

GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

WINTER 2010

English 260: (Andrea Denny-Brown)

Medieval Knighthood and the Artifice of Masculinity

Wednesday, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

“A man without arms has no right to speak.” Bérroul, *Tristan*

This seminar will investigate the perceptions of masculinity that develop around the concept of knighthood in the European Middle Ages. We will combine readings in medieval literature with recent theoretical work, focusing on the masculine care of the self and the body by way of the following subjects: technological and cultural changes in arms and armor; battle plunder and violence; women's love tokens integrated into knightly attire; chivalry and self-presentation; beards, body hair, and hair cuts; Christ as knight; knightly dressing and cross-dressing; disguise and jousting; the emergence of the “gallant” or dandy; and the economics and aesthetics of heraldry. Although this course centers on pre-modern constructions of masculinity, it will ground students in theoretical approaches and concepts which are applicable to the study of periods and cultures other than the Middle Ages. Primary texts will include *Song of Roland*, *Guillaume d'Orange*, *Roman de Silence*, select Middle English romances, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and chivalric manuals by Ramon Llul, Geofroi de Charny, and Christine de Pizan. Theoretical texts will include Judith Butler, Kaja Silverman, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, and Homi Bhabha.

English 267: (Susan Zieger)

Fictions of Nineteenth-Century Sexuality

Wednesday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

This course introduces students to major theories of sexuality that are considered crucial to understanding nineteenth-century fiction, particularly the novel. We will read theory by Freud, Foucault, Butler, Sedgwick, and Edelman; novels by Emily Brontë, Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, and Henry James, and literary criticism that mediates between them. Topics will include Foucault's revision of Freud's repression hypothesis; Butler's critique of Foucault's construction of the body; Sedgwick's model of homoerotic rivalry; Marcus' theory of lesbian desire; and Edelman's “negativity thesis.” Formal course requirements include a facilitation of class discussion, an annotated bibliography, and a 15-page research paper. *Students are expected to write their papers on texts or theoretical questions that we encounter together.* Required course texts include: Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality vol. 1*; Sigmund Freud, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*; Herculine Barbin, *Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*; Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*; Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* and *Great Expectations*; Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; Henry James, “The Tragic Muse”; and Eve Sedgwick,

Epistemology of the Closet. Additional materials will be posted on the course website. Recommended texts include: Butler, *Bodies That Matter*; Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*; Sedgwick, *Between Men*; Sharon Marcus, *Between Women*; and Richard Dellamora, *Friendship's Bonds*. For our first class meeting on Jan. 4, students are asked to read *Wuthering Heights* and Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (introduction and chapter 4).

English 270: (Rob Latham)

The Postmodern Novel

Tuesday, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

This course surveys the postmodern American novel, covering representative texts from the mid-1960s through the mid-1980s. The class will examine a range of narrative forms and experimental techniques that have characterized postmodern writing. Specific themes we will track include: the contrast between minimalist and maximalist styles of writing; the playful and/or conspiratorial revision of historical narratives; the interrogation and incorporation of mass media forms and images; the collapse of distinctions between elite and popular cultures; and the transformation of personal and social identity through technological systems. We will also sample major conceptual models of postmodernity and significant theorizations of postmodernism in literature.

English 272: (Carole-Anne Tyler)

The Turn to Ethics

Thursday, 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

This seminar explores the “turn to ethics” in theorizing the humanities and arts in the last quarter century, with a particular emphasis on the antihumanist and poststructuralist contributions to that turn. Issues to be considered include equality, difference, and “rights”; radical alterity, narcissism, and “recognition”; cosmopolitanism, relativism, nihilism, and “Truth”; aggression, violence, and “hospitality.” These issues will be explored through texts by or about Aristotle, Kant, Sade, Bentham, Hegel, Nietzsche, Lacan, Zizek, Levinas, Derrida, Agamben, Butler, Edelman, Badiou, Irigaray, Salecl, Appiah, Freud, Fanon, and Spivak. This list is tentative, with an average of 2-3 essays or book chapters per week required, depending on the difficulty of the material. The class will conclude with a discussion of ethics and Coetzee's recent novel *Disgrace*. Required writing includes two very short summaries of a text (2-3 pages; 26% of the final grade or 13% each), with particular attention to the single most useful, most problematic, and most confusing ideas in it; a short analysis of a text (3-4 pages; 20% of the final grade); a final research paper abstract and bibliography (300-500 words; 4% of the final grade); and a final research paper based on that abstract, roughly conference-length (9-12 pages; 40% of the final grade). The final research paper (and therefore the abstract too) must focus on one or more of the readings or on the ethics of *Disgrace* and should include at least half a dozen bibliographic sources, at least two of which but no more than three of which should be from the course readings. The total writing required therefore amounts to one typical seminar paper (17-22 pages). There are no mandated formal presentations besides the summaries, to be provided in writing to

classmates and the instructor. The only other requirement is regular attendance and participation, defined as contributions to class conversations and online threaded discussion boards (10% of the final grade).

English 276: (Weihsin Gui)
The Ends of Postcolonialism
Monday, 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

This course takes up the question raised in a recent special issue of PMLA that we are witnessing the demise of postcolonial studies. We will start by discussing why scholars involved in postcolonial studies might think that this field is coming to an “end.” Then, we will discuss the “ends” of this field, or, alternatively, the various critical questions, issues, and areas of inquiry that postcolonial literary studies engages with. Rather than focus on the work of a few major thinkers or put forward a coherent argument, this course is designed as an introduction to the existing and evolving body of criticism and methods of knowledge production we know today as “postcolonialism.” Assignments: Short critical response papers, in-class presentation, mini-conference presentation, and final research paper. Texts: Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven*; Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*; Patricia Grace, *Dogside Story*; V. S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival*; Gaurav Desai and Supriya Nair, *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*. Additional materials will be available in PDF form on Blackboard/iLearn.

English 278: (Tiffany López)
Sobrevivencias: Foundational Readings and Critical Paradigms in Chicana/o
Discourse
Wednesday, 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

This seminar focuses on foundational texts in Chicana discourse. The seminar’s goal is to provide an in-depth study of pivotal writers with attention to what it is that has made them so foundational to reading the field. We will analyze their deployment of voice, strategic manipulation of genre and experimentation with literary aesthetics, and their subsequent fostering of new critical frameworks. Our readings will begin with a focus on authors whose work has been read as groundbreaking for both the conversations they have launched and the ways they have launched them. Notably, these authors work across a wide variety of genres; we will therefore address the vital role genre has played in their writing and their repeated yet varied attention to specific questions, issues, and themes. In thinking about genre, the seminar also explores the important role of the personal essay in Chicana discourse. We will read leading scholars’ creative work in tandem with their academic writing to analyze how and why Chicana discourse understands and defines critical and creative work as mutually informative.

Performance: Students are expected to regularly and actively participate in seminar discussion and demonstrate engagement with skills of close reading and literary analysis. Participants will be required to produce a portfolio of writing across genres that positions

itself in direct conversation with the course reading. The demonstrated aspiration toward journal quality work will be expected from post-MA students. Given that bilingualism, Spanish-English word play, code-switching, and Spanglish are all distinguishing elements of Chicana discourse, all seminar participants should feel comfortable reading and working with text passages where authors deploy the Spanish language.

Required Texts:

Wendy Belcher and Chon Noriega, eds., *I Am Aztlán: The Personal Essay in Chicano Studies*

Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back* (anniversary edition)

Cherríe Moraga and Norma Alarcon, et al, eds., *The Sexuality of Latinas*

Cherríe Moraga, *Loving in the War Years; Heroes and Saints and Other Plays; The Hungry Woman- A Mexican Medea; and Waiting in the Wings*

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera; Prietita and the Ghost Woman; and Friends from the Other Side*

Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street; Woman Hollering Creek; My Wicked, Wicked Ways; Loose Woman – Poems; and Caramelo*

Carla Trujillo, ed. *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About and Living Chicana Theory*

Carla Trujillo, *What Night Brings*

Josie Méndez-Negrete, *Las Hijas de Juan: Daughters Betrayed*

Emma Perez, *Forgetting the Alamo, Or, Blood Memory: A Novel*

Other required readings that will be made available:

Moraga, ed., *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* (selections); “Queer Aztlán: The Reformation of Chicano Tribe,” from *The Last Generation*

Mary Pat Brady, “‘Against the Nostalgia for the Whole and the One’: Cherríe Moraga, Aztlán and the Spatiality of Memory”; “Sandra Cisneros’s Contrapuntal ‘Geography of Scars’”; “Intermarginalia: Chicana/o Spatiality and Sexuality in the Work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Terri de la Peña”

Linda Heidenreich, “Learning from the Death of Gwen Araujo?—Transphobic Racial Subordination and Queer Latina Survival in the Twenty-First Century”

Emma Perez, “Queering the Borderlands: The Challenges of Excavating the Invisible and Unheard”

Tiffany Ana López and Phillip Serrato, “A New Mestiza Primer: Borderlands Philosophy in the Children’s Books of Gloria Anzaldúa”

Tiffany Ana López, “Reading Trauma and Violence in U.S. Latina/o Children’s Literature”

Norma Klahn, “Literary (Re)Mappings: Autobiographical (Dis)Placements by Chicana Writers

English 279: (Vorris Nunley)

Keeping it Real/Ethnic(?): Ethnic Rhetorics, Epsitemes, and the Political Rationality of Neo-Liberalism

Tuesday, 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Arguing that episteme (knowledge) and ethnicity are, in the words of rhetorician Steven Mailloux, “rhetorical all the way down, interpretation all around, performative and ideological here, there, and everywhere,” this seminar will provide a survey of theories and methods informing a variety of ethnic rhetorics and epistemes (Native American, Puritan, Chinese and Chinese American, Japanese-American, African American, and Mexican/Chicano, Corporate-Yes, Corporate!). Informed by rhetoricians such as Protagoras, Aspasia, Aristotle, Nietzsche, Mira Chieko Shimabukuro, and James Berlin; and borrowing from rhetorician and cultural theorist LuMing Mao, our seminar will venture beyond the limitations of ontology (the is-ness of a particular rhetoric/episteme) and delve into ethnicity as a productive practice and pedagogy (the kind of work a particular ethnic rhetoric/episteme **does**).

In addition to resisting the tendency to reduce ethnic/local knowledges to mere *sociology/difference*, such a method sculpts a space for seminar participants to theorize the relation of spatiality and ethnicity, and interrogates liberal-humanist notions of tolerance/diversity as critiqued by Lisa Lowe and Slavoj Zizek, allowing us to more productively understand how ethnic rhetorics remain both heard and unheard, commodified, yet invisible. This invisibility occurs vis-à-vis a hegemonic political rationality that, according to political theorist Wendy Brown, not only “governs the sayable, and the intelligible” but also, is a “specific form of normative political reason organizing the political sphere, governance practices, and citizenship.” Given that neo-liberalism is arguably the political rationality of our epoch, the seminar will wrestle with how increasingly, ethnicity, and the very idea of the human, is mediated through market, corporate, and visual logics that disturb the reality of ethnicity,

English 281: (Stan Stewart)

Comparative Studies

Literature and . . .

Thursday, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

For the past several decades, we have seen a rise of “Interdisciplinary Studies.” Like the term “pragmatism,” the meaning of which even “pragmatists” could not decide upon, “Interdisciplinary Studies” means many things to many people, and probably no good purpose would be served by our attempt to nail one particular definition to the mast, while interdicting all others. At the same time, we might want to clarify what we mean when we use the term. In this seminar, we will proceed to examine one (namely our own) application of the term in a way that seems useful to us. By this we mean that we will explain how the term applies in such and such a case. We have, for instance, such topics as:

Literature and Philosophy
Literature and Psychology
Literature and Sociology
Literature and Anthropology

Literature and Music
Literature and Science
Literature and Theology
Literature and Political Science
Literature and History
Literature and Medicine
Literature and Physics
Literature and Art

As an example of “Literature and Philosophy,” I will introduce the seminar with an overview of my new book, ***Shakespeare and Philosophy*** (Routledge 2010). We will discuss the possible uses of a descriptive (as distinct from a prescriptive) definition of “Interdisciplinary Studies.” Then, each student will select a field other than literary studies—congenial to that student’s particular interest--and examine its relation to a particular author. An example might be, “Cardinal Newman and Logic”; presumably, then, the student interested in that topic would explore the relationship of philosophy to, say, *The Grammar of Ascent*. “Walter Pater and Italian Painting” might be an example of an essay on “Literature and Art.” Another might explore “Literature and Anthropology,” by taking a look at the intersection of writings of anthropologists with the works of T. S. Eliot. Thomas Merton might invite readings in theology, Thomas Browne and Michael Crichton on medicine. Science fiction authors—and even critics of the newly-released ***Star Trek***--might invite discussions of physics.

For the obvious reason that I do not know the students’ interests in advance, and understand that these interests might be nothing like my own, there will be no specific text for this course. Instead, we will ask questions about where to go when we are interested in one or another application of “Literature and” studies.