

YC Department of English

Spring 2021 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.

If you're wondering which Spring 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, Professor Rachel Mesch: rachel.mesch@yu.edu. For information about the Media Studies minor, contact Professor Elizabeth Stewart: estewart@yu.edu. They would be happy to meet with you.

Required for English Majors

INTERPRETING TEXTS: LITERARY READING AND CRITICAL PRACTICE

PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY

ENG 2010 (Writing Intensive)

T 6:30 - 9:00

For new English majors and minors and Media Studies minors. May be taken at the same time as FYWR. Fulfills the YC Writing-Intensive requirement.

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 mandate instead 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; poetry, prose, 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.



SENIOR COLLOQUIUM
PROFESSOR RACHEL MESCH
ENG 4001
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 Research Seminar, students will consult with members of the English department faculty to prepare for leading their own sessions of the course. In addition, faculty will visit the course throughout the semester to share their own research and writing experiences.

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 1010 or 1020.

SPECIAL TOPICS IN CREATIVE NONFICTION:
MIGRATION & IMMIGRATION
PROFESSOR LIESL SCHWABE
ENG 1724
M/W 4:30 - 5:45

“Wherever there are immigrants, there are stories.”
-Suketu Mehta.

In this special topics in creative nonfiction course, we will focus on reading and writing stories of migration and immigration, of departure and arrival, of fragmentation and belonging. Right now, one out of every twenty-nine people on earth lives in a country different from the one in which they were born, making these narratives at once utterly individual and yet more common every day. And, as Valeria Luiselli writes, stories of displacement often have “no beginning, no middle, and no end,” making this material especially powerful within the elasticity and innovation of the creative nonfiction genre.



In addition to reading dynamic prose from across history and around the world, students will craft original, creative essays that experiment with form, voice, and content. Student will be expected to share their own work and provide feedback within a rigorous and supportive workshop. With a strong emphasis on revision and the development of a critical craft vocabulary, the course will

attune students to finding the universal in the specific and the familiar in the foreign. Authors to be read include, but are not limited to, Valeria Luiselli, Edwidge Danticat, Mohsin Hamid, Julie Otsuka, Eva Hoffman, Maeve Higgins, Alexander Chee, James Baldwin, and Chang-Rae Lee. Contact schwabe@yu.edu with any questions.

Prerequisite: FYWR/H 1020

INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING

PROFESSOR BRIAN TRIMBOLI

ENG 1721

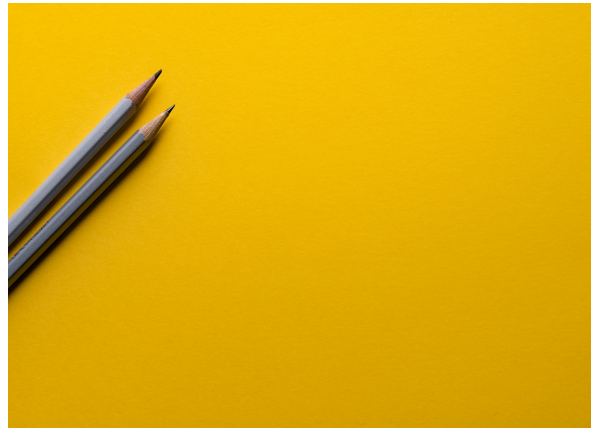
M/W 3:00 - 4:15

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 non-fiction, 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.

WRITING POETRY
PROFESSOR BARBARA BLATNER
ENG 1832
T/R 4:30 - 5:45



To create, said poet Ezra Pound, we must tie one foot down so that the other foot can dance. To free our freshest writing, we must bind ourselves in some way to a discipline or “rule” that restrains and limits us. What are the rules of a poem? Every poem has its own rules. Sometimes these rules are original, never seen before; sometimes these rules are historically templated molds into which poets pour new words. Writing in established forms can free creative thinking: while one part of the mind concentrates on meeting the demands of the form, another part is free to leap toward invention. In this workshop, you will read, write and study forms from all over the world, past and present --villanelle, sestina, haiku, rap, renga, sonnet form, visual poems, and others. You will also write “free” verse poems where you invent your own unique rules. Class time will be spent doing exercises to develop specific skills, reading and analyzing poems as models, and giving the poems you and your peers produce nurturing and instructive critique and audience. A discussion of poetics—ways of constructing and conceiving of poetry itself—will be ongoing. Creating a supportive community of peer writers is vital to the success of this class. I invite any and every beginning and seasoned poet to join and dive deeply into poem-making. It’s really not scary, once you begin. Texts: Padgett, Handbook of Poetic Forms. Keillor, Good Poems. Requirements: • Weekly writing assignments. • A portfolio of finished poems, accompanied by a self-assessment essay (5 or more pages) analyzing in detail your progress during the semester and relating that progress to specific poems you’ve read • Weekly readings and response journals. • Participation in workshops and discussion. • Attendance at a local poetry reading. • Participation in an end-of-term public reading. This course counts towards the Writing minor and the English major and minor.



Literature

Pre-requisite: FYWR 1010 (H) or 1020.

ROMANTIC REVOLUTIONS PROFESSOR LAUREN FITZGERALD ENG 2049 T/Th 3:00 - 4:15



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, the Shelleys, and Austen—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 agriculture in the country 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*, *The Prelude*, *Frankenstein*, and *Emma*.

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 most of 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.”

Counts as the 1700–1900 course requirement.

ART OF FILM: 1896-1968
PROFESSOR PAULA GEYH
ENG 2960
MW 3-4:30

For over a century, movies have captivated us and shaped our expectations and understanding of the world. This 2000-level course will introduce students to the basics of analyzing and writing about film. We'll focus primarily on the close reading of elements of mise-en-scène (everything up there on the screen) and montage (film editing), paying particular attention to how they come together to produce meaning. Although not a “history of film,” the course is organized chronologically, and it examines some of the most important artistic and technological turning points in the first fifty years of film history, including early silent film, classic Hollywood film, Soviet montage, German Expressionism, experimental film, and the French New Wave. We'll also explore the conventions of various filmic genres, including the screwball comedy, the Hitchcock mystery, the Western, and the musical, and we'll survey some key theoretical approaches to analyzing film. Among the films we'll study are *It Happened One Night*, *Rear Window*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Vertigo*, *Citizen Kane*, *The Searchers*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey*.



Texts include Kawin, *How Movies Work* and Elsaesser and Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses*.

GRAPHIC NOVELS AND ANIMATIONS
PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART
ENG 2963
Tu/Th 4:30 - 5:45

Theme, idea, form, aesthetics, and craft in the evolving genres of the graphic novel and animation. How do and should we read, watch, and analyze comics and animations, and how do they approach and make contact with us? We will try to understand the nature of their expressive potential and also how they de-



mocratize art production by way of the technologies that bring them to life.

Comics, graphic novels, and animations can be ordered according to traditional sub-genres such as comedy, tragicomedy, family memoir, historical fiction, etc., so we will discuss how this new medium innovates traditional categories. Among a number of other concerns, we will deal with the question of why artists in the 20th and 21st centuries have so often turned to these media when narrating stories about the Holocaust, nuclear destruction, and human rights crises, and, on a smaller scales, stories about individual loss, emancipation, and growth. We will also try to understand the cultural politics of the super-hero phenomenon as well as the insistent tension between the utopian and the dystopian impulses in graphic novels and animations.

TEXTS/ANIMATIONS INCLUDE:

Graphic novels: Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (Pantheon 1993); Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis* Pantheon; 1st Edition edition (June 1, 2004); Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (Mariner, 2007); Emil Ferris, *My Favorite Things is Monsters* (vol. 2 out in fall) Fantagraphics; 1 edition (February 14, 2017); Mat Johnson, *Incognegro* (VertigoComics, 2008); Alan Moore, David Gibbons, *Watchmen* (DC Comics; Reprint edition (May 13, 2014); Joe Sacco, *Safe Area Goražde* Fantagraphics; 1st edition (January 17, 2002); Nick Drnaso, *Sabrina* (Drawn & Quarterly, May 2018).

Animations:

ALL ANIMATIONS ARE AVAILABLE TO STREAM FROM YOUTUBE, AMAZON, ITUNES, GOOGLEPLAY, etc. Ari Folman, *Waltz With Bashir*; Stéphane Aubier and Vincent Patar, *A Town Called Panic*; Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons: *Watchmen* [live action]; Keji Nakazawa, *Barefoot Gen*; Richard Linklater, *Waking Life*.

Literature Courses Fulfilling Core Requirements

English majors and minors may count two such courses towards their requirements. Pre-requirement: FYWR 1010 (H) or 1020.

BOOKS ON BOOKS/FILMS ON FILMS

PROFESSOR PAULA GEYH

ENG1001 (INTC)

MW 4:30 OR MW 6:45

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 or short story 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*.

Two papers and two exams.

Counts towards the Media Studies Minor

DIASPORA LITERATURE

PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART

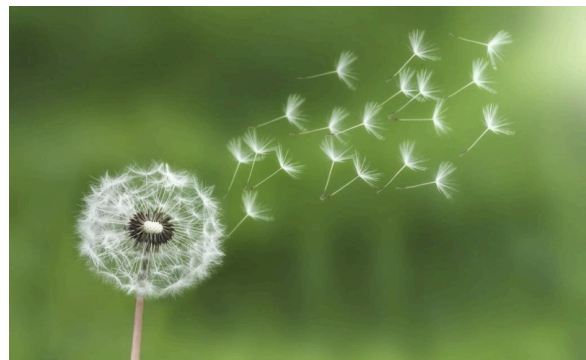
ENG 1002 (COWC)

T/R 1:30-2:45 pm

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 twenty-first century has so far been characterized by massive and often chaotic displacements of peoples seeking refuge from violence, famine, and persecution in their homelands or are simply seeking 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 century have recorded the histories and fictionalizations of such diasporic experiences. The two oldest and far-reaching global diasporas were the Jewish and the African. Both were painful, both produced flowering cultural expression, and both continue to develop, centuries later, to this day.

Texts include: W.G. Sebald, *The Emigrants* (German migration to the US and UK), Vladimir Nabokov, *Pnin* (Russian migration to the US), V.S. Naipaul, *A Bend in the River* (African migrations), Dinaw Mengestu (American Ethiopian novelist and journalist), Julie Otsuka, *When the*



Emperor Was Divine (Japanese American), Hisham Matar, *The Return* (Lybian American), Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation* (Jewish American); some **film**.

Requirements: short written responses, midterm take-home, final exam.

WORDS TO LIVE BY: LITERATURE, MORALITY, AND ENTERTAINMENT

PROFESSOR DAVID LAVINSKY

ENG 1013 (INTC)

T/R 4:30-5:45

The didactic and moral content of English literature often seems in conflict with modern notions of reading as a form of entertainment or imaginative escape. What happens, for instance, if we derive pleasure or enjoyment from a text meant instead to reform our behavior or provide examples of how to act? And what does it mean if we discover moral or ethical models in literature intended merely to entertain? Does literature have ennobling effects? By the same logic, can artifice inspire immorality,



or distract us from what truly matters? And what becomes of the reader who resists or is already estranged, because of religious or cultural identity, from a text's prescriptive intent? We will approach these questions from different cultural and aesthetic vantage points, all variously concerned with how certain literary and artistic forms inscribe their audiences in the stories they tell, scripting a specific moral response in the process. Our investigation will ground itself in readings from classical antiquity before considering the interrelation of artistic form and moral meaning in specific contexts. We will track anxieties about the spiritual consequences of imaginative diversion and departure; reconsider the relationship between religious art and secular forms of entertainment, and the utility of the sacred/secular distinction more generally; explore the different ways in which visual, textual, and performative mediums exert a hold on our minds (and bodies); and assess how these concerns are implicated in contemporary debates about the problematics of reading and moral exemplification. Many of our readings will be drawn from early English poetry, prose, and drama, though no previous exposure to this period or its literature is assumed, and a wide range of critical and theoretical texts will help students situate unfamiliar material.

FACE-TO-FACE: COMPLEX MODERN IDENTITIES IN CONTEMPORARY FILM

PROFESSOR ELIZABETH STEWART

ENG 1026 (COWC)

T/R 3:00-4:15

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



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.

Counts towards the Media Studies minor

SPOILER ALERT: MODERN STORYTELLING ACROSS GENRES

PROFESSOR RACHEL MESCH

ENG 1041H (INTC)

M/W 3:00-4:15

This class explores modern storytelling across genres, from the novel and short story, to film, television, podcasts and more. 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. What kinds of



stories are we allowed to tell, and who is

allowed to tell them? What determines a “happy ending” and how can a story be 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 storytelling, we’ll pay attention to the ways we consume stories: whether by reading, watching episode by episode, or binging in one gluttonous weekend. Becoming aware of our own practices will help us think about our relationships with the stories to which we feel most connected. 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.

Readings include William Goldman, *The Princess Bride*; Jonathan Safran Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*; stories by Margaret Atwood, Borges, Etgar Keret, Edgar Allan Poe, George Saunders, Toni Morrison.

Counts towards the Media Studies Minor.

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 <https://www.yu.edu/yeshiva-college/ug/media-studies-minor> for information about the Media Studies minor.