

YC Department of English

Spring 2017 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 2017 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. She would be happy to meet with you!

Required for English Majors

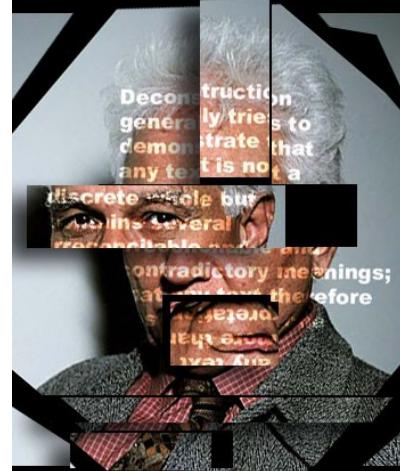
INTERPRETING TEXTS— PROFESSOR DAVID

LAVINSKY

ENG 2010 SECTION 261 M/W 6:45–8:00PM

For new English majors and minors who've completed FYWR 1010 or 1020.

This “gateway” course to the English major is an introduction to critical issues in the discipline of literary studies. It is not, strictly speaking, an introduction to the history of literary criticism or a survey of different theoretical *methods*, though of course we will develop an awareness of both throughout the term. Our mandate instead is to understand what a literary text is and how it “works”; to explore how we might put the substance of our interpretive regard into words; and to think about some larger cultural and institutional issues with respect to the “literary,” both as it conditions our reading practices and as it might justify our efforts to prioritize some texts over others.



Insofar as such concerns implicate the humanities more broadly, this class welcomes students from different majors and academic backgrounds. Readings will be similarly diverse: philosophy and literary criticism; poetry, prose, and drama from different times and places; film, visual art, or architecture; music, new media, or digital media; and perhaps also a literary event or performance in New York City.

Requirements: informed class participation, ungraded response papers, regular postings to an online discussion forum, a short critical essay, and a final project.

SENIOR ORALS—PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART

ENG 4002 Section 481 W 8:15—9:30

In this second 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, culminating in individual Senior Oral Exams in which students present what they have learned over the year. This semester, the texts will be Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, Nella Larsen’s *Passing*, Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, and Wole Soyinka’s *Death and the Kings’ Horseman*. Both semesters of this course are required for 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.

STORYCRAFT: INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING—

DR. BARBARA BLATNER

ENG 1721 SECTION 361 T 6:45—9:15



Do you have stories to tell?

In this workshop, you will practice the ancient art of storytelling by writing in three genres, fiction, poetry and drama/comedy, and adapt narrative elements - structure, voice, imagery, reversals of action - to the demands of each genre. You will write a piece each week, workshop your writing with your classmates, and read as writers. Readings include works by Chekhov, Babel, Moore, DeLillo, Levertov, Waldman, Churchill, Ives, and Baker. Attendance at one literary reading in the greater Manhattan area is required. Grades will be based on a final portfolio of work, class participation, and your willingness to grow as writers.

WRITING ABOUT ILLNESS AND MEDICINE— PROFESSOR JOANNE JACOBSON

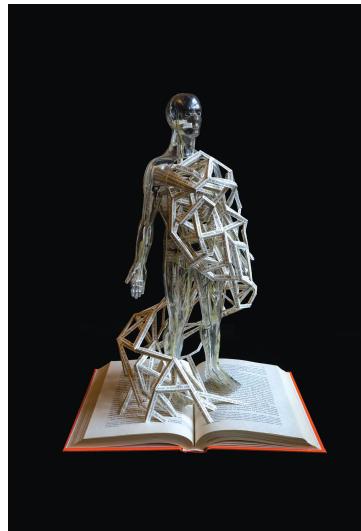
ENG 1660H Section 621 F 10:00—12:30

In this course, we will be exploring the imperatives and the challenges of writing about illness: first as readers, and then—our ultimate focus—as writers. Like other traumas, illness calls out to language and text-making—and, at the same time, pushes against the limits of language, narrative, and genre. Susan Sontag’s famous distinction between the “kingdom of the well” and the “kingdom of the sick” calls attention to the cognitive distance between the experience of illness and taken-for-granted realities of daily life. Language remains a precious resource for crossing that divide, for deepening our understanding of what it means to be ill, and even for improving medicine’s ability to care for patients.

In the first half of the course, we'll be reading together a diverse set of texts that seek to evoke the experience of illness and of medical treatment—nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and graphic memoirs, as well as criticism—at the same time as students begin to create their own writing about both. In the second half of the course, the balance of our class time will turn steadily toward a workshop format, for which students will take on increasingly more sophisticated writing assignments, present their work in class, and provide one another with constructive criticism.

Course requirements: weekly attendance; thoughtful, well-prepared participation in class discussion and workshop; three essays ranging from 3 to 5-8 pages; a final 20-page portfolio of revised writing; a series of short writing exercises; completion of reading assignments, including peer writing for workshop.

Texts will most likely include Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*; Jean-Dominique Bauby, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly: A Memoir of Life in Death*; Anatole Broyard, *Intoxicated by My Illness*; a selection of essays, short fiction, and poetry; a graphic memoir.



Literature

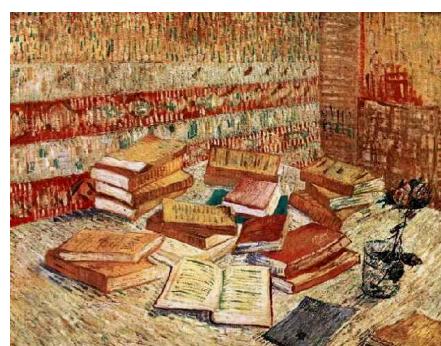
Pre-requisite: FYWR 1010 or 1020.

THE FRENCH NOVEL (IN TRANSLATION)—PROFESSOR RACHEL MESCH

ENG 2185 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. This was a period of tremendous change in France and across Europe. We will examine how multiple forces of change—industrialization, the explosion of consumer culture and the mass press, the development of science and technology, interest in medicine and psychology, and a fascination with the everyday— influenced literary forms and brought us to the realist genre with which we are now so familiar. The course will introduce you to some of the most influential writers of all time, as well as some of the most famous novels ever writ-



ten: Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (don't worry—not all 800 pages!), Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Emile Zola's *The Human Beast* and Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way* (from *In Search of Lost Time*).

NINETEENTH CENTURY LITERATURE AND CULTURE: DARWIN, TENNYSON, MILL, MARX, ENGELS AND DICKENS—PROFESSOR WILL LEE

ENG 3055 Section 241 Tu/Th 4:30—5:45

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

Nineteenth century British texts beg for interdisciplinary approaches, currently best represented by the movements in critical theory called New Historicism and Cultural Studies, which updated and transformed the Victorian Studies movement. Novels like Dickens' *Hard Times* focused explicitly on societal crises, while poets like Tennyson took on social and moral responsibilities, which many Victorians came to feel the Romantics had shirked. Darwin, geology, and contemporary scholarship led most people to question their religious beliefs and their views about human nature. Political developments led them to question their beliefs about men, women, and representative government. In what ways did each text inscribe social fault lines? Did the authors' ideas about how to palliate or eliminate social problems go far enough, or could they have gone further? Readings will cluster around radical cultural developments such as industrialization, urbanization, democratization, and evolution, as unprecedented circumstances propelled writers toward new styles, forms, and positions. Through this course, you will learn to read texts closely, to interpret literature as part of a cultural and social fabric, to imagine (provisionally) what various works meant to the authors' contemporaries, and to realize why modern and Victorian interpretations of the same work inevitably diverge. Since many if not most of our own social problems began to take on their modern forms during the Victorian era, students should see frequent analogies with our own cultures and subcultures.



Readings: Houghton, Williams, Darwin, Tennyson, Mill, Marx, Engels, and Dickens.

This elective course welcomes students majoring in the any of the humanities and social sciences. It will count toward the English major or minor and toward graduation.

Requirements: participation; 4-6 page close cultural reading; focused revision; brief presentation; 12-14 page research paper engaging primary and secondary sources; take-home final

HISTORY OF THE BOOK: FROM GUTENBERG TO GOOGLE—PROFESSOR JEFFREY FREEDMAN

ENG 3124H and HIS 2124H SECTION 621 F10:00-12:30

Pre-requisite: Honors standing or permission to attend an Honors course. Counts as one of the two 3000-level courses for English majors.



Today, digital technology and the internet are reshaping the world of books in multiple ways, challenging previous notions of what a book is, what it is for, how it is transmitted, and who owns it. This is not the first time, however, that the world of books has been so radically transformed. This course seeks to provide some historical perspective on the transformations of the digital age by examining how the world of books developed in the aftermath of an earlier technological breakthrough: the invention in the mid-fifteenth century of printing with movable type.

In addition to normal class meetings, we will be holding two sessions in rare books libraries—one at New York Public Library, where we will be examining copies of early printed books, and the other at Butler Library of Columbia University, where we will be looking at the tools of early-modern bookmaking, including a replica of a wooden hand press. Requirements for the course will include four 4-5 page essays on set topics and one slightly longer, end-of-term paper on a topic to be worked out in consultation with the instructor.

Cross-listed Core Courses

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

DIASPORA LITERATURE—PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART

ENG 1002 SECTION 621 F 10:00—12:30

Literatures of the 20th and 21st 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 20th century and more recent Middle Eastern migration.

Aside from literature and film, we will also study the music of diaspora, all 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.



This semester the course will devote significant attention to the issue of “race,” in America and elsewhere, and to contemporary mass migrations from the Middle East in the context of global terrorism and the war on terror.

Topics: Western and non-western, “minor” and “major” cultures, “race,” cultural hybridity, 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 Cornel West, Peter Weir, Caryl Phillips, V.S. Naipaul, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Philip Roth, Randa Jarrar, Alice Walker, Amos Oz, and Bharati Mukherjee.

Requirements: frequent short written responses, active class participation, 7-8 pp paper, final exam.

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.

LITERATURE, MORALITY, AND ENTERTAINMENT— PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY

ENG 1013 Section 361 Tu 6:45—9:15

The didactic and moral content of English literature often seems in conflict with modern notions of reading as a form of entertainment or imaginative escape. What happens, for instance, if we derive pleasure or enjoyment from a text meant instead to reform our behavior or provide examples of how to act? And what does it mean if we discover moral or ethical models in literature we expected only to be entertaining? Does literature have ennobling effects? By the same logic, can artifice inspire immorality, or distract us from what truly matters? And what becomes of the reader who resists or is already estranged, because of religious or cultural identity, from a text's prescriptive intent? We will approach these questions from different cultural and aesthetic vantage points, all variously concerned with how certain literary and artistic forms inscribe their audiences in the stories they tell, scripting a specific moral response in the process. Our investigation will ground itself in readings from classical antiquity before considering the interrelation of artistic form and moral meaning in specific contexts. We will track anxieties about the spiritual consequences of imaginative diversion and departure; reconsider the relationship between religious art and secular forms of entertainment, and the utility of the sacred/secular distinction more generally; explore the different ways in which visual, textual, and performative mediums exert a hold on our minds (and bodies); and assess how these concerns are implicated in contemporary debates about the problematics of reading and moral exemplification. Many of our readings will be drawn from early English poetry, prose, and drama, though no previous exposure to this period or its literature is assumed, and a wide range of critical and theoretical texts will help students situate unfamiliar material. Requirements include informed class participation, periodic readings quizzes, ungraded response papers, regular postings to an online discussion forum, a short critical essay, and a final project.



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.