YC Department of English
Spring 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 Spring 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 Paula Geyh: geyh@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.

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 prerequisite for these classes is FYWR 1020.

ENG 1409 Writing the Personal Essay
Professor Katherine Payne
T/R 4:30 - 5:45

In his essay "The Singular First Person" Scott Russell Sanders claims, "I choose to write about my experience not because it is mine, but because it seems to me a door through which others might pass." In this class we will examine the personal essay—its form, history, and presence within Anglophone and international literature. But most importantly we will write personal essays, keeping in mind that the essay is a passageway—from personal experience to public presentation, from reader to writer, from past to present, and from the known into the unknown. Students will develop habits of creativity including journaling, brainstorming, and collecting materials. You will also develop your voice on the page through drafting and revising. We will also learn from each other in a writers' workshop. Readings will include works by Montaigne, Woolf, Thoreau, Baldwin, Borges, Didion, Lopate, and many others.

ENG 1721 Introduction to Creative Writing
Professor Brian Trimboli
M/W 4:30 - 5:45

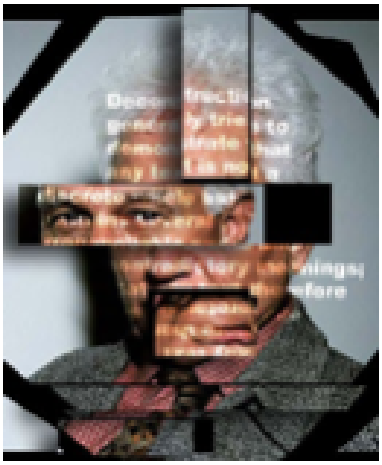
For writers from all backgrounds and all skill levels. The course will encourage writers to sharpen their communication skills through exploration of the three major genres within creative writing. We will read, and write, fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction, in order to better understand reader-based writing through precision and voice. Writers in this course will start with the basic elements of short fiction and work their way towards producing short non-fiction, as well as poetry. In addition, we will be reading

authors such as Italo Calvino, Barry Yourgrau, Margaret Atwood, Haruki Murakami, Louise Gluck, and Yusef Komunyakaa, in order to better understand the genres' trajectories and contemporary standing. This course will provide the space to develop your own writerly voice, as well as how you might explore that voice within different mediums, and might be especially interesting for those studying Media Studies, Philosophy, as well as English or Writing Studies.

LITERATURE & 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 2010 Interpreting Texts: Literary Reading and Critical Practice
Professor David Lavinsky
T/R 3:00 - 4:15



This "gateway" course to the English major is an introduction to critical issues in the discipline of literary studies. It is not, strictly speaking, an introduction to the *history* of literary criticism or a survey of different theoretical *methods*, though of course we will develop an awareness of both throughout the term. Our aim is to explore what it means to read; to understand what a text "is" and how it "works"; and to generate interpretive approaches adequate to the sophisticated critical and theoretical concerns such questions imply. Because these topics are relevant to a wide range of majors within the humanities, students from different academic backgrounds are welcome to enroll. Readings will be similarly diverse: philosophy and literary criticism; prose,

poetry, and drama from different times and places; film, visual art, or architecture; music, new media, or digital media; and perhaps also one or more excursions within New York City.

Requirements: informed class participation, regular postings to an online discussion forum, a short critical essay, and a final project.

NOTE: this course is a requirement for English majors but open to non-majors with a strong background in literature; it can be used to fulfill either the 1st or 2nd semester of the two-semester literature requirement.

ENG 2049 Romantic Revolutions
Professor Lauren Fitzgerald
M/W 4:30 - 5:45

William Blake, *America a Prophecy* (1793, 1821) The William Blake Archive

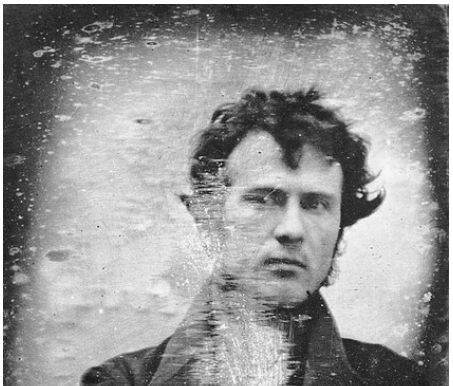
This course examines works by famous British Romantic authors—Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Keats, and the Shelleys—through the lens of revolution. Part of the "Age of Revolution," this period (roughly 1780–1830) is marked by political upheavals in America, England, France, and elsewhere; by demands for the rights of man and woman; and by calls for the abolition of the slave trade. Due to developments in anthropology, astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, medicine, meteorology, and physics, this was also the age of the

"Second Scientific Revolution," which in turn contributed to the rapid economic expansion and technological advances of the Industrial Revolution and its shift from rural agriculture to manufacturing in the cities. We will explore how these key historical and cultural frameworks—what was called at the time "the spirit of the age"—informed some of the greatest literature of the period, including *Songs of Innocence and Experience, Lyrical Ballads, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* and *Frankenstein*.

However, these authors not only responded to this complex and rapidly changing milieu; they caused revolutions of their own. Writing itself underwent monumental transformations in what was written, published, and by whom, as well as in claims about how authors created their works. Such changes are all the more fascinating because these authors knew each other and were careful readers of each other's works, which they critiqued, revised, and even collaborated on. And though this period later became known as "Romantic" because of its apparent kinship with a literary mode (*romance*), representations of romantic love and other emotions were dramatically altered too, due in no small part to literature published at this time. This period reminds us that we read literature not only for its own sake or as a window into the past but to understand who we are now and to imagine possible futures. As Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote 200 years ago, his contemporaries were "mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present," what he more famously called "the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

Fulfills the 1700–1900 course requirement.

ENG 2410 The Victorian Novel
Professor Carrie Shanafelt
M/W 3:00 - 4:15



During this semester, we will read several major novels written during the reign of Queen Victoria in Great Britain from 1837-1901. This was a time of globalization,

secularization, and scientific advancement, but it was also a period when gender, racial, class, and religious diversity was repressed for the sake of conformity to rigorous—and often deadly—social norms. Yet British readers were hungry for adventure, diversity, and sympathy across social boundaries, and they found opportunities for vicarious transgression of those boundaries in popular fiction. Students in this course will become familiar with major genres of fiction in this period, including Gothic, comic, realist, naturalist, aestheticist, and sensation fiction, and they will analyze these genres in relation to their depictions of social transgression and its consequences.

ENG 2861H Major Authors: Whitman/Melville
Professor Fredric Sugarman
F 10 - 12:30

Herman Melville and Walt Whitman were both born in 1819 and died within a year of each other (1891/1892). They developed within the artistic battles in New York City embodied in the Young America movement, a now forgotten footnote to the work of two great writers. The two never met nor did they read each other's works. Yet, while one worked in poetry and the other predominantly in prose (Melville was also an accomplished poet), they posit opposing philosophies of what it is to be an American. Whitman was the great dissolver of all differences; Melville was the creator of the social reality; whereas Whitman saw the poet's role as subsuming all objective reality and recasting it as a unified poetic vision, Melville saw the literary act to be rescuing the real from the onset of poetic/personal subjectivity.

This class will concentrate on the two masterpieces of each writer – Song of Myself and Moby-Dick. Beginning with Whitman and his Preface to the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass, we will read Song of Myself in its entirety also considering his other great masterpiece,

Crossing Brooklyn Ferry. The undertaking is to see how Whitman's poetic enterprise is to undo the world he lives in, imaginatively recreating it through poetry, and establishing a voice – Walt Whitman, a kosmos – that represents an America of the imagination. After Whitman, we will turn to the whaling adventure in which Captain Ahab adopts a philosophy akin to Whitman's which Ishmael will try to evade and undo. Moby-Dick is a battle for the idea of America, a struggle between what Whitman believed to be for the good and Melville could never accept as the real.

ENG 4001 Senior Colloquium
Professor Elizabeth Stewart
M 6:00 - 8:30

This course provides students majoring in English with a culminating, "capstone" experience, which forges links between your previous courses while directing you towards new paths of inquiry. Concluding with a Senior Final Paper and Oral Presentation, this semester-long course explicitly links the gateway course (English 2010, Interpreting Texts) with other courses in the major by creating and following connections among texts, genres, cultural contexts, and critical perspectives. In this way, we hope you will consider your own stake in the ongoing conversation of literary studies, the questions that drive your interest in the field, and the ways in which you might carry your intellectual pursuits into the future. The course joins students and faculty in dialogue around texts and the interpretive practices that contextualize them, while enhancing community among English majors through its collaborative nature. Building on the work of the Advanced Seminar, students will consult with members of the English department faculty to prepare for leading their own sessions of the course.

Required for all Creative Writing and Literary Studies students in their final Spring semester.

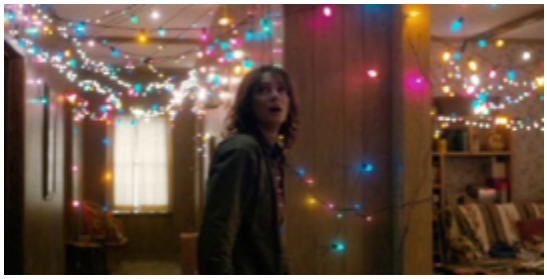
CORE COURSES

INTC (Interpreting the Creative)

ENG 1017 Law and Literature: Testimonial Evidence in Fiction and Film
Professor Carrie Shanafelt
M/W 6:45 - 8:00

In this course, students will practice and implement methodologies for responding to literary works and film, focusing on Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Pale Fire* and Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashomon*. Each of these texts narrates the aftermath of a murder, creating a set of unsolved problems that yield no definitive legal or moral consensus. Together, we will practice a variety of strategies for discussing and writing about texts that offer competing perspectives on what reality is and how we find meaning in it.

ENG 1034 Stranger Things: The Art of the Unreal
Professor David Lavinsky
T/R 1:30 - 2:45



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 push beyond familiar theoretical frameworks (e.g., Plato, Freud) by examining modern philosophical accounts of literary aesthetics. This work will guide us through a broad range of textual forms and discourses, from classical epic to contemporary film and television, all variously marked by the ramifying proximity of the alien and the familiar, by moments of estrangement and epistemic disruption. To reference the shadowy parallel dimension from the popular television 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; medieval legend and romance; fantasy literature; mystical and visionary writing; surrealist art; and, by the end of the term, science fiction. We will supplement this diverse assemblage of material with critical and theoretical readings intended for a broad student audience. Requirements will include regular postings to an on-line discussion forum, short response papers, and a final paper/collaborative multimedia project, together with excursions to relevant NYC museums, archives, or historical sites.

COWC (Contemporary World Cultures)

ENG 1002 Diaspora Literature
M/W 3:00 - 4:15
Professor Elizabeth Stewart

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 Guldbransen, *Stealing Africa: Why Poverty?* (documentary), Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro* (documentary), Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks,* Australia's Peter Weir, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (film), Ryan Coogler, *The Black Panther,* W. G. Sebald, *The Emigrants* (Germans, Jews, US), Austrian Jewish writer and journalist Joseph Roth, *The Wandering* Jews, Czech Jewish writer Franz Kafka, "Josephine, the Singer, or: the Mouse Folk," Israeli Kafkaesque writer S.Y. Agnon, *The Parable and Its Lesson.*

ENG 1026 Face-to-Face: Complex Modern Identities in Contemporary Film
Professor Elizabeth Stewart
M/W 4:30 - 5:45

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. FILMS: *Everything Everywhere All at Once, The Truman Show, Psycho, Get Out!, Alien, Picnic at Hanging Rock, The Virgin Suicides, Vertigo, The Dark Knight, Caché, Parasite.*
Requirements: class participation, midterm, 2 analytical essays, presentation.
Counts towards the Media Studies minor

CUOT (Cultures Over Time)

ENG 1036 Frontiers And Borders: Travel Writing Through The Ages
Professor David Lavinsky
T/R 4:30 - 5:45

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 some recent 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.

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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.