

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
FALL 2011**

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<http://cas.buffalo.edu/english>

ENG 501 – INTRODUCTION TO SCHOLARLY METHODS

PROF. RUTH MACK

Monday 9:00-11:40, Clemens 412

Registration Numbers: (A) 29481 (B) 30818

All new students in the English Department's M.A. Program are required to take English 501, which is designated *Introduction to Scholarly Methods*. This course is in turn divided into two sections, A and B, which have different formats: the A section is a conventional seminar, whereas the B section does not have a common meeting time, but instead consists in individual advisement tailored to your specific needs. All new M.A. Program students must enroll in the A section, and full-time students should also enroll in the B section. (You can enroll in the A section online, but you will be enrolled in the B section automatically. Part-time students should drop the B section.)

English 501 A is intended to enhance your familiarity and facility with the kinds of questions literary scholars ask today and their strategies for answering them. We will therefore study various critical approaches and gain a grounding in research methods. Research into the composition, publication, and critical history of a text of your own choosing (in consultation with me) will form the basis of writing assignments and an oral presentation.

(Please note that while the A and B sections of this course can count toward your eight-seminar requirement for the M.A. and while the A section is required for all new M.A. students, neither the A nor the B section of this course counts toward the four intensive seminars required for the degree.)

ENG 502 – INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THEORY

PROF. MING-QIAN MA

Wednesday 9:00-11:40, Clemens 412

Registration Number: 33009

Designed as a survey class, English 502 is intended to introduce students to the critical theories of the 20th- and 21st -Centuries, with an emphasis on the post 1960s period. Chronological in approach, it will study the founding or representative texts of various schools or types of theories and criticisms, focusing on their working assumptions, grounding perceptions, constitutive concepts, paradigmatic formations, and corresponding methodologies. The objective of this course is to further prepare students for their more advanced studies at the graduate level by 1) providing an overview/review of the critical and theoretical discourses fundamental to literary and interdisciplinary studies; 2) offering an intensified learning process aiming at cultivating an intellectual rigor in the accuracy of understanding and articulation, and in the cogency of thinking and writing; 3) presenting opportunities to practice literary

criticism by applying these theories to readings of literature for the purpose of learning a range of interpretative methods; and 4) improving and refining a diacritical sensitivity toward not only the significance but also the limitations of each type of critical theories.

Course assignments include one 40-minute presentation, weekly response papers, three short papers of literary criticism, and a term paper.

Textbooks required for the course:

Literary Theory: An Anthology, 2nd Edition. Edited by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Blackwell, 2004
Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Tales, by Herman Melville; with a new introduction by Joyce Carol Oates. Signet Classic, 1998. (Other editions are acceptable)

Supplementary reading materials will be distributed in the form of handouts.

ENG 525 – ROMANTICS

PROF. SUSAN EILENBERG

Tuesday 12:30-3:10, Clemens 436

Registration Numbers: (A) 25801 (B) 30272

This course is designed as a semi-survey of four English romantic poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats, plus a very minor amount of James Thomson and Charlotte Turner Smith), whose anxieties about the possibility or impossibility of representation produced what amount often to inexplicit allegories of reading. It is a semi-survey only because while considerations of proper survey-style breadth largely determine the outlines of the syllabus, loyalty to close reading and the often disorderly questions it develops will determine the manner of our procedure through that syllabus. So although the romantics wrote more than anyone might reasonably attempt to read in a single semester, we will try to get through as much of the major material writings as we can, concentrating, however, on those pieces that have recently been at the center of critical debate. I would like to pursue questions about the economy of creation and loss (which means of course too questions about mourning and multiplication), about sympathy (what makes it possible, what makes it dangerous), about commensurability (also incommensurability, adequacy, and the sublime) and, especially, about analogy, identity, and the materialization of the figure. I would hope to maintain a balance between plain reading, close and massive, and thesis-mongering.

Each student in the A section will write brief, weekly responses to their reading and a long essay to be handed in at the end of term. Students in the B section will write only the brief weekly responses.

ENG 528 – VICTORIAN LITERATURE: The Subject of Atmosphere in Victorian Literature

PROF. KATE BROWN

Wednesday 3:30-6:10, Clemens 412

Registration Numbers: (A) 28928 (B) 30932

The texts we will read in this course share a heightened, even excessive, interest in the objects, surfaces, and climactic conditions that participate in what we usually call “setting.” In *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt articulates what has since been taken largely for granted, that the detailed particularization of place in literature emerges as an aspect of realist technique, whose aim is “the production of what purports to be an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals.” On this account, minutely detailed settings provide the persuasive backdrop for a celebration of individualism that reaches its peak in the Victorian period, along with realist technique itself. In this course, we will hope to complicate our understanding of Victorian subjectivity and the possibilities of setting by attending to spaces that fail to provide a stable ground for knowable characters, but instead become liquid or viscous or glitteringly opaque. Our hypothesis will be that these atmospheric spaces contest (if only in passing and even with alarm) the consistency, autonomy, and singularity of selves.

Victorian authors are likely to include: M. E. Braddon, Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Ruskin, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and H. G. Wells.

We will also read contemporary theorists and critics of subjectivity, space, objects, and weather, including Isobel Armstrong, Nancy Armstrong, Jean Baudrillard, Walter Benjamin, Sigmund Freud, John Kucich, Hilary Schor, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Susan Stewart, and Ian Watt.

Course requirements for all students will include a short presentation to the class. Intensive students will also write a 15-20 page seminar paper.

ENG 583 – POETICS: POST-SIXTIES AMERICAN POETRY: DISJUNCTIVE, PROCEDURAL AND CONCEPTUAL POETICS

PROF. STEVE McCAFFERY

Wednesday 12:30-3:10, Clemens 438

Registration Numbers: (A) 27841 (B) 30741

This course explores the post-Olsonian turn in poetry and poetics beginning in the 1970s. The poems and theories to be studied commonly repudiate the physiological and speechbased poetics of Projective Verse, Black Mountain, and the New York School as well as lyric-confessional and narrative-based poetics. The post-sixties poets considered all accept the subject as linguistically and ideologically constructed, narrative as predicated on a fetishistic logic, and the lyric subject as both belated and false. The material under consideration foregrounds the non-mimetic, materialist possibilities in language; starting with Edward Dorn’s *Gunslinger* as a watershed text it moves on to consider the theory, practice and consequences of the systematic-chance texts of Jackson Mac Low and John Cage, the foundational theories and poetry of Language Writing through to the “post-Language” manifestations of Flarf, Conceptual Writing and the neo-Oulipo. The course is also mindful of the changing discourse networks during this period, especially the major shift from analog to digital, from typewriter culture to informatics and computer based productions and facilities. Although the majority of texts to be discussed are taken from within the politico-geographical boundaries of the United States, some material is culled from Canada. Works for detailed discussion will be drawn from Jackson MacLow, John Cage, Susan Howe, Ron Silliman, Lynn Hejninian, Bruce Andrews, Charles Bernstein, Lisa Robertson, bp Nichol, Christian

Bök, Bill Kennedy and Darren Wershler, Kenneth Goldsmith, Karen Mac Cormack, K. C. Mohammed, Rod Smith among others. The seminar discussions will culminate in discussions as to whether or not the ideas and poetic texts considered signal an epistemic shift between analog and digital cultural practice in poetry. The seminars will be enriched by class visits by guests experts in their field and will be articulated onto several public readings.

ENG 609 – STUDIES IN 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE: Theory of American Literature

PROF. KENNETH DAUBER

Thursday 12:30-3:10, Clemens 412

Registration Numbers: (A) 27925 (B) 30836

This course is designed to give you a roadmap of the variety of ways of talking about classic American literature through readings in the literature of the period and, especially, through a thorough immersion in a wide range of theories about how that literature is to be approached. Reading will be heavy, about two books a week—one a primary text and one a secondary text on the nature of American writing in which that primary text plays a central role. We will read deconstructions, works of cultural criticism, ordinary language criticism, feminism, new historicism—some oldies (like Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* or D.H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*), some newies (Stanley Cavell on Thoreau and Emerson, Donald Pease on cultural critique), some in between (Jane Tompkins on women's literature, Henry Gates on African-American literature), some as yet to be determined. The list will be chosen on the basis of what seems current, what seems enduring, and what I haven't read yet but meant to because it seems promising. Primary texts will include Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, something by Hawthorne, something by Melville (probably *Pierre*), a chunk of Emerson's best, a few of the earliest American novels (Brockden Brown, maybe Hannah Foster), and others (Poe, Thoreau, Douglass). By the end of the course, if you are faithful, you will have an extraordinary sense of how the founding period in American literature lays itself out, what the debates about it are, what works and what doesn't. I tend to be very opinionated about such matters. The course is designed to enable you to form your own (hopefully different) opinions, as well.

**ENG 625 – STUDIES IN 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE:
The American 1890s**

PROF. CARRIE TIRADO BRAMEN

Thursday 3:30-6:10, Clemens 436

Registration Numbers: (A) 35019 (B) 26426

William James predicted that the year 1890 would be known as “the great epochal year in American literature.” With the publication of *Principles of Psychology*, Henry James' *The Tragic Muse* and Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, James confidently saw the 1890s as a new era of American letters. That period, however, also marked a time of endings. The deaths of such figures as Melville, Whitman, Whittier, Stowe and Holmes represented the passing of the Civil War generation, who were the first to witness the consequences of national expansion and industrial progress.

This course will explore the literary, intellectual and cultural history of this transitional decade. It was a time when the cultural authority of the Genteel Tradition was seriously scrutinized and challenged, as well as a period when writers of the regional and cultural “margins” gained literary access. Apart from regionalism, the most direct challenge to the Genteel Tradition was the rise of the mass media. Critics such as William Dean Howells grew anxious about the commodification of literature and championed realism as a belligerent and moral campaign against emerging forms of mass culture. As Howells’ *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890) depicts, the fin-de-siecle also marks a period of national labor strife, including the Pullman Strike (1894) and President Cleveland’s attempt to appease workers through the establishment of Labor Day in 1894. Topics will include: the literature of testimony and Wounded Knee (1890); literary realism in relation to pragmatism; naturalism versus realism; William James’ emergent psychological theories of “multiple selves” in relation to Du Bois’s “double consciousness,” the new literature of sexology and “sexual inversion,” the rise of the New Woman, the Spanish-American War, immigration, the impact of Plessy versus Ferguson, and Ida B. Wells’s anti-lynching crusade.

Assignments: one-page informal reading responses; one short periodical assignment; seminar paper (15pp).

Readings will include: Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, Thorstein Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, William James, *Principles of Psychology*, Henry James, *Turn of the Screw*, Frank Norris, *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco*; José Martí, *Selected Writings*, Pauline Hopkins, *Hagar’s Daughter*, Abraham Cahan, *Yekl*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Solitude of the Self,” Twain, *Pudd’nhead Wilson* and Eugene Debs, selected speeches, Sui Sin Far, “From the Mental Portfolio of a Eurasian,” Lucy Bland (ed), *Sexology Uncensored*.

Brief List of secondary sources: Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, Jennifer Fleissner, *Women, Compulsion, Modernity*

ENG 627 – CINEMATIC MODERNISMS

PROF. WILLIAM SOLOMON

Monday 3:30-6:10, Clemens 538

Registration Numbers: (A) 37644 (B) 37645

This seminar will consider the intersections between American literary modernism and cinema, attempting to situate an assortment of primary texts (prose fictions, poems and motion pictures) historically in relation to the practices and discourses constituting urban-industrial modernity. We will be thinking about how experimental writing and specific film genres (silent comedy, the Hollywood musical, the European avant-garde) responded in the early decades of the twentieth century (as well as after World War II) to the mechanization of work in particular and of everyday life in general. A recurrent topic will be the investment on the part of artists as well as commercially successful entertainers in the possibility of disrupting the forces of socio-economic rationalism via technologically mediated forms of play. An additional concern will be to locate the two cultural phenomena in question in the context of carnival-grotesque amusements, which in turn will require that we address such issues as the (gendered) politics of spectacle, blackface minstrelsy, as well as the aesthetics of postmodernism. The accomplishments of the Beats and the American underground will also be a component of our inquiry. The overall aim of the course will be to reconfigure the field in a manner that may prove productive for future research enterprises.

Literary texts will include Henry James, Stephen Crane, F. Scott Fitzgerald, T.S. Eliot, Hart Crane, John Dos Passos, Gertrude Stein, Eudora Welty, Dorothy Parker, James Agee, George Schuyler, Richard Wright, Nathanael West, William Carlos Williams, William Faulkner, Flannery O’Conner, Jack Kerouac, Robert Coover, and Joan Didion.

Critical or theoretical resources will include the work of Walter Benjamin, Viktor Shklovsky, Siegfried Kracauer, Sergei Eisenstein, Jonathan Crary, Tom Gunning, Georges Bataille, Miriam Hansen, Avital Ronell, Jacques Derrida, Fredric Jameson, Hal Foster, Julia Kristeva, Susan Stewart, Peter Wollen, Slavoj Žižek, as well as Deleuze and Guattari.

ENG 633 – MODERN POETRY: Yeats and Intra-Nationalism

PROF. JOSEPH VALENTE

Thursday 3:30-6:10, Clemens 412

Registration Numbers: (A) 30043 (B) 28191

The fundamental predicate of transnational studies can be summarized, the nation is not coterminous with the state apparatus that functions (pursues agendas, establishes and enforces laws, legitimates power, monopolizes violence etc.) in its name. National formations exceed state boundaries and involve groups (tribes, classes ethnicities etc.) in rhizomatic networks, abrasive and as well as adhesive, that defy the logic of state authority and identification. The internal correlative of this dynamic we might call intra-nationalism, a condition in which multiple, overlapping self-designated people-nations, with differing state affiliations, coexist within what is, is struggling to become, or is struggling to be recognized as a unitary and sovereign nation-state. Such has been the condition of Ireland from at least the Act of Union (1800), if not the arrival of Henry II, and down until the present day.

Unlike every other colonial space in the late Victorian era, Ireland was a European country that had been folded into the metropolitan powerhouse that had colonized it and Ireland featured a settler class who identified themselves as members not of their country of origin, but of the supposedly barbarous land they had come to vanquish, subjugate, and “civilize.” As a consequence of these historical pressures, the identity category, Irish, came to be anything but self-identical in its significations or its range of pertinence. It named nations divided in themselves and from one another along various lines: ancestry, sectarian affiliation, regional provenance/residence, political sympathies, cultural allegiances, and ideological postures.

Under these conditions of fracture and conflict, it is appropriate that the single undisputed national poet of Ireland during this era, W.B. Yeats, was also the artistic voice most audibly haunted by the simultaneous necessity and undecidability of national belonging, most wavering in his commitment to a single version of national identity, and, in the end, most concerned to articulate a multi-ethnic model of national being. Yeats was of the Protestant petit-bourgeois settler class, the group whose national claims were among the least securely delimited of all the main Irish constituencies, having neither aboriginality nor enduring land ownership as a warrant of legitimacy. We will be examining how Yeats sought to compensate for his status anxiety by situating himself in the Irish bardic tradition, wherein the poet traditionally acted as the spokesman, for an entire, organically cohesive tribe. We will proceed to trace the development of Yeats’ work as a deliberately nation-building project that repeatedly stumbled on and

over questions of ethnic definition, difference and antagonism. We will try to understand how Yeats came to alter his understanding of the fundamental coordinates of nationhood with each of several changes in his own allegiances or identifications. Finally, and most importantly, we will examine how the need to speak for and to a nation-state of (conflicting) national estates drove a man who lacked the sensibility and eschewed the technical experimentation of the rising modernist avant-gardes to turn form verse of lyrical simplicity and symbolist vapors to some of the most intellectually sophisticated, complex and resistant verse of the twentieth century.

ENG 649 – STUDIES IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE

Josephine Baker's Skin: Blackness, Power and Sexuality

PROF. HERSHINI YOUNG

Tuesday 12:30-3:10, Clemens 412

Registration Numbers: (A) 37647 (B) 37648

This class investigates what lies coiled within and what lies under the skin. Through detours, dance-steps and mis-steps, we will survey recent cultural and literary work on blackness, sexuality and violence. Insisting on examining strategies of survival as well as those dark things that survival holds at bay, readings will include Darieck Scott's *Extravagant Abjection* that locates black power in that moment that the body is utterly compromised and penetrated and Thomas Glave's experimental novel *The Torturer's Wife* where body parts rain from the sky and litter the garden walk-ways in the nightmare that is the sexualized violence of war. We will trace the contours of the black femme's flights (*The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense* by Kara Keeling) and the strides of black butch blues in *Looking Like What You Are: Sexual Style, Race, and Lesbian Identity* by Lisa Walker. Excerpts from Christina Sharpe's *Monstrous Intimacies* will allow us to think about the genital fantasies of Strom Thurmond (in case any of you were lying awake at night wondering) and the sadomasochism of everyday black life in Isaac Julien's *The Attendant*. We will do all of this while listening to the professional mourner's wails rattle our walls as the death toll from AIDS in Southern Africa surges (Zakes Mda) and the cacophonous dead continue to rise. And perhaps, amidst all this furious sound, we might be able to sense the delicate seismic shifts and trembles that lie on and beneath Josephine Baker's glistening, golden skin (*Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* by Anne Anlin Cheng).

ENG 651 – LITERARY THEORY – POSTMODERNISM

PROF. JOSEPPH CONTE

Wednesday 12:30-3:10, Clemens 538

Registration Numbers: (A) 37650 (B) 37652

Although the mass media have adopted the term "postmodern" (either as a high gloss shorthand for technological advances or, in disparaging contexts, as a synonym for factitious philosophizing) to describe the current period in cultural history, there have been a number of competing and often irreconcilable definitions of the poetics of postmodernism. If we accept Jean-François Lyotard's proposition that the postmodern is defined by "incredulity toward metanarratives," it's no wonder that

there have been so many differing petit récits regarding the quality, product, and theory of postmodernism. We'll begin our reading, then, with Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, paying particular attention to his claims for the impact of science and informational technology in the postindustrial age. We'll try to answer the question of historical periodization and/or cultural shift that Ihab Hassan ascribes to the prevalence of indeterminacy and immanence, signaling a break with—rather than a belated version of—modernism. Linda Hutcheon, in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, investigates the function of irony and parody in mass media and high art forms, relating these methods to feminist practice. Frederic Jameson counters with a less flattering description of art, literature, and popular culture as pastiche occasioned by an overheated consumer economy in his analysis of late capitalism, most recently collected in *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*. Jameson's position is supported in part by a reading of Perry Anderson's historical overview, *The Origins of Postmodernity*.

Particularly relevant to the problem of provenance in American culture, Jean Baudrillard argues that the simulacrum has been substituted for the real, making it impossible to trace our cultural icons to some authoritative source. In defense of popular culture we'll visit one of the inaugural essays in the field, Leslie Fiedler's "Cross the border—close that gap: Postmodernism." Additional supporting arguments for Buffalo as the birthplace of postmodern theory can be found in the novelist John Barth's essays, "The Literature of Exhaustion" and "The Literature of Replenishment," which offer the complementary view from the heights of self-conscious artifice and reflexive fiction. Critical theory, however, has had no exclusive purchase on postmodernity. The eclectic appropriations of postmodern architecture and the visual arts are the subject of Charles Jencks's *What is Post-Modernism?*. Following on Lyotard's prospectus for the new sciences, we'll read an account of the "rise of the machines" in the fields of cybernetics, informatics, and technocracy in Steven Best and Douglas Kellner's *The Postmodern Adventure: Science, Technology, and Cultural Studies at the Third Millennium*. At various points in the semester we'll consult Hans Bertens's history of the period, *The Idea of the Postmodern*.

The preceding description necessarily presents contending arguments regarding postmodernism, and so it remains a reading list rather than offering a metanarrative of its own. Our discussion will be studded with as many references to individual works of postmodern art, architecture, poetry, fiction, and digital media as time permits.

Seminar participants who are registered intensively will be required to make a twenty-minute oral presentation and produce a twenty-page research paper.

ENG 651 – ECOCENTRICISM: Medieval and Modern Nature Construction

PROF. RANDY SCHIFF

Thursday 3:30-6:10, Clemens 412

Registration Numbers: (A) 37649 (B) 37651

Ecocriticism offers a compelling interdisciplinarity, inviting various literary scholars, historians, biologists, geographers, and others to breach disciplinary boundaries in exploring the interrelation of nature and textuality. Our course will consist of two fundamental, juxtaposed pursuits: a survey of ecocritical theory; and a series of encounters with pre-modern literary texts, with the goal of theorizing the Western literary historical life of such concepts as nature, animality, and territory. The seminar will reflect upon the ecocritical turn by engaging with a seminal collection of ecocritical essays, and will also consider the rise of ecological consciousness relative to pre-modern notions of nature and modern nationalism. We will pay particular attention to constructions of nature and their relation to territorialism,

considering theorists like Agamben, Bramwell, Cronon, Harrison, and Kolodny, as well as poetic visions of nature put forth by Virgil, Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France, and Chaucer. Exploring posthumanism and animal studies, we will read the work of theorists like Haraway, Derrida, and Wolfe alongside Chrétien's *Yvain*, the medieval bestiary, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. While considering poetic visions of the wasteland, the wild man, lycanthropy, and animal speech, we will explore the potential of ecocritical theory to enrich literary historical writing on nature. Seminar participants will be required to provide one presentation on related material; those taking the course intensively will be required to write a seminar paper of 17-25 pages.

ENG 653 – CRITICAL THEORY: BEAUVOIR, FANON, AND SARTRE

PROF. JIM HOLSTUN

Monday 12:30-3:10, Clemens 538

Registration Numbers: (A) 28943 (B) 30921

I'll try to do two things simultaneously in this course. First, I want to introduce marxist theory as such, with some readings in Marx and Engels and developments by a group of three French comrades. You'll need Robert Tucker's *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Second, I want to examine a vital current of marxism thought that tends to get short shrift in the intellectual traditions deriving from structuralism and post-structuralism or from Lukács and the Frankfurt School.

We'll read Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), her epochal critique of patriarchy and official marxism. We'll read some excerpts from Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943); all of *What Is Literature?* (1947) and *Search for a Method* (1957); and all or most of the book that *Search* introduces, *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, vol. 1 (1960): a marxist critique of official marxism and an attempt to establish the philosophical intelligibility of "practical ensembles." And we'll read all of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), and excerpts from some of his other writings on colonialism, neocolonialism, and the Algerian Revolution.

We'll talk about the implicit and explicit dialogues among these three: Beauvoir on capitalism, Sartre on colonialism, Fanon on gender. And we'll talk about their appropriation, misappropriation, and misplacement by a later tradition: Bhabha on Fanon, Lévi-Strauss and Foucault on Sartre, Beauvoir's prophetic French feminist critique of "French Feminism"—that presumptuous American misnomer. And we will definitely talk about Sartre's analysis of Tahrir Square and Beauvoir's world-historical 1947 visit to Niagara Falls and Freddie's Donuts on Main Street, Buffalo.

Books at Talking Leaves and Queen City Imaging. *Note*: the translation of *The Second Sex* is a vexed question. You must have the new complete translation by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevalier. If you have questions or just want to talk, please stop by or write me at jamesholstun@hotmail.com.

ENG 680 – FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

PROF. BRUCE JACKSON

Monday 3:30-6:10, Clemens 610

Registration Number: 34242

Participants in this seminar will design and carry out a project of field research and will engage in extensive discussions of their work. Subject matter and medium are completely open: you can document a poet, a rock band, a crook, a cop, a cookie store, a process, a group, a place; you can do it with pen, still camera, audio or video tape recorder and/or film.

There is no syllabus. Our discussions will focus on research project definition and design, fieldwork ethics, collection and management of data, and the organization of data into a product—article, film, sound recording or program, exhibit, thesis. I'll ask everyone to read three books—one a superb study of urban street life that includes discussions of methodology, the observer's and writer's roles, and the ethical obligations of both. We will add some reading as we go along—items that come out of our specific discussions. I'll also ask each participant to discuss for the class a key book on or derived from fieldwork.

Some participants may finish a product during the semester, but a finished product isn't a requirement (a rough draft of one is, as is a detailed log of work done); our concern will be on designing and carrying out the field research, and with understanding the substantive, methodological, and ethical questions raised by one another's work.

Past participants in this seminar have been graduate students in English, Visual Studies, American Studies, Comparative Literature, Anthropology, Media Study, Communications, Sociology and History.

ENG 683 – AMERICAN FILM HISTORY

PROF. ALAN SPIEGEL

Thursday 12:30-3:10, Clemens 538

Registration Numbers: (A) 37653 (B) 37654

For those who wish to pursue a minor field in film history, or simply learn how to look at movies, this course may be considered a reasonable place to begin. This semester will attempt a short history of the American film-movements, trends, artists, studios: the works—easily a year's material (or more) telescoped into a semester. We'll start perhaps with a month of intensive practice in film analysis (including an introduction to basic film techniques, camera terms, the language of the body, etc.) drawing examples from the work of the silent masters: Keaton's *Sherlock Jr.*, Griffith's *Broken Blossoms*, Sjöström's *The Wind*. And then in all likelihood, the transition to sound: Chaplin's *Modern Times* (word resistant), Welles' *Citizen Kane* (word and image integrated). Next a brief look at the studio system: Vidor's *Gilda* (star system, censorship), Tourneur's *The Cat People* (genre system, B-film), Kazon's *On the Waterfront* (black-list, "method" acting). We'll probably end with an overview of major trends in serious contemporary filmmaking: such as, Altman's *The Long Goodbye* (deconstruction of genre), Kubrick's *2001* (aestheticizing the surface), Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs* (personal obsessions), Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (dream narrative). Naturally we'll supplement this sketchy and tentative survey with video excerpts from films; the relevant chapters in David Cook's *A History of the Narrative Film*; handouts, etc.

My goals are simply to 1) help students think through their eyes; get a lot of practice in reading movies seriously, that is *closely*; in translating images into analytic terms, and 2) see each film as representative of various trends and problems in film history, theory, and critical methodology. Perhaps not so simple after all, but I trust everyone will have a good time.

A number of short analytic papers and oral presentations will probably be required. Films will be shown on Tuesdays at 3:30 and discussed on Thursdays at 12:30. While the Thursday class is of course mandatory, the Tuesday screening is optional; the student may see the required film by any means available to her (e.g., DVD rental) as long as the viewing takes place *before* the Thursday meeting. Media students are urged to sign on; a background in film is not a prerequisite.

ENG 685 – MYTHOLOGY: The Structure of Religious Narrative

PROF. DIANE CHRISTIAN

Wednesday 3:30-6:10, Clemens 610

Registration Numbers: (A) 37686 (B) 37687

To some extent, mythology is only the most ancient history and biography. So far from being false or fabulous in the common sense, it contains only enduring and essential truth. . . . Either time or rare wisdom writes it

Henry David Thoreau *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* 1848

“Mythology is someone else’s religion,” Robert Graves wrote when organizing the *Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* in the 1950s. The editors refused to allow him to include biblical material. This class will consider myths of origin and sexual organization from all over the world. A primary text will be Barbara Sproul’s *Primal Myths* which she organizes according to geographical area. We’ll also read Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, a sacred story (*muthos*) of modern science. And we’ll finish with Jean Malaurie’s *The Allée of the Whales*. Malaurie, a living geomorphologist and ethnographer of the Inuit, presents Arctic mythology as scientific truth and animism.

ENG 699 – ETHNOPOETICS

PROF. DENNIS TEDLOCK

Tuesday 12:30-3:10, Clemens 538

Registration Numbers: (A) 30091 (B) 30013

Ethnopoetics is a decentered poetics, an attempt to hear and read the poetries of distant others, outside the Western tradition. In contrast with “cross-cultural poetics,” as currently practiced, the focus will be on works that originate outside the globalized and metropolitan world of colonial languages. In approaching such works, we must set aside any notion that they will necessarily come from a distant time, or from present-day peoples who are somehow living in the past, or that they will necessarily resemble Homer, or that they will be less complex than Western or metropolitan poetries.

Ethnopoetics does not merely contrast the poetics of “ethnics” with just plain poetics, but implies that any poetics is always an ethnopoetics. Our main interest will indeed be the poetics of people who are ethnically distant from ourselves, but it is precisely through the effort to reach into distances that we bring our own ethnicity, and the poetics that goes with it, into fuller consciousness.

Ethnopoetics originated among poets with an interest in anthropology and linguistics and among anthropologists and linguists with an interest in poetry, such as David Antin, Stanley Diamond, Dell Hymes, Jerome Rothenberg, Gary Snyder, Nathaniel Tam (E. Michael Mendelson), and myself. The

emphasis has been on performances in which the speaking, chanting, or singing voice gives shape to proverbs, riddles, curses, laments, praises, prayers, prophecies, public announcements, and narratives.

Practitioners of ethnopoetics treat the relationship between performances and texts as a field for experimentation. Texts that were taken down in the era of handwritten dictation and published as prose are reformed and/or retranslated in order to reveal their poetic features. In the case of sound recordings, transcripts and translations serve not only as listening guides but also as scripts and scores for other performances. An ethnopoetic score not only takes account of the words but silences, changes in loudness and tone of voice, the production of sound effects, and the use of gesture and props. Whatever a score may encompass, the notion of a definitive text has no place in ethnopoetics. Linguists and folklorists tend to narrow their attention to the normative side of performance, recognizing only such features as can be accounted for by general rules. Ethnopoetics remains open to the creative side of performance, valuing features that may be rare or even unique to a particular artist or occasion.

Special attention will be given to the dialogical dimension of performances. At the simplest level this means that in many genres an audience response may be required, or there may be a division of roles among two or more speakers or singers. But it can also mean that a single speaker produces multiple contrasting voices. A poet, instead of settling on just the right words, may give voice to multiple ways of saying something, thus treating language itself as fundamentally dialogical. Contrary to M.M. Bakhtin, it is simply not true that multivocal discourse is an invention of novelists, or that poetry must be monological.

Readings will include translations of verbal arts in various African, Asian, and Amerindian languages. There will also be listenings covering a wide range of recorded performances. Weekly one-page response papers will be required, along with a project that may take the form of a term paper—or, alternatively, a transcription and/or translation and/or performance.
