VCU
Department of
English

Course Descriptions

Summer 2016
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Credit Distribution

Writing.................................305, 307
Linguistics............................390, 450
Criticism.............................. N/A
Literature Prior to 1700..........361
Literature 1700-1945..............372, 379
Diversity.............................. 379

**Note:** Upper level classes not listed above count as English elective credit.

These distributions are current as of 2/8/16. If instructor or class times change, check with your advisor to make sure the distribution has not changed.
ENGL 215-001       Textual Analysis: “The Old Brag of My Heart”: Coming of Age in the U.S. in the Latter Half of the Twentieth Century
In this course we will examine what it means to come of age in the United States during the latter half of the twentieth century. We will begin with a discussion the bildungsroman, a sub-genre of the novel that dates back to Germany in the second half of the eighteenth century, and then examine more recent examples (and perhaps non-examples) of this type of narrative in order to understand the form as it appears in a more recent and local context. Our first text will be Jeffrey Eugenides’s The Virgin Suicides (originally published in 1993), from which we will work backward towards William Maxwell’s The Folded Leaf (originally published in 1945). We will end the course with a discussion of Justin Torres’s We the Animals (published in 2012). In the course of our discussion we will examine the similarities and differences in the works with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, region, sexual orientation and/or an intersection of these social identities.

ENGL 215-002       Textual Analysis
An inquiry into literary texts, emphasizing critical thinking and close reading. Individual sections will focus on a unifying question or problem. Students will study selected texts and their times with an emphasis on developing skills in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, research and/or oral communication.

ENGL 215-901       Textual Analysis
This online ENGL 215 (textual analysis) is an introduction to poetry that audiences interpret through visual means. No prior expertise or familiarity with poetry is expected or required; we will use technology and social media apps to ease ourselves into a better rapport with poetic genres. We will study poems that rely heavily on imagery for their effects, poems that respond to other visual arts like painting and sculpture, and poems that manipulate the relationships between form, meaning, and space. This is a skills course that requires daily participation and collaboration in an online environment. We will illustrate and
annotate poems as a way of sponsoring critical thinking about the genre. The final project will involve the construction of either a critical or a creative multimedia edition of a poem.

Coats            May 23-July 13  Blackboard (Online)       CRN #: 32049

ENGL 305-001  Writing Poetry
English 305 is a creative writing workshop; students will write drafts of poems--some in response to assignments--and will bring copies for discussion and critique. The class also includes a thorough reading component of mostly contemporary poems, as well as essays about poetry. The final grade is based on a portfolio of revised poems, as well as studio work such as freewrites, written critiques, imitations, image lists, notebook entries and possibly one short essay. Required texts: *The Poet’s Companion* by Addonizio and Laux and *Best of the Best American Poetry: 25th Anniversary Edition*, edited by Lehman and Pinsky.

Shiel            May 23-June 23    MTWR 10:30-12:45pm   CRN #: 34715

ENGL 307-001  Writing Fiction
Writing Fiction is an introduction to the techniques of fiction writing, both traditional and contemporary. We will view fiction from a writer’s perspective rather than from a reader’s, discussing such topics as setting, point of view, character, dialogue, plot, and conflict, and we will put what we discuss into practice as each student begins to create a portfolio of new work.

Lodge           June 13- Aug 3     MW 3:00-5:40pm       CRN #: 34718

ENGL 307-002  Writing Fiction
In this course, we will explore what a story is, how to discover and develop the stories you want to tell, and the narrative techniques to create and shape them and make them wonderful. You will read and discuss published stories as models, write exercises designed to develop your narrative skills, as well as write original stories. Much of the class will be conducted as a workshop. This means that you provide the audience for each other’s work, reading and commenting in class and in written critiques.

Danvers         June 14- Aug 4    TR 6:00-8:40pm       CRN #: 34846

ENGL/RELS 361-002  The Bible as Literature
In this course students will gain an understanding of different genres of Biblical literature as well as a sense of the literature’s historical development and context. Attention will be paid to the differences between reading the Bible as a sacred text versus a literary text, the significant influence Biblical literature has had on non-Biblical literature (both secular and religious), and the types of
literary criticism that non-religious scholars and theologians apply to Biblical texts. Through class lectures and discussions, the reading of Biblical, non-Biblical, and critical literature, and the writing of papers in which literary criticism will be applied to Biblical texts, students will become familiar not only with key Biblical texts and themes, but possible interpretations and understandings of them.

Smith                June 13- July 21          MTWR 10:30am-12:10pm            CRN #: 35199

ENGL 372-001  U.S. Literature: 1820-1865
This upper-division course will focus on American authors writing in the decades prior to the Civil War (roughly 1820 – 1860). Throughout the course, an emphasis will be placed on examining how the authors under consideration responded to the changing economic, cultural, and political marketplaces of the antebellum period. Authors covered may include Poe, Emerson, Thoreau, Stowe, Whitman, Hawthorne, and Melville as well as a selection of antebellum periodical writings. Assignments to include daily commonplace book / journal entries, 2 exams, and a final paper.

Harrison    May 23- June 10          MTWRF 9:00-12:00pm            CRN #: 31912

ENGL 379-001  African American Literature
From the Beginnings through the Harlem Renaissance
This course offers a survey of and introduction to the African American vernacular tradition as well as African American engagement with print culture in the development of African American letters. We engage such key moments and movements as: the Negro Spirituals and work songs, the historic publication of Phillis Wheatley’s Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral (1773), W.E.B Du Bois’s seminal The Souls of Black Folk (1903), and the Harlem Renaissance/New Negro Movement (1919-1937). We will examine themes of literacy, self-writing, protest, and orality. We will question: What is the role of writing in the construction of black identity, freedom, and citizenship? What is the purpose and aesthetics of black art? How do early black writers employ, construct, and revise various literary forms such as the eulogy, the novel, and the autobiography and to what end? How do these writers begin to signify on a developing tradition of African American letters by redeploying tropes such as the talking book?

Jones    June 13-July 21          MTWR 1:00-2:40pm            CRN #: 36620

ENGL 380-001  Southern Literature
A survey of the fiction of the American South, tracing its development from the Civil War to the present in both the novel and short story forms.

McCown    July 25-Aug 12          MTWRF 9:00-11:50am            CRN #: 36006
ENGL 385-001  Fiction into Film
This is a course in adaptation, the translation of literary works into film. As such we will both be reading that literature and viewing those films critically, with an eye toward how the narrative and other elements of the originals have been reshaped by the filmmakers. I’ll introduce some basic theory of adaptation, and we will apply it to a variety of literary works and films that represent a range of genres. My aim is to illustrate various problems or approaches to adaptation. Don’t hold me to this list, but films might range from two different film versions of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* to Terry Gilliam’s adaptation of Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, from Jack Clayton’s version of *The Great Gatsby* to several versions of Raymond Chandler’s *The Big Sleep*. We will discuss the literature and watch feature length motion pictures in alternate classes. There will be a series of reading/viewing responses or quizzes, a short paper focused on adaptation issues, and a comprehensive final exam.
Fine May 23-Jun 10  MTWRF 9:00-11:50am   CRN#: 36416

ENGL/LING 390-001    Introduction to Linguistics
This course is a general introduction to the field of linguistics, the scientific study of language. It will introduce you to the biological, cognitive and social basis for human language and communication with an emphasis on basic, formal methods of linguistic description. Basic areas covered under formal linguistics includes phonetics (the properties of speech sounds), phonology (the systematic sound patterns of language), morphology (the grammatical structure of words), syntax (the structure of phrases and sentences), and semantics/pragmatics (the meaning and use of words and sentences). This course will also cover areas such as historical linguistics (language change and language relationships), language acquisition (how languages are acquired in children vs. adults) and physiological basis of language (language and the brain). This course is designed to give you a brief but broad overview of the methods used in linguistic description and analysis and to familiarize you with the main areas of inquiry within the field of linguistics.

Topics and issues covered include:
• The biological basis and evolutionary origins of human language
• Relations of language to cognition, communication, and social organization
• Sounds, forms and meanings of words, phrases, and sentences
• The reconstruction of linguistic history and the “family tree” of languages
• Dialect variation and language standardization
• Language learning by children and adults
ENGL/LING 450-901 Modern Grammar
This course is an introduction to the study of grammar, focusing on the nature and structure of human language (syntax) from the perspective of the Minimalist Program, the current version of the Principles and Parameters approach within Generative linguistic theory. This course will focus primarily on the grammar of Standard American English but other dialects of English and other languages will also be examined. This course is designed to give you a brief but broad overview of the issues and analytical methods in current grammatical theory and a comprehensive understanding of the basic structure of English and human languages more generally. No prior coursework in linguistics is required.

HUMS 250-002 Reading Film
The primary aims of this course are to introduce you to various formal elements of film composition, to develop your "visual literacy," and to hone your ability to watch, assess, think and write about film and/or its component features analytically. In short, the course seeks to make you an active, informed, conversant and participatory consumer of film and visual media. We will explore the medium of film as a vehicle for storytelling, and more specifically, we will explore the component elements of this medium to understand how they function to support the broader, thematic goal(s) of the medium. We will screen a number of films, or parts thereof, in our exploration and development of proficiency with technical and analytical vocabulary associated with film.