary visibility, and for centuries, as noted essayist Phillip Lopate has said, a "hallmark" of the essay has long been its "intimacy." Whether a personal statement for graduate school or a persuasive opinion piece for a national newspaper, the essay demands honesty, establishes trust with its reader, and creates a window into not only the writer's experience, but also, often, the writer's values, questions, and thought process.



Throughout this course, we will study and write several different variations within the essay tradition, from personal to critical to editorial, exploring their overlap as much as their distinction. With an emphasis on structure and voice, we will consider the possibilities of the form: what has been left out in order to crystallize what's included. Readings will include works by Michel de

Montaigne, George Orwell, Joan Didion, James Baldwin, Roxanne Gay, Tony Judt, Hilton Als, David Foster Wallace, and Vivian Gornick.

While there will be a significant amount of reading, this is ultimately a writing workshop, for which students will extensively share, discuss, and revise their work. The semester will be scaffolded to support the writing process from ideas and rough drafts, through overhauled revisions, to polished, stand-alone pieces. Thoughtful participation is essential for your success in this course and to your potential as a writer. This is a class of discovery and investigation, open to new and seasoned writers alike. Bring your curiosity, your hard work, and your observations about the world and yourself in it.

## Literature

*Pre-requisite: FYWR 1010 or 1020.*

### 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CHAUCER: THE *CANTERBURY TALES*

PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY

ENG 2317 Section 361 T 6:45–9:15PM

*Counts as the required pre-1700 course for English majors.*



Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is an anthology of stories told by diverse and engaging fictional narrators—quarrelsome knights, wanton widows, corrupt preachers, poor clerks, pious nuns, and, of course, a talking rooster. Drawing on other storytelling collections but also always remaking them in the process, the *Canterbury Tales* helped create a new standard for ambitious and entertaining literature in English. In this introductory class, we will study most of the tales, turning to recent scholarship (as well as some multi-media adaptations of Chaucer's work) in order to understand the formal and generic innovations of the text, the literary sensibilities and expectations it represents, and the many interpretive problems and pleasures arising therein. But our investigation will not confine itself to knights and roosters; we will take such things as provocations to consider our own status as twenty-first-century witnesses to a surprising kind of literary otherness. In particular, we will account for how culturally distant texts disclose themselves to modern readers vis-à-vis the discursive fiction of a speaking voice. In what ways might Chaucer's text address *us*? Thinking, then, about the possibilities for extending the medieval into the present on aesthetic or formal grounds, we will then shift our focus and take the *Canterbury Tales* as a kind of test case by which to assess the claims of competing interpretive agendas, especially historicism. Thus, the readings in this class, and the questions they introduce about our own cultural moment, will appeal to a broad student audience. No experience with early English literature is assumed.

Requirements include short interpretive essays, discussion questions posted to an online forum, a collaborative final project or presentation of some kind, and at least one class trip to a New York City museum or archive to see original manuscripts of Chaucer's work.

**REALISMS: MIMETIC TO MAGICAL** PROFESSOR WILL LEE  
ENG 2052 Section 341 TR 4:30–5:45PM

Literary realists all claim to imitate “the real world,” yet they disagree about what to select, how to convey those selected portions of “reality,” and whether and how the “real” and the literary relate to one another. Mimetic realism attempts to imitate or to present life as it is. Naturalism portrays the struggles of life in a competitive world. Socialist realism requires authors to portray the world of work within the real world, the social structures within which people perform various tasks, and the implicit and explicit explanations of both within a given work. Magical realists admit instances of the improbable and even the impossible into their “real worlds.” Following in the footsteps of Erich Auerbach in *Mimesis* (1946) but updating his narrative, and drawing on narratology and genre theory, we will examine various branches of realism, including mimeticism, naturalism, socialist realism, and magical realism, mainly in novels and stories but also in poems and selected passages from nonfictional and fictional works. The course is designed for majors and minors in the humanities, Jewish Studies, and social sciences, though anyone with a genuine interest is welcome.

Requirements: attendance, active participation, two short essays to develop and demonstrate skills in close reading and increasing understanding of different types of realisms, an optional focused revision of one of the short essays, a final essay of 10–12 pages developed in stages, and possibly a brief presentation.

**GRAPHIC NOVELS AND ANIMATIONS** PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART  
ENG 2963H Section 621 F 10:00AM–12:30PM

*Pre-requisite: Honors standing or permission to attend an Honors course.*  
*Counts as the required non-British literature course for English majors.*

Introduction to the reading experience and analysis of the constantly evolving genres of the graphic novel and animation in the East and West, primarily the US and Japan. The course will approach these genres from the point of view of theme, idea, form, aesthetics, and craft. Together the class will ask and think about how we approach and read comics and animations—as well as how they approach and make contact with us—about the nature of their expressive potential, and it will consider some of the ramifications of the democratizing of art production that these new genres and their technologies bring with them.



Regarding the thematics of comics, graphic novels, and animations, the course will consider them in the context of their sub-genres: comedy, tragicomedy, family memoir, historical fiction and memoir. Among other concerns, it will deal with the question of why artists in the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have so often been moved to turn to these genres when narrating stories relating to the Holocaust, to nuclear destruction, and to human rights crises, and, on a smaller, more individual level, often also when confronting the politics of race, gender, and sexuality. We will

also try to understand the cultural politics of the super-hero phenomenon as well as the insistent tension between the utopian and the dystopian impulses in graphic novels and animations.

Texts/Animations include Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale*; Keiji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen*; Ari Folman, *Waltz With Bashir*; Jason Shiga, *Empire State: A Love Story (or Not)*; Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*; Jim Woodring, *Congress of the Animals*; *South Park*; Alison Bechdel, *Fun House*; Mat Johnson, *Icognegro*; Riyoko Ikeda, *Claudine...!* & *The Rose of Versailles*; Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons: *Watchmen*; Katsuhiro Otomo, *Akira*

Requirements: 1–2 short presentations; term paper or creative project; final exam.

### **GENDER AND LITERATURE PROFESSOR RACHEL MESCH**

ENG 3065 Section 261 M 6:45–9:15PM

*Counts as one of the two 3000-level courses for English majors.*

In this seminar, you will learn critical tools for analyzing gender in literature in order to become a more sensitive reader and to further develop your own voice as you become attuned to textual dimensions that you may have previously ignored. Our readings of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century novels and short stories from both the French (in translation!) and Anglo (British & American) traditions by both male and female authors will be coupled with theoretical texts from various domains of feminist literary criticism and gender and masculinity studies. Among the questions that we will ask: What does it mean to write as a woman or a man and why should that matter? What does it mean to “read for gender” and what is accomplished through this practice? How are masculinity and femininity constructed in literature? What happens when characters do not behave according to accepted gender norms? What is the position of women in the canon and how has this changed? What role have history and culture played in determining and constructing gender? Does our own gender identity affect the way that we read? We will explore these questions in open conversation and dialogue. Most importantly, there will be ample opportunity to explore multiple points of view as you each sharpen your own critical perspective through a new set of analytical tools.

Readings will be drawn from Virginia Woolf, Emily Brontë, Honoré de Balzac, E. M. Forster, Oscar Wilde, Rachilde, Judith Butler, Eve K. Sedgwick, Audre Lorde. Requirements include weekly informal blog postings, two short papers and a longer final paper on a topic of your choice.

### **Cross-listed Core Courses**

*English majors and minors may count one such course towards their requirements.*

### **DIASPORA LITERATURE PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART**

ENG 1002 Section 331 TR 3:00–4:15PM

Literatures of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries relating to mass migrations and massive historical dispersals of peoples, the dissemination of cultures, and their encounters



with other cultures. African, Asian, and Jewish diasporic literatures with one emphasis on American “minor” literatures (Asian American, African American, Jewish American) and another on 20<sup>th</sup>-century and more recent Middle Eastern migration.

A number of the literary works to be read are seminal within the canon of World Literature. The literary texts are read in historical and geographical context and in conjunction with social science and cultural studies analyses of diasporic experiences and formations of ethnic and national and transnational identities.

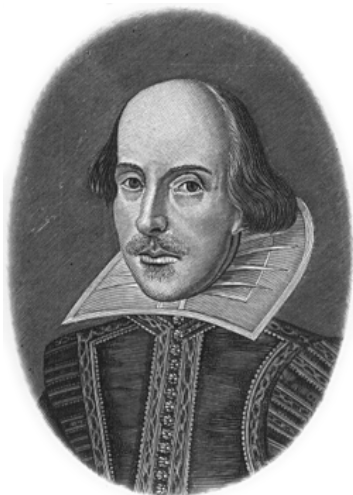
While the focus of the course will vary from semester to semester this semester the course will devote significant attention to contemporary mass migrations from the Middle East in the context of global terrorism and the war on terror.

Topics: the relationship between western and non-western cultures; “minor” and “major” cultures, cultural hybridity and creolization; nationalism, religion, radicalization in the diaspora experience, and “holy war” in the context of colonialism, neocolonialism, and globalization; authoritarianism, violence, and cultural politics in developing nations; the relationship between culture, history, and politics.

Texts/Films by Peter Weir, David Cronenberg, Caryl Phillips, Toni Morrison, V.S. Naipaul, Philip Roth, Randa Jarrar, David H. Hwang, Salman Rushdie, Amos Oz, and others.

Requirements: midterm, final exams, research paper.

**SHAKESPEARE AND THE ARTS    PROFESSOR WILLIAM LEE**  
ENG 1003 Section 331 TR 3:00–4:15PM



Shakespeare integrated many genres, subgenres, and forms of art into his plays: songs, poems, dances, and, in *The Tempest* at the very end of his career, instrumental music and a simple masque. Ever since the Renaissance, Shakespeare has continued to inspire artists of all kinds: painters, sculptors, choreographers, composers, poets, novelists, and filmmakers as well as his fellow playwrights. Shakespeare therefore offers today’s students an excellent opportunity to learn about a broad range of the creative arts during the English Renaissance and beyond. Drawing to a greater or lesser degree on close reading, textual studies, genre studies, genre theory, media studies, film studies, art criticism, art history, literary studies, Shakespeare studies, influence studies, historical studies, and cultural studies, we will focus on how each form of art, each medium, each genre, and each artwork creates meanings.

Requirements: attendance, participation, three 3-page exercise/essays, one 9–10 page essay, a short presentation, and a take-home final.

## FICTION, THE ARTISTIC IMAGINATION, AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS

PROFESSOR RICHARD NOCHIMSON

ENG 1007 Section 231 MW 3:00–4:15PM

The primary focus of this course is to explore the fiction writer's creative process from different angles, including inspiration, conception, development, revision, and adaptation to the screen.

We will be exploring together general and more specific questions such as the following: What happens during the creative process? What is the relationship between an author's life and the author's fictional works? Where does literary inspiration come from? What do creators of fiction think about as they work? How do short stories and novels get written, rewritten, reimagined? How do writers draw upon and transform life experience into narrative fiction? In writing and in rewriting their works, what kinds of decisions do writers make about characterization, about setting, about point of view, about style, about structure, about ideas to be conveyed? How do readers react to and evaluate such decisions? In adapting fictional works, how closely do later writers and filmmakers follow the original work? How do audiences react to changes from the original?



Students will read three novels and will screen film/television versions of each of them. For one of the novels, there will also be background and critical readings.

The novels are the following: Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*; E. M. Forster, *Howards End*; John Le Carré, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*.

Students will also read a selection of short stories; in some cases there will be critical or background materials to accompany the stories. Some of the short story assignments will involve reading earlier and later drafts of the same story. In other cases, students will read a classic short story and also a much later version of the same story by a contemporary writer. Another approach will be to read contemporary stories alongside the canonical stories that served as their inspiration and subject matter, rather than as a source for more direct adaptation.

In addition to regular informal writing in response to the readings and screenings, there will be a midterm, a final, and two relatively brief papers. Students will have the option of writing a short story, along with their own commentary on their story and their own description of the process they followed in creating the story, in place of the second paper. This is a discussion course; attendance and participation are essential.

Visit <http://www.yu.edu/yeshiva-college/ug/english/> to find out more about the YC English Department and its faculty, the English major and minor, and the Writing minor.