

Eng 400 Seminars

Spring 2018

Students can learn about the professor's research interests from their [faculty pages](#) on the department's website.

Visual Narrative in Comics and Graphic Novels

Dr. Amy Anderson

Why are we continually drawn to Batman's attempts to save Gotham? And why are we willing to follow Calvin and his smart-alec buddy Hobbs as they careen off yet another cliff in nothing but a wagon? The engrossing visual narratives in comic strips and graphic novels tell their stories both through what is shown and what is hidden in the gutter. In this course, we'll take a closer look at how these narratives are constructed. We'll learn a basic vocabulary for talking about visual narratives from Scott McCloud, Molly Bang, and other visual theorists. Then, we'll turn our discussion to a series of graphic novels and the personal, social, and cultural work that they accomplish. We'll join in the scholarly discussion on the COMIXSCHOLARS listserv, and you'll also have the chance to further research a comics-related topic of your own choosing.

Literature of the Holocaust

Dr. Paul Green

The central goal of this course is to help students understand, in some small way, the horrors of the Shoah (the Hebrew word for the Holocaust) and its impact on the millions whom it directly or indirectly affected. Secondly, it is to be hoped that focusing on a limited number of Holocaust and post-Holocaust texts for critical discussion will provide a voice for the 6,000,000 Jews and 5,000,000 non-Jews silenced by the Nazis, particularly at a time when Holocaust denial (sometimes referred to as Holocaust revisionism) is increasing by leaps and bounds. In addition, it is hoped that this course will familiarize students, through the assigned readings, oral reports, and required research, with some important works of literature dealing with various aspects of the Holocaust. This course will take a broad-based Cultural Studies approach, emphasizing New Historicist and Feminist perspectives, among others. Students will be encouraged to utilize other appropriate critical, theoretical, and historical views for their oral presentations and their written work. The readings will represent both canonical and non-canonical genres (poetry, drama, short stories, novels, and discursive essays, on the one hand; journals, diaries, memoirs, survivor narratives, and a graphic novel, on the other). Though the instructor will lecture as needed, the emphasis throughout will be on class discussion. Students will have at their disposal the fairly recently acquired Sender Frejdownicz Collection of scholarly books in the Francis Harvey Green Library, as well as the Sender Frejdownicz Holocaust Study Room.

Reading James Joyce's *Ulysses*

Dr. Graham MacPhee

James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* is often described as the greatest novel ever written in English, yet many potential readers are put off by its reputation as an especially "difficult" and "inexplicable" book. Don't be intimidated by the scare stories—this seminar will give you the key to understanding this brilliant, funny, and ground-breaking novel. We will look at the historical context within which Joyce was writing and trace how these events shaped the humor, insights, and experimentation of his fascinating novel. Understood in relation to the momentous events of the time—war and revolution in Ireland, racism and imperialism in the British Empire, and new ways of seeing gender relations and sexuality in the modern world—you'll find a real sense of achievement in taming a text that has (sadly) scared off less courageous readers.

The course will combine perspectives from postcolonial and Irish studies, and gender, race, and critical theory to examine how historical context enables the interpretation of what might seem a "difficult" modernist text. The seminar will develop students' skills in close reading and critical writing, and will provide an advanced foundation in literary analysis to prepare students as future English teachers, graduate students, or historically literate citizens and professionals.

Interested students can learn about the seminar instructor's research interests from Dr. MacPhee's faculty listing on the English Department's website.

Theorizing the Novel: Kazuo Ishiguro and Chang-rae Lee

Dr. William Nessly

This seminar is targeted toward students interested in narrative and the theory of the novel, contemporary literature, ethnic and minority literature, and the study of imperialism. As a focused study of two similar authors, the course will involve a rigorous, in-depth study of narrative form and a detailed introduction to the theory of the novel. By narrowing our focus, we will be able to go deeper into the novels and theories than is usually possible. You will read four novels—Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills* and *The Remains of the Day*, and Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* and *A Gesture Life*. You will also read selections from classic novel theorists such as Ian Watt and Mikhail Bakhtin, Foucaultian scholars of the novel, and theoretical works by Edward Said and Lisa Lowe, among others. Unreliable narration, links between imperialism and the novel, comparisons of American and British contexts, and the representation of trauma will be important topics of the course.

Language, Literature, and Cognition

Dr. Eirini Panagiotidou

This course focuses on the interface between language and cognition and investigates the impact of a range of linguistic features on the reading experience. It draws on methodologies developed in the field of cognitive poetics, a relatively recent development in the area of literary criticism. Cognitive poetics brings together linguistics, psychology, and advancements in the field of cognitive sciences to study how meaning is constructed in literary texts. Students will be introduced to a number of cognitive poetic frameworks including blending theory, conceptual metaphor, deixis, prototype, frame, and schema theory. We will also investigate the relationship between literary texts and reader engagement and address a series of questions related to why we are moved by literature. Using a number of literary texts from a variety of

genres, students will be encouraged to reflect on how meaning is constructed through linguistic and stylistic choices and on the role of the reader in the meaning construction process.

Women in Social Media

Dr. Ashley Patriarca

#YesAllWomen, & #SolidarityIsforWhiteWomen, & #YouOKSis: Women and Social Media

Despite the stereotypes, identifying as a woman on social media is not all pinning wedding ideas to inspiration boards. Rather, it's a complex performance of identity and navigating communities that may or may not be welcoming. In this class, we'll analyze how women use social media to establish and maintain connections, develop activist networks, etc. We'll work with intersectional feminist theory and social networking theories to help us understand how these uses developed and what purposes they serve for the users. We'll examine the discussions about the present and future state of feminism that have developed through hashtags such as #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen. We'll also address the risks associated with being a woman on social media, such as the potential for harassment.

Students can learn about Dr. Patriarca's work and research interests on the English department website and from her personal website, <http://www.ashleypatriarca.com>.

Technocriticism and the Rhetoric of Technology

Dr. Timothy Ray

Course Description: Technology is not neutral. It is many things to many people. And it is laden with values and interpretations and meanings. As such, it is rhetorical. This course will attempt to examine the rhetorical dimensions of technology by looking at exemplary texts that cast a rhetorical spin on technology and texts that engage in a process of "technocriticism"—i.e., critiquing technology for its social implications. Students will be encouraged to scrutinize these texts through various theoretical lenses—including Marxism/classism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, Freudian psychoanalytic theory/sex theory, feminist theory, queer theory and semiotics—in in effort to articulate how technology is being used rhetorically and viewed critically by these writers—i.e., how "technocriticism" exists as a theoretical lens in and of itself. In doing so, students themselves will be engaging in technocriticism in their scholarly projects for the course. By compiling our various articulations of the rhetoric of technology at work in specific works, seminar members will attempt to construct an overarching rhetoric of technology and a greater understanding of technocriticism and its critical role in academia and society and even our wired lifestyles themselves. The course will look at how technology is viewed by various professions, by various cultures and subcultures, by religious groups, and by society at large and will look at the interrelationships between technology and society in terms of technocriticism.

Novel Narratives: Playing with Print in the Digital Age

Dr. Eleanor Shevlin

This seminar focuses on the unexpected ways that digital culture has reinvigorated novels as a printed genre and the prehistory of the Novel's play with print. J.J. Abrams and Doug Dorst's novel *S.* exemplifies this rejuvenation and serves as the inspiration and starting point for the course. Presented as a translation of the final novel of an enigmatic but famed author, one V.M. Straka, and designed as a tattered library book enclosed in a slipcase, *S.* also offers up the handwritten interactions of two readers who are literary students. While its narrative can be read sequentially page by page, it also mimics a hyperlinked environment through the distinctive stories told by the marginalia and Straka's text. Starting with *S.*, we will examine the resurgence of fiction's play with print in the wake of our ever-increasing digital world. To this end, we will read *S.* and four other works, two of which pre-date the advent of our sociocultural immersion in the digital. B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1968), the first of our two pre-digital novels, offers a haunting narrative about illness and memoir; its message is reinforced by its use of the print medium and invites comparisons with hypertext. The second is an even older text, Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767), whose guiding premise is questioning how one can truly represent a life within the confines of the printed page. The other two works we will read join *S.* in being full participants in print's play in the digital age. Both *Kapow!* and *Bats of the Republic: An Illuminated Novel* employ design and visuals as integrated functions of their narrative. Methodologically, we will be employing aspects of narrative theory, theories of the novel, and scholarship in print and digital cultures of the book. In addition to regular participation, you will write a position paper, a remediation paper, deliver a formal presentation, and complete a three-part final project that culminates in a 12- to 15-page seminar paper.

Reading History: The Boundaries of Nonfiction/Fiction/Poetry **Dr. Jeff Sommers**

Author's Notes that offer disclaimers about the contents of an historical novel are not at all unusual in contemporary historical fiction. The challenge presented to readers is how to answer the question: "When reading a book set in the past, how are readers supposed to know what to trust or believe?" Another way to phrase the question is "What is the boundary between nonfiction and fiction?" A naïve reader will accept the story as historical fact; a cynical reader will reject the story as entirely imaginary. Our goal in this seminar will be to devise more sophisticated reading strategies that acknowledge the statement "based on a true story" to be an authorial warning designed to influence our reading. By reading historical fiction, both short stories and novels, and historically-based poetry along with commentary by historians on their work and by literary critics on the literature, students in this seminar will attempt to construct those sophisticated reading strategies.

Literature & Language of Environmentalism **Dr. Cheryl Wanko**

This seminar looks at how "nature," sustainability, and environmental problems have been constructed in North American writing. Examining a range of types of texts from the Bible to modern memoirs will allow us to consider questions related to ecocriticism, conduct research related to the intersections between language, literature, science, and culture, and create texts that address local and broader environmental questions. We will complete and reflect on a week-long "No Impact" experiment that asks us to see how

little environmental impact we can make. We'll also ponder our own places in the global challenges and evaluate ways of teaching about sustainability in an English Studies curriculum to try to figure out how best we can that confront those challenges through our discipline.