

YC Department of English Fall 2020 Course Offerings

If you're wondering which Fall 2020 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, Dr. Rachel Mesch mesch@yu.edu. For information about the Media Studies Minor contact Dr. Elizabeth Stewart estewart@yu.edu.

Advanced Writing

Counts towards the Writing minor. English majors take at least one and as many as three advanced writing courses. Students may count one Advanced Writing course towards the English Minor. Pre-requisite: FYWR (H).

WRITING FICTION—PROFESSOR DAVID PURETZ

ENG 1822 Sec M/W 4:30 - 5:45

Prerequisite: FYWR 1010 (H) or FYWR 1020 (H)



Our goal as fiction writers, broadly stated, may be to entertain or amuse readers, to move or persuade them, to get them to look more closely at or think more deeply about something that's worth their attention—or some combination(s) of these. Ultimately the goal of fiction, as David Foster Wallace has said, is to show what it is to be a human being. In this Writing Fiction course we'll be reading and writing prose that work toward these ends. This course is for both curious novices as well as for those with some experience writing stories who want to expand their knowledge and range. We will spend the

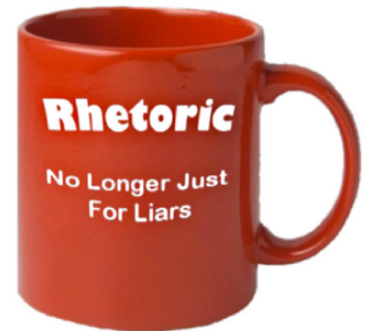
first half of the semester discussing various works of fiction in long and short form. We will read for content, but just as importantly, we will study the voice, point of view, structure, and use of language. We will practice close reading techniques with our own writing in mind. Every week, we will be writing creatively in response to these works, using them as models and as inspiration for our own writing. The second half of the semester is dedicated to the writing workshop. You will be responsible for submitting one substantial story or a series of shorter stories for workshop critique and for extensive revision. Students who successfully complete this course

will develop a working knowledge of a range of fiction writing styles, expand their ability to give detailed constructive feedback, develop a more sophisticated and unique writing style through practice and observation, and learn to advance their creative work through the process of revision.

RHETORIC & WRITING: CLASSICAL LESSONS FOR MODERN SITUATIONS—PROFESSOR LAUREN FITZGERALD

ENG 1450 Sec TU/TH 3:00 - 4:15

Prerequisite: FYWR 1010 (H) or FYWR 1020 (H); counts towards the Media Studies minor.



Though rhetoric has gotten a bad rap, for thousands of years, this time-tested art has enabled orators, writers, and digital-media designers alike to locate what Aristotle called “the available means of persuasion” in any situation. This new YC English Department creative writing course draws on ancient Greek and Roman rhetoric, two of the earliest sources for the rhetorical principles that inform European and U.S. culture.

But what has rhetoric got to do with *creative* writing? In fact, some of the most famous creative writers of all time, including Shakespeare and Milton, honed their creativity by studying rhetoric. For one thing, analyzing how others use language increases your repertoire of effective strategies and helps you rule out ineffective ones. For another, rhetoric includes a systematic approach to the composing process by way of the five “canons” of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. We will analyze such language and practice these canons, with emphasis on inventing new ideas and locating opportunities for voicing them.

Through this study and practice, you will become a *rhetorician*, a critical analyzer of texts and the larger systems in which they are produced, as well as a *rhetor*, adept at using these systems to produce your own texts to get things done. We will focus on your writing, but because rhetoric applies to all modes of communication, we will also prepare speeches and deploy 21st-century digital technologies for rhetorical purposes, including applying for jobs and graduate/professional programs. Requirements include weekly exercises (some of which Shakespeare and Milton completed!), a brief speech on a reading, job/application materials and rhetorical analysis, and a final portfolio made up of several developed and polished assignments from the course and a reflective introduction.

Literature

Pre-requisite: FYWR (H).

21ST-CENTURY CHAUCER: MEDIEVAL BOOKS AND THEIR MODERN READERS—

PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY

ENG 2317 SEC M/W 3:00 - 4:15

Counts as pre-1700 requirement.



Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is an anthology of stories told by diverse and engaging fictional narrators. Drawing on other storytelling collections but also always remaking them in the process, the *Canterbury Tales* helped create a new standard for ambitious and entertaining literature in English. In this introductory seminar, we will begin with selections from the *Canterbury Tales* before turning to a wide range of other medieval texts, focusing on what made them interesting or innovative in their original literary-historical moment. Yet our investigation will not confine itself to the medieval, at least in any strict chronological sense; we will take pre-modern writing as a provocation to consider

our own status as twenty-first-century witnesses to a surprising kind of literary otherness. In particular, we will explore how culturally distant texts disclose themselves to modern readers through a variety of digital media platforms: blogs, online archives, and multi-form adaptations. Using such resources, we will develop strategies for navigating a newly vivid literary past, while also developing an appreciation for our own interpretive agendas as contemporary readers and critics. No experience with early English literature (or media studies) is assumed. Requirements include short response papers, discussion questions posted to an online forum, collaborative multi-media projects, and at least one class trip to a New York City museum or archive to see original manuscripts of Chaucer's work.

CRIME FICTION & FILM—
PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART
ENG 2059 Sec TU/TH 4:30 - 5:45
Counts towards the Media Studies minor.



In this course we discuss in an interdisciplinary fashion various representations—in literature and film—of the problem of human aggression and violence, of good and evil, and of the relationship between individual and state where state aggression is often implemented to punish, discipline, and manage the individual, and the individual often lashes out against the state. Further, the course explores the following motifs in literature and film: social definitions and productions of criminality, socio-psychological mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the traumatically generated social matrices of control, surveillance, and force that shape our lives.

The course is roughly divided into 5 parts:

Part 1: The “Management” of Individual Life and Violence: Postmodern Aggression and Morality; Seriality; Evil and Psychopathy;

Part 2: Detection, Normalization, and Reintegration;

Part 3: State Crime, Political Crime, Crimes against Humanity;

Part 4: “True Crime” and the Crime Writer's Implication;

Part 5: Life and Death, Biopolitics, Pact with the Devil.

Fiction includes works by Poe, Kleist, Kafka, Capote, Harris. Denise Mina; Film includes Hannibal, Rosemary’s Baby, The White Ribbon, Heavenly Creatures; TV series include House of Cards, Luther, Breaking Bad; Criminological texts include Foucault, Lacan, Meloy, Alford.

Requirements: class participation, midterm, essay.

AMERICAN GREATS: LITERATURE AND ART FROM 1865-PRESENT—
PROFESSOR PAULA GEYH
ENG 2612 Sec TU/TH 6:45 - 8:00

Counts towards the Media Studies minor.



This course provides a broad historical survey of great (aka “canonical”) works of American literature from 1865 to the present. We will study the novels and poetry within their historical contexts and in relation to the ideas, themes, and stylistic conventions of the intellectual and aesthetic movements of realism/

naturalism, modernism, and postmodernism. As part of our explorations of those movements, we'll be looking at the work of key artists in conjunction with the texts. Readings will include Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*; Whitman, "Leaves of Grass"; Dickinson, selected poems; Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*; Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*; selected Modernist poetry (Eliot, Stevens, Williams, Moore); Ginsberg, "Howl"; Plath, excerpts from *The Bell Jar*; O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*; Robinson, *Housekeeping*; Vizenor, "Feral Lasers"; DeLillo, *White Noise*, and Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.

Requirements: Two papers and two exams.

ADVANCED RESEARCH—PROFESSOR RACHEL MESCH

ENG 3005 Sec M 6:00 -

Counts as 3000-level requirement

This course explores the kinds of research and writing associated with literary studies, from traditional academic projects to more creative writing possibilities. We will focus on a few main texts studied intensively from a variety of approaches. In that sense, it will build on the work of English 2010, while preparing stu-



dents for the senior colloquium in their final Spring semester through discussion leading and presentations. Writing exercises throughout the semester will culminate in a final paper or a creative project. Students should plan to take this course in the fall semester of their final year. In certain cases, they may take it the previous year, but they should be well into their English studies.

Readings in Fall 2020 will include Woolf, Joyce, and Morrison.

Core Courses

English majors and minors may count two such courses towards their requirements. Prerequisite: FYWR 1010 or 1020.

BOOKS ON BOOKS, FILMS ON FILMS (INTC)—PROFESSOR PAULA GEYH

ENG 1001 Section 311 TU/TH 3:00 – 4:15 **OR** TU/TH 4:30 - 5:45

Counts towards the Media Studies Minor and the INTC requirement.

What do literature and film tell us about themselves and each other? What are the elemental forms and structures of literary and filmic narrative? What approaches might one use for the analysis of literature and film? How is reading a novel different from “reading” a film? By addressing these questions, this course will help students to develop a deeper understanding of how narrative literature and film work and how they’re related (or aren’t).



The course will begin by considering the relationship between truth and fiction, and some ideas about what “art” is and does. We’ll examine the roles of readers, film viewers, authors, directors, and critics. We’ll explore the forms and structures of literary and cinematic storytelling, and how these elements come together to produce meaning. Finally, we’ll briefly survey various approaches used by scholars and critics to analyze literature and film.

Course texts will include Calvino, *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler* and Zusak, *The Book Thief*. Films will include *The Wizard of Oz*, *Sherlock Jr.*, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, *Stranger than Fiction*, *Singin’ in the Rain*, and *Cinema Paradiso*. Critical texts will include Plato, *The Republic*; Wilde, “The Decay of Lying”; Wellek & Warren, “The Nature and Modes of Narrative Fiction”; Lynn, *Texts and Contexts*; Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*; and Spadoni, *A Pocket Guide to Analyzing Film*.

Requirements: two papers and two exams.

FRONTIERS AND BORDERS: TRAVEL WRITING THROUGH THE AGES (CUOT)—PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY

ENG 1036 Sec M/W 4:30-5:45

Counts towards the CUOT requirement.



In this class, we will explore an assortment of literary and historical texts all broadly defined as “travel writing.” Our investigation begins in classical antiquity, with material focused on

the westward migration of refugees following the Trojan War. Turning to later periods, it then examines how crusades, pilgrimages, mass expulsions, and explorations to the far reaches of the known world reflected—and shaped—medieval notions of cultural difference; key here is the account of Italian merchant adventurer Marco Polo. Next, we consider the age of discovery, and the role maps and other geographic conventions played in early modern representations of the Atlantic, perhaps most notably in Shakespeare and his contemporaries. After considering these and other sources (e.g., selections from Ibn Battuta, Jonathan Swift, Mark Twain, Freya Stark, and Jamaica Kincaid), the semester concludes with travel narratives that frame the experience of the refugee, the migrant, and the asylum seeker. Implicit in all these cases is the idea that travel writing is not just an aesthetic or stylistic choice but also an attempt to grapple with the complexities of historical experience. Hence our focus on its changing contexts; major topics include race, slavery, colonialism, religious difference, emigration, empire, commerce, tourism, and the exotic. In addition to critical essays and presentations, students will have the opportunity to write their own travel narratives.

FACE-TO-FACE: COMPLEX MODERN IDENTITIES IN CONTEMPORARY FILM (COWC) (WI) — PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART

ENG 1026 Sec T/R 6:45 - 8:00



Counts towards the Media Studies minor and the COWC requirement.

The basis of identity is to a large extent visual, and images are the bricks and mortar of what we eventually come to think of as cultural identity. As Aristotle claimed, we learn to become ourselves by imitating what we see (on the stage) in front of us—for us, the film screen—and we become ourselves by imitating our cultural ideals. This

course explores the role cinematic images play in creating narratives about a multiplicity of cultural identities. Aristotle also insisted that it is the “ideal” character created on the stage who will aid in creating “ideal” citizens. In other words, Aristotle knew that the visual/verbal arts—in his case, theater, in our case film—have not only a representative function, but an ideological one as well. But cinematic images, like images in the other arts, have also held the function of “naturalizing” certain structures of oppression and domination as well as challenging them. This course will explore how American and foreign film represents various racial, class, gender, ethnic, and national identities, and how they reproduce and challenge those representations at the same time. While the course

pays attention to both cognition and affect in our reception of film, it will emphasize the study of affect in cinematic identification, projection, and enjoyment.

Requirements: class participation, short responses, 2 critical essays.

SPOILER ALERT: ENDINGS, BEGINNINGS, AND THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF MODERN STORIES (INTC)—PROFESSOR RACHEL MESCH

ENG 1041 Sec M/W 3:00 - 4:15

Counts towards the Media Studies minor and the INTC requirement.



This class will explore modern storytelling across genres, from the novel, short story, and graphic novel to film, television, podcasts and beyond. Students will learn to engage deeply with these diverse forms as texts to be critically analyzed, and we will study the way that stories are both products of culture and determined by them. Some of the questions we'll consider: What kinds of stories are we allowed to tell in a given historical moment, and who is allowed to tell them? What determines a “happy ending” and why are certain stories controversial? How do stories help us to see ourselves? How have we moved away from endings, as a culture, and towards the serial, and what is lost and gained in this movement? What new genres of storytelling have emerged in recent decades, and how can we understand their relationship to traditional literary forms? This class is about the need for stories and how texts—literary and otherwise—generate meaning. In addition to studying the underpinnings of narrative, we'll pay attention to the ways we consume stories: whether by reading, watching episode by episode, or binging in one gluttonous Netflix weekend. Becoming aware of our own practices will help us think about our relationships with the stories we most connect to. The class thus aims to be as much an introduction to literary and textual study as an exploration of what it means to be human in an ever-changing world.

Writings by Henry James, Edgar Allan Poe, Jane Austen, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Virginia Woolf; numerous films, television shows, and podcasts.

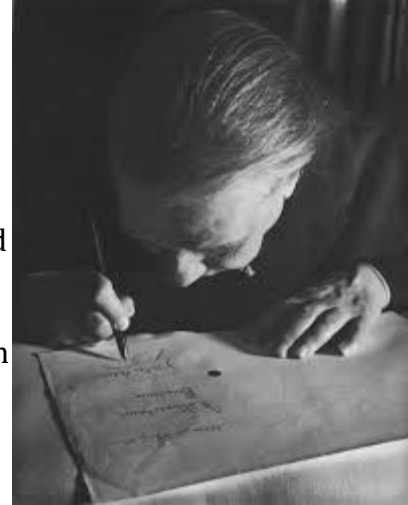
Assessments: response papers and viewing journals, in-class midterm, presentation, and a final paper.

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES (YC/STRAUS CENTER)—PROFESSORS DAVID LAVINSKY AND RONNIE PERELIS

ENG 1043 Sec TU/TH 3:00 - 4:15

Counts towards the INTC requirement.

In this co-taught, interdisciplinary core course, offered in conjunction with the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, students will explore the diverse literary and historical dimensions of spiritual autobiography. Our investigation will begin in late antiquity, with Josephus and Augustine, before focusing on material produced within the medieval and early modern cultural matrix. Authors to be considered include Herman the Jew, Guibert de Nogent, Luis de Carvajal, Rabbi Hayyim Vital Calabrese, Richard Norwood, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Glikl of Hameln, and John Bunyan. Course readings—memoirs, wills, testimonies, confessions, interrogation transcripts, and other materials stylized as first-person narrative accounts—will attest to the lived experience of their authors and the spiritual selves they attempt to fashion using the conventions of autobiographical writing; central here are topics such as religious identity, conversion, Jewish-Christian relations, biblical exegesis, and the circulation of texts and ideas in the age of print. At the same time, however, such self-fashioning draws on literary practices that demand a critical sensitivity to language, form, and rhetoric. No experience with medieval and early modern literature is assumed.



Visit <http://www.yu.edu/yeshiva-college/ug/english/> to find out more about the YC English Department and its faculty and the English major and minor. Visit <https://www.yu.edu/yeshiva-college/ug/writing> to learn about the Writing minor—and for links to the Writing minor and new Media Studies minors' webpages.