

YC Department of English

Fall 2024 Course Offerings

Our courses invite students to deepen their writing, reading, and critical thinking skills. We welcome interested students from all majors to join our community. Majors may choose between the Creative Writing and Literary Studies tracks.

If you're wondering which Fall 2024 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 Elizabeth Stewart: estewart@yu.edu. For information about the Media Studies minor, contact Professor Elizabeth Stewart: estewart@yu.edu.

Course requirements for the major and our minors can be found on the [YC English website](#).

Required for English Majors

Both Literary Studies and Creative Writing Concentrations

ENG 3005 ADVANCED SEMINAR

M 6:00-8:30

PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART



This course explores the kinds of thinking and writing associated with literary and cultural studies, from traditional academic projects to more creative writing endeavors. Designed for all students in both the literary studies and creative writing tracks, the course is meant to build on the work you have already done in English 2010 Interpreting Texts, while preparing you for the

student-led Senior Colloquium in your final Spring semester. You should therefore sign up for this course in the Fall semester before the Spring in which you plan to take the colloquium. It is advisable to take the seminar earlier if you intend on a January graduation, rather than taking it in your final Fall semester. Thus, anyone planning to graduate by January 2026 should sign up for Fall 2024.

Our focus this semester will be on frameworks for thinking about constructions of gendered subjectivity, from canonical texts to popular culture. We'll read selections from Virginia Woolf, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Oscar Wilde, Sherman Alexie, Alison Bechdel, Audre Lorde, and more, alongside contemporary films and TV (such as *Vertigo* and *Orange Is the New Black*). Writing exercises throughout the semester will

culminate in a final paper or a creative project, and students will each have a chance to lead their own discussions in preparation for the colloquium.¹

Creative Writing

These classes count towards the Creative Writing concentration and the Creative Writing minor. English majors in the Literary Studies concentration may count as many as two of these courses, and English minors may count one. The prerequisites for the classes is FYWR 1020.

ENG 1822 WRITING FICTION

T/R 6:45 - 8:00

PROFESSOR DAVID PURETZ

Our goal as fiction writers is to entertain or amuse our readers, to move or persuade them, to get them to look more closely at or think more deeply about something that we feel is 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 will be reading and writing stories that work toward these ends. The 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 from different traditions and time periods. We will read for content, but just as importantly, we will study the voice, point of view, structure, and



¹ Geyh, *ED Brochure Fall 2023*.

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.

ENG 1800 WRITING/READING POETRY (INTC)

M/W 4:30 - 5:45

PROFESSOR BRIAN TRIMBOLI

Writing/Reading Poetry is for writers from all backgrounds, and all skill levels, who are interested in poetry and its far-reaching implications. This course will help writers develop an appreciation of contemporary poetry, as well as their own poetic voice, and

will provide a space to explore the different impacts of poetic language. We will pursue influence and understanding from the great contemporary poets of the world, and will examine how regions and cultures shape, and are shaped by, poetry. Writers will work towards a portfolio of their own poetry, and be reading the work of Yehuda Amichai, Wislawa Szymborska, Breyten Breytenbach, Kofi Awoonor, as well as many others.



Literature and Film Electives

Pre-requisite: FYWR or FYWR (H). Literary Studies students take eight of these electives, and Creative Writing students take at least three, in addition to the Advanced Seminar (Fall) and Colloquium (Spring).



ENG 2018H *FRANKENSTEIN'S* INFLUENCES: MILTON TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

T/R 3:00-4:15

PROFESSOR LAUREN FITZGERALD

Honors;

fulfills the Writing-Intensive requirement;

fulfills the 1700-1900 requirement of the English major

[Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, 1818](#)

This course explores influences on and of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), which originates, like Victor Frankenstein's monster, from a myriad of materials and continues to have a wide-ranging impact on representations of ethical questions in science. We'll start with Shelley's novel, attending especially to her sources. Then we'll examine these sources (or excerpts from them), most importantly, Milton's epic, *Paradise Lost* (1667), which informs Frankenstein's hubristic assumption of godlike powers as well as his creation's sense of himself both as Adam and as Satan. In addition, we'll consider works on human development by Enlightenment thinkers Locke, Rousseau, Shelley's parents, Godwin and Wollstonecraft, and Goethe, whose novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) the creature reads together with *Paradise Lost*; late 18th- and early 19th-century scientific discussions of what constitutes life; and representations of nature, rebellion, and punishment in Romantic poetry by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Mary Shelley's husband Percy Shelley, and their famous friend

Byron. The second half of the semester will be devoted to *Frankenstein's* influence in the 20th and 21st centuries, the texts of which will largely be chosen by students. Options will range from using the monster in science writing as a symbol of ethical violations (e.g., “Franken-” + “food,” “cells,” “drugs”) to the implications of artificial intelligence in such science fiction films as *Metropolis* (Lang 1927), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick 1968), and *Blade Runner* (Scott 1982). Overall, we’ll use *Frankenstein* to frame a literary history and history of ideas. Especially relevant in a writing-intensive course, we’ll also use it to discuss the relationship between influence and originality.

ENG 2346 MILTON AND 17TH CENTURY LITERATURE

M/W 3:00 - 4:15

PROFESSOR CARRIE SHANAFELT

Counts towards the pre-1700 requirement.

The seventeenth century in England was a period of political crisis, religious dissent, globalization, scientific discovery, and philosophical debate. Across this same period, English poetry became a powerful tool for examining human nature, thought, and emotion in a rapidly changing world. In this course, we will read poems by John Donne, Ben Jonson, Robert Herrick, Thomas Randolph, Edmund Waller, Abraham Cowley, John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Margaret Cavendish, John Dryden, Katherine Philips, Aphra Behn, and William Wycherley, among others. Students will demonstrate understanding of the material in a midterm and final examination, memorize and recite one poem from the syllabus, sonnet-length or longer, and write one short (3-4-page) formalist analysis, and one longer (5-6-page) essay on the work of a single poet.



**ENG 2317 21ST CENTURY CHAUCER: READING MEDIEVAL
LITERATURE IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

T/R 4:30-5:45

PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY

Counts towards the Media Studies minor and the 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 premodern 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. At least one class trip to view original manuscripts of Chaucer's work will be arranged.

Core Courses

English majors and minors may count up to two Core courses towards their requirements.

ENG 1002H DIASPORA LITERATURE (COWC)

M/W 3:00 – 4:15

PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART

Honors

This course explores literature about diaspora: “diaspora” as the abandonment of home, whether voluntary or enforced, and a search for a new home, new opportunities, and new beginnings, even as the home of the past lingers in the imagination, in memory, and in desire.



The massive and often chaotic displacements of peoples seeking refuge from violence, famine, and persecution in their homelands or opportunities for economic survival in an increasingly globalized and politically turbulent world. The twentieth century, the century of totalitarianism and genocide, had already seen seismic shifts in populations fleeing ethnic cleansing, political persecution, and specific events such as WWI and WWII, the Holocaust, African decolonization, the Indian partition, various regime changes, and nation-building. Literature and film in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have recorded the histories and fictionalizations of such diasporic experiences. The two oldest and far-reaching global diasporas have been the Jewish and the African diasporas. Both were painful, both produced flowering cultural expression, and both continue to develop, centuries later, to this day.

Texts: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Henry Louis Gates, *Black in Latin America* (documentary); Christopher Guldbrandsen, *Stealing Africa: Why Poverty?*

(documentary), Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro* (documentary), Austrian Jewish writer and journalist Joseph Roth, *The Wandering Jews*, Czech Jewish writer Franz Kafka, “Josephine, the Singer, or: the Mouse Folk” and “In the Penal Colony,” American Jewish cartoonist Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*, Israeli Kafkaesque writer S.Y. Agnon, *The Parable and Its Lesson*, and additional secondary literature.

ENG 1023H AUTHORSHIP: PLATO TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (CUOT)

F 10:00 - 12:30

PROFESSOR LAUREN FITZGERALD

For incoming freshmen Honors students.



This course explores a topic that you might be surprised to learn will come up frequently in your work as a college student, representations of *authorship* over the last ~2500 years. From a historical perspective, and because depictions of this process have changed significantly over the

centuries, we’ll consider how famous authors have described where ideas for writing come from: Is it divine inspiration? The world around them? Imitation of previous authors? Hard work and craftsmanship? An expression of who we are? Collaborations with others? We’ll also address more recent perspectives on who gets to be called an author: For instance, why is there a debate about whether Shakespeare authored his works? Are women writers part of the authorial tradition? What about college students? Most important, we’ll look at why this topic matters to you, right now. Ever wonder why, as a student, you must produce original writing, usually on your own, when the writing that people do on the job and/or the internet can be anonymous, collaborative,

imitative, and even, strictly speaking, plagiarized? We'll tackle this question too and raise many others about the far-reaching topic of authorship.

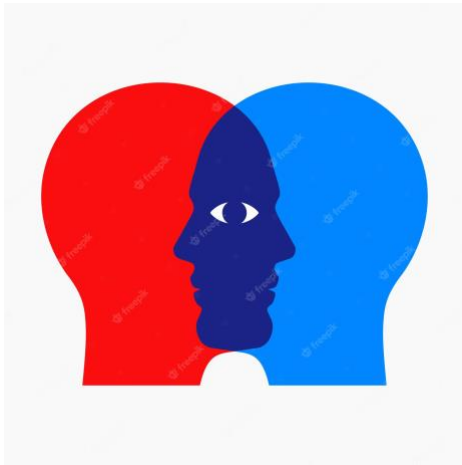
ENG 1026 FACE-TO-FACE:

COMPLEX MODERN IDENTITIES IN CONTEMPORARY FILM (COWC)

M/W 4:30 - 5:45

PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART

Counts towards the Media Studies minor.



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 subjectivity on the whole and cultural identity more broadly speaking. As Aristotle claimed, we learn to become ourselves by idealizing and imitating what we see on the stage—for us, the film screen—in front of us and we become ourselves by imitating our own ideals, thereby overcoming other possible iterations of

ourselves. This is a course about subjectivity, the social order in which it emerges, ideology, and power. It explores the role cinematic images play in our own unconscious formation. 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.

In its new variant, the course's main themes are: subjectivity, technology, power, and horror. Theory to be studied: Aristotle, Lacan, Hegel, Žižek, Mulvey. Films to be studied: *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, *The Truman Show*, *Psycho*, *Get Out*, *Alien*, *The Virgin Suicides*, *Vertigo*, *The Dark Knight*, *Caché*, *Parasite*.

ENG 1034 STRANGER THINGS: THE ART OF THE UNREAL (INTC)

T/R 3:00 - 4:15

PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY



Reality is not always probable, or likely.

--Jorge Luis Borges

In this interdisciplinary core course, we will study how literature and other media construct fictional worlds, claimed actualities very different from those we collectively perceive and experience. At least initially, then, the issues we confront will be epistemological in nature—that is, they will concern how art challenges or otherwise defines the limits of what we can know and understand; and yet we will also try to complicate familiar paradigms by examining a broad range of materials, from classical epic to contemporary film, for their estranging effects. To reference the shadowy parallel dimension from the popular miniseries “Stranger Things,” episodes of which we will view, think of the course as a class trip to the Upside Down and its analogous settings, as afforded by engagements with classical poetry; folklore, legend, and romance; ghost stories and the supernatural; mystical and visionary writing; surrealist art; and, by the end of the term, science fiction. All readings are intended for a broad student audience.

ENG 1036 TRAVEL WRITING THROUGH THE AGES: FRONTIERS AND BORDERS (CUOT)

PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY

T/R 1:30-2:45



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, 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 try writing their own travel narrative.

ENG 2360 / ENG 2360H LITERATURE & ENLIGHTENMENT (INTC)

M/W 4:30 - 5:45; Honors: 6:45 - 8:00

PROFESSOR CARRIE SHANAFELT



In this course, we will examine several works of popular British prose from the Restoration through the 1760s in the intellectual context of Enlightenment philosophy. During this era, authors of popular fiction (including Aphra Behn, Jonathan Swift, Eliza Haywood, Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, and Samuel Johnson), not only wrote in response to the dominant aesthetic, moral, political, and epistemological frameworks provided by contemporary philosophers, but also contributed to the development of modern philosophical argument by satirizing long-held assumptions about human nature, perception, subjectivity, morality, political economy, and the purposes of art. In conversation with these works of fiction, we will also read excerpts from philosophical works by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, George Berkeley, David Hume, and Adam Smith. Students will write two short analytical papers and a more substantial essay responding to these ideas.

ENG 4930H TOPICS: SECULAR THEOLOGY: AMERICAN JEWISH LITERATURE (INTC)

F 10:00 - 12:15

PROFESSOR FRED SUGARMAN

Honors



After WWII, when European Jewry and its religious institutions were nearly decimated, a transition occurred from religious to secular identification for Jews. Jews were anxious to embrace American secular culture and mostly abandoned Rabbis and the synagogues

to embrace American culture. Jews were entering colleges and thanks to the GI Bill, many of their professors were Jews signaling the ascent of culture over religion. Diverse figures such as Morris R. Cohen (CCNY), Irving Howe (CUNY), Lionel Trilling (Columbia), and other stars of the academy brought heightened interest and value in the arts, particularly the study of the novel. Not surprisingly, a generation of Jewish writers became touchstones for what would be the deepest explorations of Jewishness in America.

This class will concentrate on the three most important writers in replacing religion with literature: Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth. Bellow straddled the worlds of American and European cultures, Malamud maintained his devotion to the American realistic novel and Roth was the final, far-reaching figure who negated religion and replaced it with the language of the novel.

ENG 4930H TOPICS: THE VALUES OF VERSE: SACRED AND SECULAR PERSPECTIVES (INTC)

T/R 6:45 - 8:00

PROFESSOR SHAINA TRAPEDO

Honors



What makes a good poem? What good are poems? For Aristotle, poetry played a crucial role in civic stability. Roman statesman-turned-satirist Horace declared that poets should aim to “delight” and “profit” their audiences. 14th-century Catholic and Italian humanist Francesco Petrarch struggled to justify the joy he found in the aureate language of antiquity and

prove that the arts serve a spiritual purpose. Though he confessed to loving Homer and Virgil, he later resolved, “my poet [shall be] David... I want to have his Psalter always at hand [and] beneath my pillow when I sleep and when I come to die.” During the Renaissance, the Psalms served as a touchstone for poets exploring the texture, edges, and impediments of human experience, which infused their art with the lyricism and wisdom of ancient Israel that has profoundly shaped Western literature and culture to this day. This course will explore the virtuosity of verse and by what means poetry yields sacred insight and secular wisdom. For Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, who taught English literature at Stern College after completing his Ph.D. in English at Harvard in the late 1950s, “[q]uite apart from the precision, economy, suggestiveness, and force, great poetry may be imaginative and passionate— and, as such, inspiring, exhilarating, and ennobling.” In seeking to understand the value(s) of verse, we will study a variety of poets including Ovid, Dante, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Bradstreet, and Goethe, among many others. Taught under the auspices of the English department and the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, this course will feature occasional guest lectures by affiliated humanities faculty.

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 Creative Writing minor—and for links to the Creative Writing minor and the Media Studies minors’ webpages.