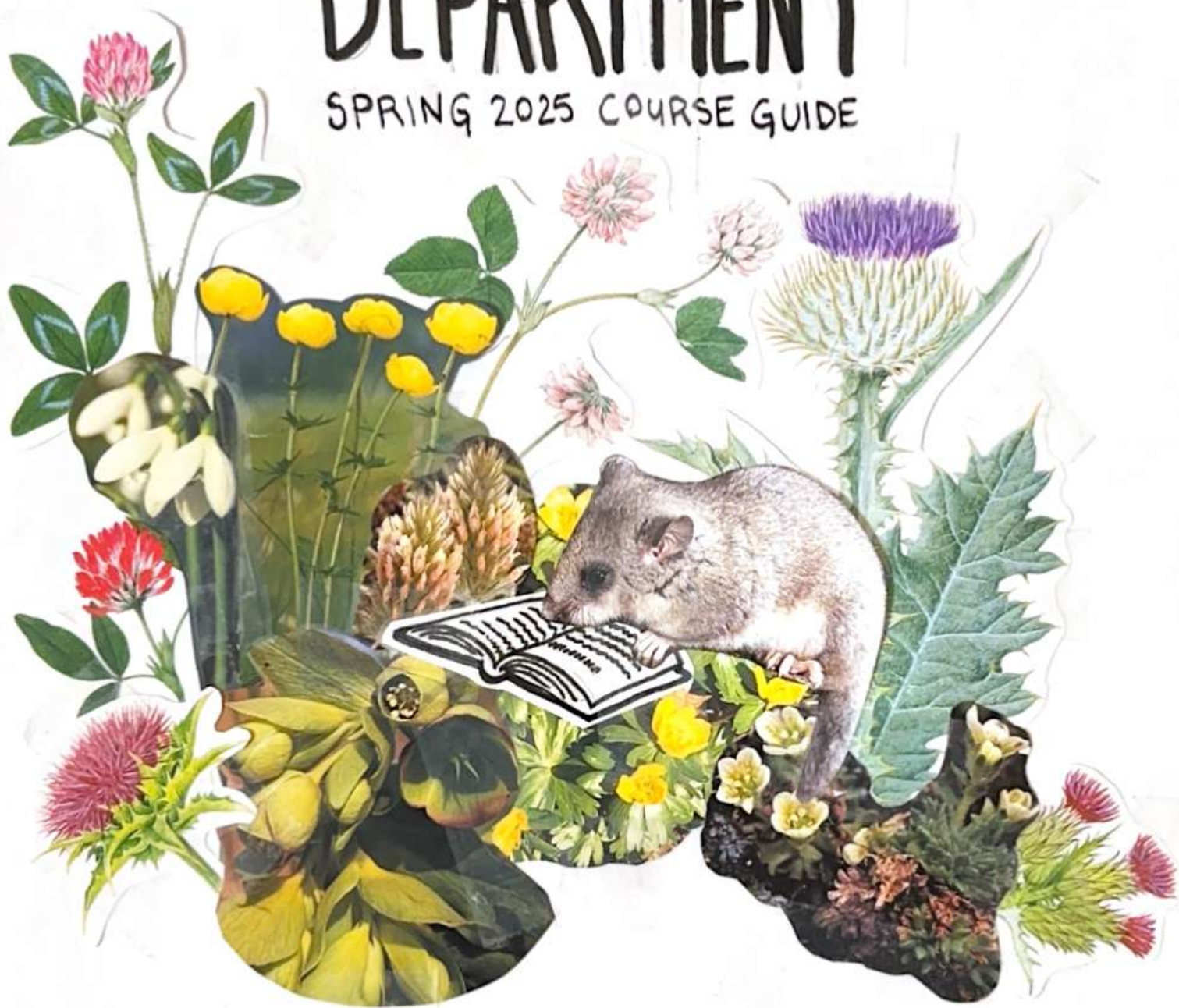


HAVERFORD • COLLEGE • ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

SPRING 2025 COURSE GUIDE



containing descriptions of readings, approaches
and course conduct of ALL departmental offerings

cover art by Liesl Baldauf '25

Major Requirements

Admission to the major requires completion of at least two courses, WRPR 150 or a 100level English course and 1-2 English courses at the 200 level, by the end of the sophomore year.

In total the major requires eleven credits

- Seven courses at the 100, 200 and 300 levels of which
 - At least two must be in literature written before 1800
 - At least two must be in literature written after 1800
 - At least one (and no more than two, including WRPR 150) must be at the 100 level; two or three at the 200 level; and a minimum of two must be at the 300 level.
- ENGL 298 and 299, the two-semester Junior Seminar in English
- ENGL 298j, the .5 credit yearlong Junior Seminar tutorial in English
- ENGL 399f (Fall) and 399b (Spring) for a total of 1.5 credit Senior Conference

Note: The department will give major credit for a one semester course in a foreign literature in the original language and/or for Comparative Literature 200. No more than four (4) major credits will be awarded for work done beyond the Tri-College Consortium, whether abroad or in the U.S. Courses taken in the Bryn Mawr English Department, the Swarthmore English Department, and the UPenn English Department may also be counted towards the major at Haverford.

Creative Writing Concentration:

Creative Writing courses at Haverford are open to all students. Only a handful of English majors per year, however, are accepted into the Creative Writing Concentration.

- Students interested in completing a Creative Writing Concentration must: 1) have taken or be in the process of completing two college creative writing courses by the spring of their junior year; 2) apply for acceptance to the Concentration by submitting a portfolio of creative work to the Director of Creative Writing in March of their junior year
- The concentration involves writing a senior thesis composed of an original creative text (usually poetry, fiction or drama) and a rigorous critical component

Students interested in completing a Creative Writing Concentration apply for acceptance in the spring semester of their junior year by submitting a portfolio of creative work to Asali Solomon, Director of Creative Writing **by the Friday before Spring Break of their Junior year (no extensions)**. The Departmental Concentration Committee will grant admission to students whose work suggests their readiness to generate a substantial literary project

English Department Course Offerings Spring 2025

COURSE NUMBER	DIV. DIST. CROSSLIST	COURSE NAME	CLASS HOURS	LTD. ENROLL.	INSTRUCTOR
ENGL 101B	A/B	Theories of the Novel	MW 10-11:25	15	Millen
ENGL 113B	A/B AA	Playing in the Dark: Freedom, Slavery, and the Haunting of U.S. Literature	TTH 1-2:25	20	Stadler
ENGL 226B	A/B	Disability and Literature	MW 11:30-12:55	25	Allor
ENGL 238B	A/B	Creative Writing: Nonfiction–Investigative Reporting	M 7:30-10:00	15	Mike Newall
ENGL 267B	A/B	Global SF Since 1945	M 7:30-9:55	45	McInerney
ENGL 289B	A/B	Contemporary Poetry: Reading/Writing Eco-poetics	MW 10-11:25		Bastie
ENGL 292B	A/B	Creative Writing: Poetry II	F 11:00-1:25	15	Kim
ENGL 294B	A/B	Creative Writing: Fiction II	Th 1:30-3:55	15	Solomon
ENGL 296B	A/B	Creative Writing: Playwriting	Th 1:30-3:55	15	Espinoza
ENGL 299B	A/B	Junior Seminar II	T Th 10-11:25		Benston
ENGL 305B	A/B	The Premodern Life of Trees	TH 1:30-3:55	15	Allor
ENGL 306B	A/B ASAM	Topics in Asian American Literature: Asian American Hybridity	T Th 11:30-12:55	15	Kim
ENGL 309B	A/B PJHR	Against Death: Capital Punishment in American Literature and Culture	T 1:30-3:55	15	Reckson
ENGL 335B	A/B	Topics in Indigenous Literatures: Contested Borders	M 1:30-3:55		Bastie
ENGL 361B	A/B AA	The New Black Arts Movement	W 1:30-3:55	15	Solomon
ENGL 399B	A	Senior Seminar			Kim, McInerney, Benston, Reckson, Solomon, Millen, Allor, Stadler

Cross-Listing Key: VIST = Visual Studies; AA= Africana Studies; ASAM=Asian American Studies; CL=Comparative Literature; GS=Gender & Sexuality Studies; HLTH=Health Studies; ENVS=Environmental Studies; PJHR=Peace, Justice, and Aman Rights, B=Bryn Mawr “Approach” designation

Theories of the Novel

“Yes—oh dear yes—the novel tells a story.” Such was E. M. Forster’s definition, or his best guess. But there are other and more daring explanations for the elasticity and staying power of what is arguably the most dominant cultural form of modernity. In this class, we will be studying a wide range of theories of the novel. To test out those theories, we will also be reading an eclectic cluster of novels from the classic to the contemporary to ask some fundamental questions about the form: What distinguishes novels from other artistic forms? What kinds of thinking can the novel perform? How does it imagine the relation between the individual and society? In what ways might novels challenge and critique the worlds they are so invested in describing? Why are certain plots, or recognizable types of imaginary person, more lasting than others? To answer these questions, we will work to estrange ourselves a little from key features of novelistic writing, things we may well take for granted—plot, character, point of view, style, genre, mimesis—so that we can consider their distinctiveness afresh. By reading across a long literary historical timeline we will trace continuities, divergences, and innovations. Possible novelists: Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Herman Melville, Nella Larsen, Virginia Woolf, and Arundhati Roy. Possible novel theorists: Mikhail Bakhtin, Raymond Williams, Edward Said, Catherine Gallagher, Nancy Armstrong, Fredric Jameson, Anna Kornbluh, Dora Zhang, and others.

Course Requirements include: two short response papers, a brief presentation on theoretical readings, a critical/creative speculation (how might *X* novel look if *Y* had written it), a final research project, and active participation in class discussion.

Playing in the Dark: Freedom, Slavery & the Haunting of US Fiction

The literary scholar Leslie Fiedler once called 19th-century American literature “a literature of the dark and grotesque in a land of light and affirmation.” Decades later, the novelist Toni Morrison took a more critical view of this quality in her non-fiction book *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. For Morrison, US literature of the 19th century and beyond turns Gothic and grotesque as it attempts the “highly problematic construction of the American as a new white man”; these attempts, she writes, are consistently haunted by specters, in particular the relentless valorization of freedom in a nation built upon the enslavement of people of African descent. In this course, we’ll study these dynamics as they appear in literature by white, Black, and Indigenous authors, looking at how horror, ghosts, and the supernatural structure U. S. narrative fiction’s engagement with race, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes in very odd and unexpected places. As we read (mostly) fiction and autobiography extending from the 17th century to the 21st, we’ll talk about narrative form, genre, and literature as a form of both building and critiquing a nation. We’ll pay particular attention to the way literature can work to disorient our understanding of what we take for granted as “real” when that supposed real has been constructed to conceal histories of violence, terror, revenge, and subversion.

Content warning: course readings will occasionally contain racist language and representations of violence (including sexual violence) and racism.

Requirements: A short close reading paper, three essays of 4-6 pp., an introduction to a class session, class participation (in varied forms—discussion, small group exercises, in-class writing, in-class group annotations).

Primary texts may include (in chronological order of publication):

Mary Rowlandson, *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*

Charles Brockden Brown, “Somnambulism”

Edgar Allan Poe, *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* and selected tales

William Wells Brown, *Clotel*

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno”

Hannah Crafts, *The Bondswoman’s Narrative*

Charles Chesnutt, selected Conjure Tales

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*

Louise Erdrich, *The Sentence*

Secondary texts will include:

Leslie Fiedler, from *Love and Death in the American Novel*

Teresa Goddu, “Introduction to American Gothic,” excerpts from *Gothic America: Narrative, History and Nation*

Avery Gordon, from *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*

Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*

Disability and Literature

Prerequisites:
First-year writing seminar

Course Description:

How are bodies and minds depicted as “normal” or “abnormal,” and how have these categories changed over time and place? This course examines representations of disability in literature from Biblical scripture to modern critical memoir, including disabled saints and saints providing miraculous cures; a fifteenth-century poet’s account of his own madness; William Shakespeare’s depiction of “deformed” king Richard III as choosing to “prove a villain”; and a novel featuring a protagonist disabled by the 1984 Bhopal chemical spill, the world’s worst industrial disaster. We will address how bodily differences and impairments are given social meaning as disability, and how these disabilities are portrayed in literary genres including scripture, hagiography, poetry, drama, novels, short stories, and memoir. We study these depictions from the perspective of disability studies, a discipline that seeks to understand the cultural meanings and material realities of disability with respect to systems of oppression. We will interrogate the definition of the “normal” human body and mind and how this category has been formed, both historically and in the present.

Course Requirements:

Four response papers (500 words each), a take-home midterm, a research paper or creative final project (8–10 pp.), and active participation.

Texts:

- Selected work by disability studies scholars including Lennard Davis, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, Mia Mingus, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, among others
- Excerpts from Biblical and Patristic writings about disability
- *Life of Saint Agatha* and *Life of Saint Margaret*
- Thomas Hoccleve, *Complaint* (1421)
- William Shakespeare, *Richard III* (c. 1592)
- Aphra Behn, *The Dumb Virgin* (1688)
- Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886)
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892)
- Indra Sinha, *Animal’s People* (2007)
- Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (2017)

English 238B
M 7:30-10:00

Mike Newall
Spring 2025

Creative Writing: Nonfiction, Investigative Reporting for Narrative Writing

Every act of journalism, from the playful feature to the deep dive take-out, is an act of exacting discovery. Truth is the fundamental foundation. Making the truth feel real, making it matter, is the art. This course will explore investigative reporting for narrative writing - the art of rigorously uncovering and unspooling uncomfortable truths through the tools of narrative storytelling. The goal of this course is to develop reporters and reading skills and to help students become interviewers and stylists, while learning to enliven complex reporting with powerful creative non-fiction. We will read and discuss a range of journalism from authors like Sheri Fink, Lane DeGregory, Rebecca Skloot, Dan Barry, Ben Montgomery, Wright Thompson, Kelley Benham, Azmat Kham and Anand Gopa, Eli Saslow, Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, Katherine Boo, and Patrick Radden Keefe. Success will depend on attendance and thorough and engaged participation.

Course Requirements: Students will write a reported feature article (3-5pp) and a piece of longform narrative journalism (6-10pp) for workshop and complete shorter written exercises. Students will be responsible for weekly written feedback to classmates' workshop articles. Students will also need to discuss an example of investigative narrative journalism - an article, book, or podcast - they discovered in their own reading or listening.

ENGL/COML 267
M 7:30-9:55

M. McInerney
mmcinern@hc

Global SF since 1945

SF—science fiction, speculative fiction—is the primary allegorical mode of the contemporary world. Stories set in the far future or in alternative presents or pasts permit profound reflections upon and critiques of the world we inhabit today. This course explores the explosion of the genre in the decades since the Second World War and the advent of atomic weapons. We will read a few classics from the '50s and '60s before turning to stories that engage queer identities, Afrofuturism and African futurism, and the global threat of climate change.

Required Texts:

Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles* (Simon and Schuster)
Ursula LeGuin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (Ace)
Samuel Delany, *Babel-17/Empire Star*
Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (Beacon)
N.K. Jemisen, *The Fifth Season* (Orbit)
Kazuo Ishiguro, *Klara and the Sun* (Vintage)
Haruki Murakami, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum (Vintage)
Enki Bilal, *The Carnival of Immortals*

Please note that many of these are less expensive if you choose the Kindle Edition and that is perfectly fine. Audiobooks are also an option for some texts.

Required Films (scheduled for Sunday late afternoons with pizza over several weeks mid-semester—you are also free to watch on your own): Andrei Tarkovsky, *Solaris*; Hayao Miyazaki, *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*; Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner*; Bong Joon Ho, *Snowpiercer*.

Additional materials (stories by Joanna Russ, Shineshi Hoshi, Shingai Njeri Kagunda, Stanislaw Lem, essays by Judith Butler, Elizabeth Kolbert, Samuel Delany, etc.) will be posted to the course Moodle.

Required Work (details to be found on course Moodle):

1 short (1-2 pg) personal reflection on the way science or technology has affected you, or on your opinion of an SF concept: 15%
1 short (4-6 page) essay: 20%
Podcast assignment: 30%
Short (1pgph) film reviews, posted to Moodle: 10%
Thought experiment (non-textual response to a reading): 15%
Regular and engaged participation in class/online 10%

Attendance Policy:

Now that the Covid19 pandemic is becoming endemic (that is, we have to live with it) Haverford College has reasserted its commitment to a comprehensive residential education: “In-person class attendance enriches and deepens the learning experience for students and their classmates, and is therefore expected.” Thus, in this class, two consecutive unexcused absences or three unexcused absences over the course of the semester will incur a penalty (deduction of 1%/day from your participation grade). In order for an absence to be excused, you must contact your dean and have your dean contact your professors.

Masking Policy: Haverford begins this semester as a mask-friendly campus. For the purposes of this class, that means that while masking is not required, anyone who chooses to wear a mask should feel free to do so. Additionally, if you have allergies, or a cold or cough, please wear a mask in class. Be aware that the College may at some point pivot back to universal masking in shared spaces.

Learning goals:

- to think critically about the connections between technology and consciousness, humans and their environment, late capitalism and personhood, systems of power and oppression
- to gain the skills to read both fiction and non-fiction closely and critically
- to write more clearly and persuasively
- to communicate clearly in different modalities

Contemporary Poetry: Reading/Writing Eco-poetics

In his essay on “Outsider Eco-poetics,” Tyrone Williams writes, an “eco-poetics worthy of its name would call itself into question indefinitely.” In another, he writes that eco-poetics “offers us glimpses into our singular dark future.” With Williams’s words as impetus, the approach of this course is twofold, recognizing the interlocking way that eco-poetics is as much a theory as it is a practice. So in part, we will look together to eco-poetic writing that not only “glimpses...our singular dark future” but acts as a mode of engaging with, exposing, refusing, or even countering global environmental injustices and catastrophes that constitute it. To state this another way, this course, rather than thinking of the environment through nature writing, will turn to texts that take up how the environment is mobilized, militarized, exploited, contaminated, and neglected by economic and political powers in ways that disproportionately impact marginalized populations. For example, we might consider how Roque Salas Rivera in *While They Sleep (Under the Bed is Another Country)* implements Spanish footnotes that qualify statements in English about Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane María to reframe the gravity of socio-ecological devastation as a by-product of colonial policies. Or how Natalie Diaz (Mojave) in “*exhibits from American Water Museum*” crafts installation descriptions to an imaginary museum that explore the devastating impact of U.S. water policy on Indigenous Nations. In studying these texts, we will ask: how can eco-poetics differently think about state-induced environmental catastrophe? How does the enmeshment that is eco-poetics continually hold open the irresolutions of contemporaneity?

Alongside the critical, this course takes seriously the practice of not just reading, theorizing, discussing, and analyzing works of eco-poetics, but also the practice of writing as well. Creative writing will take a variety of forms, from exercises that use ecological processes as a structuring apparatus to ones that introduce new forms such as collage or cartography. We will consider the possibilities of hybridity, of bending conventions, of introducing different modes. Moreover, this course’s task of writing eco-poetics will set collaboration as the core of its methodology allowing work to be warped, infected, reimagined, infused, and/or challenged by others in the class.

Reading and writing, as merging the critical and creative, will hopefully form a symbiotic relationship with each other—never synthesizing, but operating in reciprocity.

Writers might include:

- Selections from, *The Routledge Companion to Eco-poetics*, Edited By Julia Fiedorczuk, Mary Newell, Bernard Quetchenbach, Orchid Tierney
- Kamau Brathwaite
- Natalie Diaz (Mojave)
- Macarena Gómez-Barris
- Craig Santos Perez (CHamoru)
- Tommy Pico (Kumeyaay)
- Roque Salas Rivera
- Steffan Triplett
- Cecilia Vicuña
- Kyle Whyte (Potawatomi)
- Tyrone Williams

ENGL 292B
Friday 11:00-1:25

Elizabeth Kim
Spring 2025

Creative Writing: Poetry II

This is an advanced poetry workshop in which students will expand their poetic repertoire and further refine their craft by modeling their writing on a diverse range of published book-length works by contemporary poets such as Solmaz Sharif, Ross Gay, Cathy Park Hong, Maggie Nelson, Evie Shockley, and Mary Jo Bang. We will dissect and analyze features such as formal and aesthetic construction, thematic continuity, organization, narrative trajectory, source materials, and conceptual frameworks within the assigned poetry collections in order to inform students' approaches to their own writing and to envision individual poems not merely as isolated pieces, but ultimately operating within a larger cohesive project. Students will produce new poems—the writing of which will involve several stages of drafting, research, workshop, and revision—that will ultimately be compiled into a unified portfolio. Workshop sessions throughout the semester will provide opportunities for presenting drafts in progress and receiving feedback from the class in order to aid the development of student projects.

Course Requirements

Weekly poem drafts

Book review

Two small group workshop submissions

One full class workshop submission

Feedback letters for all workshops

Revision workshop submission

Final portfolio (10-12 pages)

Consistent participation and attendance (no more than one absence permitted)

Prerequisites: Completion of a poetry writing course and writing sample (no more than 5 pages of poetry). Submit writing sample to ekim1@haverford.edu before the end of the pre-registration period. Please include your name, year, major (if declared), and previous creative writing course(s) taken. Students will be notified of their status in the course before the start of the semester.

ENGL 294B
Th 1:30-3:55

Asali Solomon
Spring 2025

Creative Writing, Fiction II

Fiction II students will continue to work on the short story form, honing the basic elements of craft: character development, dialogue, plot and prose style. They will increase their focus on revision and the process of "finishing" a story. Other central themes of the course, which emphasizes workshop and discussion, will be finding a form for the story you want to write, and developing a distinctive voice. One of the central goals of this course is to develop a more sustained (and sustainable) writing schedule.

We will likely read authors including Edward P. Jones, Danielle Evans, Ted Chiang, Carmen Maria Machado, Lucia Berlin and George Saunders

Course Requirements in brief

- Writing 4 stories, 10-12pp apiece (this includes revisions)
- Responding to published reading in a Moodle Forum (most weeks)
- Thoughtful written responses to student workshop stories (1-3 per class)
- Writing Exercises (most weeks)

The prerequisite for this class is a previous fiction writing class or professor approval. If you are interested in the class, please submit a writing sample to asolomon@haverford.edu. At the top, please mention your previous CW writing experience.

English 296B
TH 1:30-2:55

AZ Espinoza
Spring 2025

Creative Writing: Playwriting

This course is an introduction to the craft of playwriting. Students will familiarize themselves with the structure of dramatic narratives through an interdisciplinary exploration of performance, design, and theatre for social change practices that center social justice in the generating of new work for the theatre. Coursework will include weekly writing assignments towards the completion of a new play draft, periodic assignments introducing the principles of collaboration essential to the theatre making process, the reading of playscripts, and accessing live performance. Class sessions will be centered on the workshopping of written text both for short-term and committed play idea assignments, the discussion and dissection of noteworthy contemporary plays, and an active engagement in current conversations that are shaping the future of the artform.

ENGL 299B
T/TH 10-11:30

Kim Benston
Woodside 204

Junior Seminar in English

This course is a two-semester Seminar required of all Junior English majors.

Through readings, class discussion, written assignments, and tutorials, students will become familiar with 1) a series of texts selected to represent a range of English language poetry and fiction; and 2) examples of critical writing selected to represent critical theory and practice as it has been influenced by linguistics, hermeneutics, history, sociology, psychology and the study of cultural representation (per such prisms as feminism, Marxism, New Historicism, and postcolonialism). Junior Seminar aims to cultivate in the student some sense of the variety of British, American, and Anglophone literature and its criticism, and to introduce the student to the activity of criticism as it interacts with literature and the intellectual life of our time. This active criticism will lead students to grasp both the nature of literary convention and tradition and the revisionary energies that open up established canons to a diversity of voices and forms.

The loose theme of this year's seminar is "expressive hauntologies"—the intermingling in texts of received formulations, present perspectives, and imagined futures through which literary tradition is simultaneously constituted and critiqued, acknowledged and transformed. We will examine how works struggle variously to exorcise and conjure spectral traces of what historically has been said and/or repressed, envisioning themselves as richer instantiations of or fresh departures from their ghostly inheritance. More broadly, through close scrutiny of strategically arranged clusters of works, we will explore how dialogues internal to literature itself about the peculiar potency and fragility of figurative, imagistic, symbolic, and narrative form provoke yet also at times resist modes of reading that address the meaning of "meaning" in literary expression. Along the way, we will consider how literature and various methods for its critical understanding inflect evolving themes of the cultural moments in which they arise and which they help to produce: e.g., love, desire, consciousness, community, nature; power, justice, mourning, hope; belief; and the horizons of being "human" as such.

Assignments: Students will write in various forms to various lengths—with formal essays undergoing revisions in the wake of suggestions each paper will receive in tutorial sessions—and offer occasional oral presentations. Regular attendance in both seminar and tutorial is required, as is rigorous preparation in anticipation of class discussion.

Readings: The first term is devoted to poetry, poetics, and practical criticism, and includes examples of Renaissance lyrics (e.g., Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton); selected British Romantic poetry (e.g., Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Keats); 18th-19th century American poems (e.g., Wheatley, Dickinson, and Whitman); and modern verse (e.g., Eliot, Rich, and Harper). The second term focuses on narrative and its theorization and criticism; readings include longer works by George Eliot, T.S. Eliot, Jean Toomer, and James Joyce.

The Premodern Life of Trees: Interdisciplinarity and Literary Study of the Past

Course Description:

This course seeks to examine premodern literary representations of the natural world alongside historical, scientific, and experiential ways of understanding the environment. Our case study will be the figure of the tree. In collaboration with the Haverford College Arboretum, we will study literature from the premodern world that depicts trees, forests, and gardens while cultivating botanical, artistic, and historical knowledge about the trees of Haverford. We will read classical, medieval, and early modern texts including Virgil's *Georgics*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bonaventure's *Tree of Life*, Mandeville's *Travels*, and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. We will explore theoretical models for thinking about the materiality of the past, including examples from history of science, cultural studies, Indigenous studies, and queer theory. Finally, with the assistance of the Arboretum, we will investigate botanical, archival, artistic, and experiential kinds of knowledge about trees in the present and determine how this expertise can be productively combined with the study of the past. This is a literary studies course with a significant interdisciplinary component that will be useful for students interested in combining textual and material studies, as well as those interested in the history of our relationship with trees and forests.

Course Requirements:

Tree journal (a weekly, multimedia journal on a tree you select on Haverford's campus), three short response papers, a research paper or creative final project, and active participation.

Texts:

Virgil, *Georgics*
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*
Mandeville's *Travels*
Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

Other primary texts on the course Moodle, including:

"Dream of the Rood"
Bonaventure, *Tree of Life*
Jon Gardener, "The Feat of Gardening"
Nicolas Bollard, *Book of Planting and Grafting*
Edmund Spenser, *Shepherd's Calendar*

Theory and criticism including Bruno Latour, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Carolyn Dinshaw, and others.

ENGL 306B
T/Th 11:30-12:55

Elizabeth Kim
Spring 2025

Topics in Asian American Literature: Asian American Hybridity

While the term *hybrid* generally refers to that which is composed of heterogeneous elements, Asian American literary scholar Lisa Lowe theorizes hybridity as “the formation of cultural objects and practices produced by histories of uneven and unsynthetic power relations” and frames the concept as “the process through which [Asians in the US] survive those violences by living, inventing, and reproducing different cultural alternatives.” In this course, we will study the relationship between form and content in a diverse range of experimental and hybrid works by contemporary Asian American authors to explore the particular ways in which they address the hybrid identity marker “Asian American.” How do the works’ multi-genre and -media construction open up possibilities for alternative modes of representing and responding to the specific social, political, and historical conditions of ethnic/racial hybridity? Through examining works of poetry, essay, fiction, and comics paired with critical texts, we will analyze how authors blend and blur different genres and media as well as what this reflects about Asian American identity, experience, and survival.

Assignments

Two short close reading responses to primary works

Two short personal reflections on critical texts

One presentation

Midterm paper proposal

Midterm paper (5-7 pages)

Final paper proposal

Final paper (10-12 pages)

Readings

Dictee, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha

Litany for the Long Moment, Mary-Kim Arnold

The Vertical Interrogation of Strangers, Bhanu Kapil

From unincorporated territory: [saina], Craig Santos Perez

DMZ Colony, Don Mee Choi

Silent Anatomies, Monica Ong

Shortcomings, Adrian Tomine

Good Talk, Mira Jacob

**Against Death:
Opposing Capital Punishment in American Literature and Culture**

In the long history of capital punishment in the U.S., writers and artists have played an active role in shaping—rather than simply reflecting—public discourse around justice and punishment. This course examines the history of literary and cultural responses to capital punishment, beginning with the introduction of privately conducted state-sanctioned executions in the 1830s and ending shortly after the reinstatement of the death penalty in 1976 following a four-year moratorium. We'll look at representations of the death penalty in novels, essays, plays, poems, comic books, photography, and film, with an emphasis on the relationship between art and social practice; interwoven histories of race, gender, class, and criminality; and the relays between capital punishment, media, and other technologies of social power. We'll ask: what is the relationship between culture and punishment in the U.S.? To what extent has art been able to challenge narratives of social, political, and technological progress that adhere to capital punishment? And how might we track the intersection between aesthetic and political forms of intervention?

We'll explore responses to the death penalty in two directions: first, as they coalesce around specific events and figures (including Nat Turner's revolt, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, the Dakota 38, the Haymarket riot, Sacco and Vanzetti, the Scottsboro nine, Louis and Emmett Till, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg); and second, as they aim to register the anonymous and largely unspectacular deaths taking place with punctuated regularity, often behind prison walls and out of public view. We'll take up debates around the reproduction of suffering, attending to how the history of capital punishment has intersected with histories of media, spectacle, and entertainment culture. We'll ask how specific representational modes (including melodrama, documentary, confession, realism, and reenactment) have either obscured or brought into relief the organization of social power. And finally, we'll explore literature's role in what philosopher Jacques Rancière has called the "distribution of the sensible"—the organization of social relations through what is and is not perceptible. How has literature made visible, audible, and tangible the executions of liberal democracy? And how has it imagined alternative possibilities, rooted in practices of haunting, mourning, redress, and abolition?

This course will be co-taught in collaboration with Right 2 Redemption, a group of organizers serving death by incarceration (or life without parole) sentences at SCI Phoenix in Collegeville, PA. Over the course of the semester, we will regularly travel to SCI Phoenix to learn from and with R2R about the history of mass incarceration in Pennsylvania, the rise of death by incarceration sentencing in response to anti-death penalty activism, and the effort to achieve the right to redemption for all people. We will also be in extended dialogue with formerly incarcerated artists, writers, and activists.

Important note: students enrolled in this course will need to undergo a clearance process to gain access to SCI Phoenix, and will be expected to commit to approximately *4 to 6 hours per month* outside of scheduled class time as we travel to and attend workshops at the prison (transportation will be provided). Please contact lreckson@haverford.edu with any questions about this process and commitment.

Topics in Indigenous Literatures: Contested Borders

In the essay “Alchemical Dream of We,” Mojave poet Natalie Diaz provocatively asks: “How might we speak of life beyond the State’s designs and borders? How to imagine the living we’ve yet to do if the State language we have now is rooted in our suffering? What is the language we need to live right now?” (53). To begin to answer these questions, this course will engage with how Indigenous theorists and poets are undertaking that speaking and imagining through contesting settler-colonial understandings of borders across Turtle Island and Oceania. For example, Kahnawà:ke Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson theorizes nested sovereignty, wherein Indigenous Nations “prevail within and apart from settler governance,” begging the question: who sets borders and where (11)? Or how according to Nick Estes (Oceti Sakowin Oyate), Melanie Yazzie (Diné), Jennifer Nez Denetdale (Diné), and David Correia “borders exist everywhere settler order confronts Native order. And since we find this confrontation everywhere in settler society, everything in a settler world is a border” (6). If borders are everywhere, how do we understand borders in contemporaneity?

Together, we will investigate the ways that Indigenous poetry is re-spatializing borders, or to invoke Mishuana Goeman (Tonawanda Seneca Nation), how Indigenous poetry “is disrupting, crossing, and transgressing boundaries set up by settler states who enact politics and promote an erasure, elimination, and eradication of Native culture, political authority, and, as many poets suggest, our very nonconforming subjecthood” (61). Understanding that Indigenous poetics are engaged in this project, we will read Indigenous poets who rethink individual and collective identity through the contours of topography, mapmaking, decolonization, ecologies, relationality, and law. For instance, we might consider how James Thomas Stevens (Akwesasne Mohawk) traces the word “island” through its various definitions and visual representations to illuminate how they conflict and thereby destabilizes colonial imposed conceptions: “Island. / Look to a map to prove the concept mute. / All waters have a source and this connection renders earth / island.” Or how Lehua Taitano (CHamoru) opposes the distance of diaspora by underscoring the power of relationality: “No matter where we are, inside us is a liquid web connecting our beating hearts.”

Ultimately, this course will ask: what is the connection between poetry and place? How might we define a poetics of cartography or counter-cartography? And how can poetry contest borders?

Poets might include:

- Billy-Ray Belcourt (Driftpile Cree)
- Natalie Diaz (Mojave)
- Layli Long Soldier (Oglala Lakota)
- Erin Marie Lynch (Dakota)
- Deborah Miranda (Ohlone /Costanoan-Esselen)
- dg nanouk okpik (Iñupiaq-Inuit)
- Janet Rogers (First Nations Mohawk/Tuscarora)
- Jake Skeets (Diné)
- Lehua Taitano (CHamoru)
- Ofelia Zepada (Tohono O’odham)

Asali Solomon
English 361

The New Black Arts Movement: Expressive Culture after Nationalism
Spring 2025
Wednesdays, 1:30-3:55

The literature of the Black Arts Movement from the late 1960s and early 1970s has traditionally occupied a more tenuous place in the academy (in comparison with, say, the Harlem Renaissance). Yet its influence as a radical aesthetic and a political sensibility resonates ever more forcefully in contemporary American literature and culture with each passing year. This course will begin with a historically grounded exploration of the literary achievements of BAM and move into contemporary literature and culture, charting the influence of the era.

Among others, we will consider the following questions: do contemporary black artists think of themselves as participating in a nationalist movement of any kind? How do they portray and theorize African American identity? For whom do they write and with whom are they fighting?

Syllabus likely to include some or all of the following, in addition to a number of articles.

The Norton Anthology of African American Literature, vol. 2
for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf, Ntozake Shange
Citizen, Claudia Rankine
The Sellout, Paul Beatty
Black Movie, Danez Smith
Little Girl Blue: Poems, Sequoia Maner
In the Wake, Christina Sharpe

Other Media:

Lemonade video album by Beyoncé
To Pimp a Butterfly, Kendrick Lamar (please access entire album with album art)
Eve, Rapsody
“Until the Quiet Comes”

The course requires faithful attendance and participation, (3) formal essays varying in length from 5-10pp, and a number of more informal writing assignments.