UMKC English Department Graduate
Course Descriptions
Fall 2015

English 5519: Teaching Writing: Theories, Histories, Contexts, Practices (41333)
Daniel Mahala
T 7:00pm-9:45pm
The purpose of this course is to provide a forum in which instructors of English can share ideas, discuss classroom experiences, learn about relevant research and scholarship in the teaching of reading and writing, and, in short, develop their skill and knowledge as teachers. The course is required of graduate student teachers of writing at UMKC, and will address many teaching concerns arising in the context of UMKC’s composition program. However, I presume we may also have a mix of teachers in the class from different institutions in the community outside UMKC, including secondary teachers, and perhaps even some people who are not yet teachers but are considering the possibility of becoming one. Most of the course texts focus on college-level writing instruction, but the issues raised are quite relevant to secondary English, reading instruction, and to the teaching of literature. Whatever your teaching context or grade level, you are welcome in the class.
Much of our time will be spent in small peer workshops and group discussions addressing a variety of pedagogical concerns and our own classroom-based research. Our pedagogical concerns will include collaborative learning, designing assignments and in-class writing activities, teaching invention strategies and revision, reading/writing relationships, evaluation and grading, classroom uses of visual, print and electronic media, service learning, and study of social and institutional contexts that shape literacy and classroom experience.

Since what matters for teachers is the development of principled practices, we will constantly be seeking relationships between theory and practice. What I envision us working towards is a sense of teaching as inquiry, an experimental pursuit in which teachers grow along with their students. This view of teaching supposes that the effects of classroom practices are profoundly context-dependent, and that “good” teaching is therefore not some fixed set of magic keys that presume to open all doors. Rather, “good” teaching is best fostered through a process of ongoing investigation (observation, reflection and theorizing). An important part of the class, then, will focus on helping teachers develop strategies for the sorts of qualitative, classroom-based research that can help them keep their teaching fresh, respond to new situations, and become articulate agents of educational change within and outside of schools.

Coursework:
The written work for the course and your participation in the workshops are your opportunity to demonstrate critical engagement with the theory and practice of reading and writing pedagogy. The work for the course will include regular reading and writing, including development of a detailed writing assignment sequence, responding to and/or grading sample student papers, sharing data from classroom observations and research, as well as a longer paper that explores competing goals and political pressures informing the teaching of writing.

Course Texts and Materials:
The book list has yet to be finalized, but here are a few representative titles:
Cheryl Glenn and Melissa A. Goldthwaite, *The St. Martin’s Guide to Teaching Writing*
Anne Wysocki et. al. *Writing New Media: Theory And Applications For Expanding The Teaching Of Composition*, (U of Utah P, 2004)

**English 5526: The Victorian Period (47394)**

Jennifer Phegley

TR 5:30pm-6:45pm (Blended Course with Online Components)

“According to Miss Braddon, Crime is not an accident, but it is the business of life. She would lead us to conclude that the chief end of man is to commit murder, and his highest merit to escape punishment; that women are born to attempt to commit murders, and to succeed in committing bigamy.”

—W. Fraser Rae, *North British Review*, 1865

Mary Elizabeth Braddon was one of the best-selling novelists of the nineteenth century. She wrote more than eighty novels over five decades, some aimed at working-class readers, some geared toward middle-class audiences, and most published in popular periodicals. Braddon wrote in multiple genres, including ghost stories, adventure tales, sensation novels, domestic dramas, historical epics, and detective fiction. This class will focus on Braddon’s crime fiction from the 1860s, paying special attention to the magazines in which these works appeared and the readers they were intended to attract. The London Metropolitan Police Detective Division was established in 1842 and in 1856 it was instituted across the country, spurring a nation-wide interest in sleuthing. Decades before Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote his first Sherlock Holmes story, Braddon was exploring the complexities of crime solving in a society highly circumscribed by race, class, gender, and disability and intensely interested in the opportunities for detection provided by mid-century developments in science and technology. Braddon’s murderers, forgerers, arsonists, and con artists were often seemingly respectable middle-class men and women who defied Victorian stereotypes of criminality, thus easily duping their victims. Braddon’s detectives could be bumbling and intrusive meddlers or remarkably clever interpreters of evidence and behavior. They were sometimes paid professionals, but were just as likely to be amateurs driven by personal motivations or vendettas. Among Braddon’s professional detectives are the mute policemen Joseph Peters in *The Trail of the Serpent* (1860) and the greedy private investigator Joseph Grimstone in *Aurora Floyd* (1862). Braddon’s amateur detectives include hapless barrister Robert Audley, who is obsessed with his friend George Talboys’s disappearance in *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1861), and the devoted daughter Margaret Wilmot, whose determination to catch her father’s murderer in *Henry Dunbar* (1864) eventually leads her to dupe the police. We will examine Braddon’s creation of early prototypes of the detective and her influence on the development of detective fiction as a genre. For much of the semester we will meet face-to-face on Tuesdays with required online participation via blogs on Thursdays-Saturdays. However, some Thursday meetings will be required early and late in the semester. These will be clearly indicated on the syllabus, which will be posted to Blackboard one week prior to the beginning of class. In addition to the weekly blogs, course assignments will include reading quizzes and a public wiki project exploring crime and detection in Braddon’s fiction.

Fulfills Requirements For:
*Literature and Language Capstone*
*Pre-1900 Course*
*Manuscript, Print Culture, and Editing Track*

**English 5531: 18th Century Literature (47393)**

Jennifer Frangos

M W 5:30pm-6:45pm

Postmodernism and the Enlightenment

This course will explore the connections between Postmodernism and Enlightenment Britain, the period commonly cited as the beginning of the “modern era,” where concepts of “Author,” of “Literature,” of
“Subject” (among others) took their modern and familiar forms. In most narratives, Postmodernism is a reaction against Modernism, which was a repudiation of Enlightenment (and Victorian) narratives of objectivity and progress. One twentieth-century critic, Mary Klages, suggests that Postmodernism is characterized by “fragmentation and discontinuity (especially in narrative structures), ambiguity, simultaneity, and an emphasis on the destructured, decentered, dehumanized subject.”

We will consider the extent to which such characterizations apply to a variety of texts from the Enlightenment and the Postmodern periods (such as Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels [1726], Laurence Sterne’s novel Tristram Shandy [1759–67], Jorge Luis Borges’s short stories [1930s–50s], Kathy Acker’s fiction [1980s–90s], and films such as The Matrix, Fight Club, Memento, and Big Fish) in order to examine relationships between knowledge and narrative, the imagination and “reality,” “truth” and “progress,” “sense” and “nonsense.”

Rather than advancing claims of origin or authorship — for example, “Enlightenment thinkers invented Postmodern thought” — our goal will be to explore the possibilities opened up by the juxtaposition of these two modes of relating to the world. If, for example, the Enlightenment is when things came together and Postmodernity is when things fall apart, what value might there be in reading one against the other as two answers to the same question? (And what would that question be?)

Required work for students in 5531 will include a review of secondary material (with presentation), a conference-style presentation, and a final project of at least 20 pages.

**English 5532: Advanced Creative Writing, Prose (45892)**

*Whitney Terrell*

**M 7:00pm-9:45pm**

This course will focus on writing and publishing short fiction and novels. Students interested in submitting creative non-fiction are also welcome. Undergraduate students are required to have taken English 312 or its equivalent. The class will be arranged in the “workshop format.” Three times during the semester, you’ll submit a short story, novel excerpt, or non-fiction piece to me and that piece will be read and discussed by the entire class. I’ll also line-edit your submissions and discuss them with you individually.

This course will focus heavily on craft and revision. But craft will only get you so far and so the hope here will be to create an environment that allows us to investigate what other tools we can beg, borrow or steal to create fiction that is, as John Gardner puts it, “intellectually and emotionally significant.”

Aside from doing your own writing, you must read, edit, and submit a written comment on your fellow classmates’ work. Our readings this fall will focus on writers who’ve adopted the techniques of science fiction and fantasy in order to produce literary fiction. We’ll read Margaret Atwood, Jeff VanderMeer (Author of the Southern Reach trilogy), Jonathan Lethem, Colson Whitehead, Haruki Murakami, and many others. Much is made of the difficulty and pain of fiction writing but, on the side of optimism, I’ll quote Gardner again: “Almost no one mentions that for a certain kind of person, nothing is more joyful or satisfying than the life of a novelist.”

**English 5535: Advanced Creative Writing Poetry (47384)**

*Michelle Boisseau*

**T 4:00pm-5:15pm**

Advanced Creative Writing Poetry: this workshop course will be built around an investigation into metaphor. We will create some working definitions, look at classical categories of figures and tropes, see how contemporary poets use metaphor to create poetic structures on the macro and microlevels of their poems, and use these models to make poems rich with nuance. Texts: TBA.
**English 5545: Histories and Principles of Rhetoric: Rhetoric and Social Change (47396)**

Jane Greer  
**M 7:00pm-10:00pm**

This course explores the histories and principles of rhetoric, or, to put it another way, students will have the opportunity to investigate how people get things done with words. More specifically, we will undertake case studies of three significant social movements in U.S. history—the temperance movement of the late 19th century; the labor movement of the 1920s and ‘30s; and the school desegregation movement of the 1950s and early 1960s. Students will investigate how both activists and average people marshaled arguments, presented evidence, and tapped into emotions in order to advance particular causes. We will also work to understand how the rhetorical practices of these three social movements are part of larger histories of rhetorical practice that can be traced back to ancient Greece, which is commonly viewed as the birthplace of rhetorical study.

Students enrolled in this course will complete an original research project on the rhetoric of a social movement of their own choosing, e.g., Abolition; Suffrage; Black Power; Stonewall; the Vietnam War protests; Right to Life; Greenpeace; ACT UP; Third Wave Feminism; Occupy Wall Street, etc. Graduate students enrolled in this class will be expected to produce a more in-depth research project and do a formal class presentation.

For undergraduate English majors in literature, this course meets the rhetoric/linguistics requirement; this course may also be counted toward the minor in Women’s & Gender Studies.

**English 5547: Introduction to Literary Criticism (45943)**

John Barton  
**TTH 4:00pm-5:15pm**

This course introduces students to literary theory and criticism from Plato and Aristotle through major twentieth- and twenty-first century figures such as Freud, Saussure, Bakhtin, Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, Jamison, Spivak, Butler, Bhabha, Kristeva, Said, and Balibar. Special attention will be given to a range of “schools” of, or approaches toward, the interpretation of literature, including the new criticism, the new historicism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, deconstruction, feminism, queer theory, reader-response and reception criticism, and postcolonial studies.

Course requirements will likely include short, weekly quizzes, Blackboard responses, and both a midterm and final exam. Students will also produce an annotated bibliography and write a case study examining theoretical or critical approaches to a literary work of their own choosing. That work could be any literary text—a favorite poem, novel, short story, or dramatic work—so long as it has generated a range of critical approaches.

**English 5550: Special Readings- Women’s Literature in Africa and the African Diaspora: A Comparative Exploration (46232)**

Veronica Wilson-Tagoe  
**TTH 10:00am-11:15am**

The course is a comparative examination of the variety of literary works produced by women of African descent in the US, the Caribbean and Africa. It explores selected prose, drama and poetry in relation to specific historical, cultural and political contexts and examines their impact on themes and strategies of Black women’s literature. Using a feminist interpretive framework, the course investigates the working of gender in societies and cultures and creates dialogues between literary texts and critical theories. In addition, the course recognizes a common Afro-cultural heritage that impacts on the concerns and aesthetics of women’s literature in the three regions and explores how women writers utilize this heritage in their different historical contexts. Through cross-cultural exploration of texts from the three
regions, we explore border crossings and cultural intersections that demonstrate historical links between women’s literature from the US, the Caribbean and Africa.

English 5555B: Representations of Muslim and Islam in Early Modern English Literature (47385)
Laurie Ellinghausen
W 7:00pm-9:45pm

So numberless were those bad angels seen
Hovering on wing under the cope of hell
‘Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding fires;
Till, as a signal given, the uplifted spear
Of their great sultan waving to direct
Their course . . .
John Milton, Paradise Lost, 1.344-9

Milton’s description of Satan and his devils likens Hell’s monarch to a figure deeply threatening to Europeans – the “Great Turk,” or the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, whose powerful army threatened to overrun much of Christian Europe and, at time, succeeded in doing so. Given the period’s often defensive, nationalistic posture with regard to Christian morals and ethics, this kind of characterization comes as no surprise. Readers of early modern English literature readily responded to images of Turks and other Muslim peoples as vicious, luxurious, crafty, of the devil’s league, and fiery as the climates in which they were purportedly bred.

However, a survey of English literature during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries reveals that Islam posed much more than a threat to European ways of life. Islam also represented a new field of commerce, an important influence on the development of Western knowledges, and even a desirable alternative to European socio-religious hierarchies (not to mention an economic and political ally). The complexity of Islam in early modern English literature is a subject well worth investigating as scholars seek to historicize what Islam means to Westerners in a post-9/11 world.

Readings will include:
Christopher Marlowe, Tamburlaine I and II, The Jew of Malta
Thomas More, A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation
William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, Othello, and Titus Andronicus
Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene

Excerpts and handouts to be distributed via the Blackboard course site

English 5555J: Seminar on English Language (47386)
Thomas Stroik
Tu 5:30pm-8:15pm
Course Content: Over fifty years ago, Roman Jakobson delivered his now famous address, "Closing Statement," in which he argues that linguistics and poetics are interfused: that it is not possible to study poetical language or the poetic function of language without venturing into the science and sociology of language, nor is it possible to study linguistics without recognizing the poetic in language. In this course, we will explore some of the consequences that integrating linguistics and poetics could have on literary
analysis and on linguistic aesthetics. We will pay particular attention to the ways in which the biological and cultural interweavings of language open "poetic" language for us and in turn are woven by the poetic

**English 5555N: Graduate Seminar: Prose (45891)**
**Michael Pritchett**
**MW 5:30pm-6:45pm**
The Novel
The making of a long work of prose requires expertise with the structure of the form, and an understanding of relationships between form and content. This class will focus on techniques for planning and drafting the major prose form in literature -- the novel. We will explore how these prose forms are created and how novelists use content as a guide to inventing new forms. We will study examples of newly invented prose forms that have evolved out of the novel. From a historical perspective, we will examine the poetics and tradition of the novel as it has been handed down to us from previous generations of writers, to determine what parts of the tradition are most useful to writers in the here and now. Works and authors studied will include some of the following: *In Cold Blood*, by Truman Capote, *As I Lay Dying* by William Faulkner, *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller, *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville, *Wise Blood* by Flannery O'Connor, *Voyage In The Dark* by Jean Rhys, *The Ambassadors*, by Henry James, *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, *Second Skin* by John Hawkes, *The White Hotel* by D.M. Thomas, *Look Homeward, Ángel* by Thomas Wolfe, *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert, *To The Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf, *Day Of The Locust* by Nathaniel West, and *Play It As It Lays* by Joan Didion.