

YC Department of English

Spring 2016 Course Offerings

A number of our offerings for Spring 2016 consider works in multiple media—literary texts as well as film, art, music, and theatre. All of 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 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. She would be happy to meet with you!

Required Courses for English Majors and Minors

INTERPRETING TEXTS: LITERARY READING AND CRITICAL PRACTICE

PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINKSY

ENG 2010 Section 261 MW 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 text is and how it “works”; and, from there, to explore the variety of circumstances (institutional and material ones especially) under which a text acquires meaning or solicits our interpretive regard. 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 DAVID LAVINKSY

ENG 4002 SECTION 281 M 8:15–9:45PM

For English majors with senior standing.

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 Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*

finished ten-minute play, and a portfolio of revised exercises and scenes will constitute a final grade.

Yeshiva College Drama Society Director Lin Snider, who has put up many highly successful shows, will visit the class to speak about directing plays and to respond to yours. In addition, because it is vital that playwrights hear their work in the mouths of actors, Ms. Snider will enlist for one or more classes YCDS student actors to read your plays-in-progress.

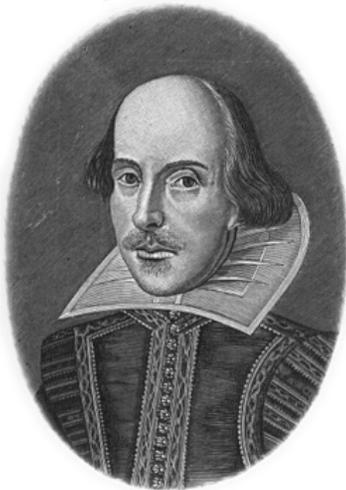
This course will sharpen your observational, storytelling and collaborative skills and thereby grow your writing in any genre, as well as enhance your job candidacy in multiple fields, including, of course, the film, television, advertising and promotional industries.

Literature and Film Electives

Pre-requisite: FYWR 1010 or 1020.

SHAKESPEARE: TRAGEDIES AND ROMANCES PROFESSOR RICHARD L. NOCHIMSON
ENG 2032 Section 231: MW 3:00–4:15PM

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



This course offers the opportunity to get to know some of the most important creations of the playwright generally regarded as the greatest playwright ever: William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare seems to be a writer for all tastes. His plays are appreciated and understood (not necessarily in the same ways) by sophisticated and unsophisticated theatergoers, by adults and children, by people in English-speaking countries and people from very different cultures such as India and Japan. He speaks as meaningfully to audiences in the twenty-first century as he did to his original audiences in Elizabethan and Jacobean England.

The plays of Shakespeare expand our horizons. They are also enjoyable. Even the most serious and tragic of the tragedies.

Students will read and discuss nine plays: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. Reading of some background and critical material will enhance students' ability to appreciate Shakespeare's art and meanings.

Class discussion is important. Students will keep an informal journal of reactions to the plays and other readings. There will be an opportunity to see at least one live production of a play by Shakespeare.

Requirements: Two five-page papers (no research required) and a final.

MODERNISMS: MUSIC, LITERATURE & ART PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART

ENG 2071H Section 331 TR 3:00–4:15PM

Pre-requisite: Honors standing or permission to attend an Honors course.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Western culture underwent a most consequential series of crises. In tune with the changes wrought by industrialization, urbanization, and the break-neck speed of technological innovations, the cultures of Europe and the U.S. reflected a relationship to the past, to tradition, and to time itself that utterly transformed these cultures. “Things fall apart,” wrote Yeats, “the centre cannot hold.” Literature, music, and the arts came to be characterized by formal and experiential fragmentedness and flooded with cognitive and emotional anxiety and dissonance, just as in the geopolitical world the very notions of individuality, freedom, collective life, power, and metaphysics underwent cataclysmic changes, as did the West’s self-identity in relation to the rest of the world and began to work out some of its confrontations with non-western cultures.

Politically, much of the world, but especially large swathes of Europe, came into the clutches of totalitarianism, and these experiences and modes of thought play a large role in the literature and music of the era. Freedom and its lack play a key role in modernist literature and art, as did the development in many quarters of a certain culture of violence. Violence, new ways of thinking about human rights, different values placed on human life came to invade modern western life and consciousness, together with the question: how can the individual find her place in this new world? On the other hand, works of literature, art, and music were driven by desire for “breakthrough” into a new world. In the throes of these cultural identity crises, the title “Modernism” thus came to describe an urge to blast the present out of the hold of a past whose authority modern writers, artists, and musicians could no longer regard as inviolate.

Given our contemporary struggles with redefining individual freedoms, with the re-surfacing of radical extremist and apocalyptic visions and accompanying violence, and a resurgent serious threat being posed to democracy and Enlightenment values, together with the growth of terror, studying Modernism and the modernist era may be timely.

Works in literary Western and non-Western modernism; basic texts by Nietzsche, Freud, Benjamin; Music: Mahler, Strauss, Schoenberg, and Debussy.

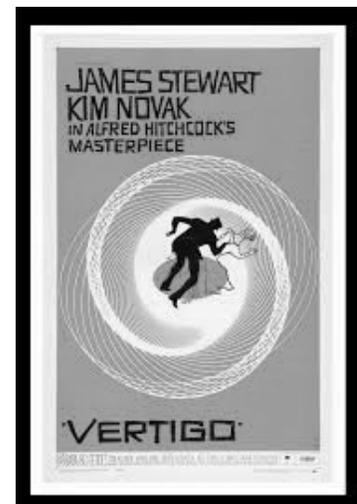
Requirements: midterm, final, research paper

APPROACHES TO FILM PROFESSOR PAULA GEYH

ENG 3131 Section 361 TR 6:45–8:45PM

Counts towards the two 3000-level courses for the English major.

From the earliest Edison kinetoscopes of the 1890s to Cameron’s 3D *Avatar* and beyond, the cinema has captivated us and shaped our expectations and understanding of the world.



This course will introduce students to the basics of analyzing film. We'll focus primarily on the close reading of elements of mise-en-scène and montage, paying particular attention to how they come together to produce meaning. We'll also discuss different theoretical approaches to film and film genres and their conventions. Texts will include Kavin, *How Movies Work*; and Elsaesser and Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses*. Films will include *A Trip to the Moon*; *Sherlock Jr.*; *Man with the Movie Camera*; *Rear Window*; *It Happened One Night*; *Citizen Kane*; *Casablanca*; *The Searchers*; *Singin' in the Rain*; *La Jetée*; *Meshes of the Afternoon*; *Vertigo*; *Breathless*; and *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Requirements: Three papers and two exams.

Cross-listed Core Courses

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

BOOKS ON BOOKS/FILMS ON FILMS PROFESSOR PAULA GEYH

ENG 1001 Section 331 TR 3:00–4:15PM

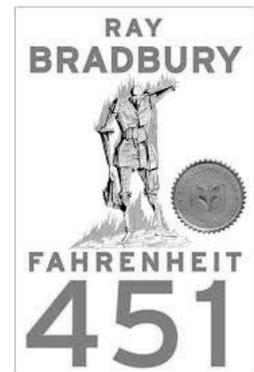
ENG 1001H Section 341 TR 4:30–5:45PM: *Pre-requisite: Honors standing or permission to attend an Honors course.*

What do literature and film tell us about themselves and each other? How is reading a novel or short story different from “reading” a film? What happens when a story passes from one medium to another? By addressing these questions, this course will help student to develop a deeper understanding of the relationships between literature and film, and through these relationships, of each medium.

The course will begin by examining the key elements of literary and cinematic story telling, and of how these elements come together to produce the meaning of a story. Then we will explore various approaches used in the analysis of literature and film, by studying both theoretical texts about literature and film, and close readings of particular works in both media, with the aim of enabling students to create their own compelling interpretations of literature and film.

Course texts will include Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*; Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*; and Zusak, *The Book Thief*. Films will include *The Wizard of Oz*, *Sherlock Jr.*, *Stranger than Fiction*, *Singin' in the Rain*, and *Fahrenheit 451*. Critical texts will include Plato, Book X of *The Republic*; Wilde, “The Decay of Lying”; Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*; and Spadoni, *A Pocket Guide to Analyzing Film*.

Requirements: Three papers and an exam.



DIASPORA LITERATURE PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART

ENG 1002 Section 311 TR 1:30–2:45PM & Section 621 F 10:00AM–12:30PM



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 Caribbean literatures and cultures, and the other on contemporary waves of migration.

Almost all of the literary works to be read are seminal within the canon of World Literature. The literary texts are read in the context of histories and contemporary events of migration and in conjunction with social science and cultural studies analyses of diasporic experiences and formations of ethnic and national 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.

FROM TRADITION TO MODERNITY PROFESSOR MANFRED WEIDHORN

ENG 1016 Section 261 MW 6:45–8:00PM

After the flowering of classical civilization, pagan polytheism declined and was soon replaced by the form of ethical monotheism known as Christianity. For some 1300 years, Europe (aka “The West”) was in the tight grip of a theocentric outlook, such as had been the case in Biblical Israel and is still the case in certain Islamic nations. This vision is based on the idea that four central assumptions are necessary for all thinking about metaphysical, moral, and even scientific matters. These foundation stones—or pillars of wisdom or roads to the truth—are Revelation, Scripture, Tradition, and Authority (call them STAR, for easy recollection). The dominance of this quartet of values, along with an overarching “faith,” constitutes “traditional” society. “Modern” therefore simply means the discarding of these four. So how did the West go from pagan to Christian and then, in turn, revert to pagan? How did a spiritual, God-fearing culture turn into what today is celebrated as harboring maximum freedom or, on the part of rabbi, priest, and mullah, anathematized for maximum swinishness? Among the authors to be read are Dante, Machiavelli, Cervantes, Galileo, and Dostoyevski.

Requirements: A few short essays and a 3000-word term paper; a midterm examination and a final.

THE AVANT-GARDE: LITERATURE AND THE ARTS PROFESSOR WILLIAM LEE
ENG 1020 Section 241 MW 4:30–5:45PM

This INTC core course/ENG elective will explore the avant-garde in literature and the arts drawing on 19th and early 20th century continental, British, and American artworks. How can we develop tools for understanding works that intend to break from tradition, to “make it new” as Pound and the age demanded? Drawing on close reading, textual studies, genre studies, genre theory, media studies, film studies, art criticism, art history, literary studies, historical studies, and cultural studies, we will pay special attention to painting, photography, poetry, fiction, and film, though students will become aware of experiments in other media and forms of art as well. We will focus on how each artwork creates meaning within its medium, genre(s), form(s), and



*Portrait of Osip Brik by
Alexander Rodchenko (1924)*

style(s) and techniques; when we can assess an interpretation as partial, implausible, or downright impossible; how interpreters can arrive at probable or even compelling interpretations of groundbreaking creative works within the literary, visual, and performing arts; and the relationships between avant-garde artists, artworks, and movements and their surrounding cultural and political contexts. By definition, these radical artworks and movements like cubism, imagism, futurism, and surrealism challenged and continue to stimulate audiences, individual interpreters, and critics, stimulating opposition, satire, and support.

Requirements: Attendance, participation, two or three short interpretive essay/exercises, a final 10 pp. paper, and a take-home final exam.

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.