UMKC Graduate Course Descriptions

Fall 2014

English 5500: Introduction to Graduate Study in English (41403)
Joan Dean
M 4:00 pm – 6:45 pm
This course provides an introduction to methods of research and scholarship related to English studies. The course explores a wide spectrum of print and digital materials, library facilities (including archives and Special Collections), databases, and other resources such as manuscripts and microfilm.

Students will develop two research projects of their own choice (although they can be neither in the same century nor the same “national literature”). The class will visit local archives and Special Collections, including the Marr Sound Archive and the Kenneth J. LaBudde Special Collection at UMKC, and the Linda Hall Library. Students are encouraged to pursue original research in other facilities such as the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, the Kenneth Spencer Special Collection at the University of Kansas, the World War I Museum, etc.

Over the course of the semester students identify academic conferences at which they might present their work, prepare a CV and paper proposal (or abstract), conduct research and develop a bibliography, present their research formally in class, and revise their work for publication. The course is not focused on literary theory, but rather intends to begin the process of professionalization.

English 5517: Modern Poetry (47345)
Michelle Boisseau
T 4:00 pm – 6:45 pm
"Anyone who has read a long poem day after day as, for example, The Faerie Queen, knows how the poem comes to possess the reader and how it naturalizes him in its own imagination and liberates him there," Stevens, "The Figure of the Youth as a Virile Poet."

In this course we will “naturalize and liberate our imaginations” in Modern Poetry as we focus on the central poets of the first generation of American Modernism: Frost, Stevens, Williams, Moore, and Eliot. Our investigation will likely begin with Eliot's “Prufrock” and The Waste Land, the postwar milieu, modernist art, and the, often fiery, responses to Eliot's vision of a failed civilization and his assertion that a complex world required a difficult art to confront it. While our emphasis will be on scrupulous readings of the poems with an eye to their artistry and the
poets’ assertions of their poetics, we will also explore how the poems are in conversation with each other and consider their critical contexts.

**English 5519: Teaching Writing: Theories, Histories, Contexts, Practices (41404)**  
Jane Greer  
R 7:00 pm – 9:45 pm  
This seminar focuses on the teaching of writing within the university and on the relationship between high school and college composition instruction. We will take up specific issues about the processes of writing and critical revision; about designing assignments and syllabi; about strategies for responding to and assessing student writing; and about the uses of technology in the classroom. Simultaneously, we will be working to become practiced observers of writing classrooms, including our own, as we pursue broader questions about the relationships between theory and practice in the composition classroom and about the position of academic writing within the constellation of literacy practices that engage our students’ attention.

This course is required for new Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) in the UMKC composition program and must be taken prior to or concurrently with their first semester of teaching. Secondary English teachers and others interested in the field of composition are also welcome.

**English 5532: Advanced Creative Writing: Fiction (46494)**  
Whitney Terrell  
M 7:00 pm – 9:45 pm  
This course will focus on writing and publishing short fiction and novels. Students interested in submitting creative non-fiction are also welcome. All 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. We’ll also have readings from traditional realist authors like Russell Banks and Alice Munro as well as postmodernists like David Foster Wallace, Aimee Bender and Donald Barthelme. 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 5534: Postcolonial Literature (47750)
Stephen Dilks
MW 5:30 pm – 6:45 pm
Postcolonial Literature explores postcolonialism through the study of texts created by or representing peoples whose historical experience has been decisively shaped by the legacies of colonialism and the experiences of post-colony.

The texts in Fall 2014 are drawn from Ireland (Gearoid MacLochlainn and Edna O'Brien), Nigeria (Chimamanda Adichie and Wole Soyinka), India (Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy), and the West Indies (Edwige Danticat and George Lamming).

In addition to specific examples of Postcolonial literature we will develop an understanding of the trajectory of the British Empire from the Elizabethan era to the 21st Century and will develop working definitions of colonialism and postcolonialism and related terms including cosmopolitanism, race, hybridity, diaspora, post-colony, nationalism, and post-nationalism.

English 5536: Poetic Forms (47346)
Michelle Boisseau
MW 5:30 pm – 6:45 pm
This class focuses on the creation of metrical verse and the study of prosody.

We will begin by immersing you in the features of English that create rhythm; you will then write in stress verse, in iambic tetrameters, in blank verse, and so on, with the remainder of the course devoted to practice in forms developed from English rhythms: e.g. the ballad, quatrains, and the sonnet. We will study and emulate poems in English, both canonical and contemporary examples, as representatives of how poets manipulate form and to what ends. This class is intensive and requires full class attendance and for students to complete daily exercises in prosody and form. Required paper texts to include Derek Attridge, Poetic Rhythm: An Introduction, Cambridge, 1995; Paul Fussell, Poetic Meter and Poetic Form, Robert Frost, North of Boston, Ellen Bryant Voigt, The Art of Syntax, and some recent collections like Randall Mann’s Straight Razor, Carol Ann Duffy’s, The Bees, Robin Roberston’s Hill of Doors. Prerequisite: MFA Creative Writing Graduate standing, a 300-level poetry creative writing course, or instructor permission.
English 5537: Prose Forms (46492)
Michael Pritchett
R 4:00 pm – 5:15 pm
WRITING INTENSIVE
The making of a work of prose requires expertise with the structure of the chosen form, and an understanding of relationships between form and content. This class teaches techniques for planning, drafting and revising the dramatic building blocks that make up major prose forms which could include the play, the novel, the long story or novella. Students will learn how to create these prose forms and how to use content as a guide to inventing new forms. We will discuss poetics and theory related to structure and examples of traditional and newly invented prose forms.

English 5547: Introduction to Literary Criticism (46614)
Daniel Mahala
TR 4:00 pm – 5:15 pm
In this course, we will explore key writings in literary criticism and theory as well as examine their potential relationships to practical matters of literacy and literary education. Many of the texts we will read explore the nature of language, representation and meaning, and many have deeply informed contemporary “schools” of literary criticism (such as formalism, historicism, deconstruction, marxism, feminism, and so on). Through our reading we will try to understand these influences, and develop a fluent understanding of some of the most important critical theories. We will also look at practical examples of literary interpretation informed by recent critical theory, and students will have opportunity to research critical theories and interpretive approaches that are useful for their own aims and interests.

Of course, the ferment in literary theory and criticism over the last thirty years has done more than raise questions about literary method and the canon. It has also established an important intellectual context for wider ranging debates about the future of humanist study. These debates often revolve around issues of representation in both the symbolic and political senses of the term. How can literary study justly represent cultural traditions from the past and present? How have the meanings of “literature” as a discursive object changed over time? How have changing historical and technological conditions shaped what counts as literature in the past, and how is the spread of digital technologies shaping the social functions and possibilities of literature and the arts today?

Course Texts:
Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Dictionary of Society and Culture*.
Selected essays and applied criticism in pdf format.
English 5550: Graduate Seminar (46615)
Norma Cantu
W 4:00 pm – 6:45 pm
Intensive individual readings in a field, genre, or individual figure to be selected by a student or a group of students in consultation with an instructor willing to direct the project. Generally limited to graduating seniors who have completed the majority of the work for their major. Not open to students in their first semester at UMKC.

English 5550: Graduate Seminar (47078)
Veronica Wilson-Tagoe
TR 10:00 am – 11:15 am
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 contexts and examines their impact on the themes and strategies of women’s literature. Using a feminist interpretive framework, it investigates intersection of gender, race and class in Black women’s literature and creates a dialogue between literary texts and critical theories. Through its cross-cultural explorations of texts, the course examines border and cultural crossings that demonstrate historical links between women’s literature in the three regions.

English 555A: Graduate Seminar Medieval Literature II (47347)
Virginia Blanton
TR 5:30 pm – 6:45 pm
Overview: This graduate seminar focuses on romance, the most important genre in medieval secular reading. Contrary to a view of romance as love stories in which the guy gets the girl, medieval romance is characterized by conventional motifs: the arduous quest, chivalric behavior, fantastic adventure, supernatural events, strange encounters with the Other, personal development, and, often, an expression of what we might call “courtly love.” While medieval romance narratives are invariably fantastic, they demonstrate an awareness of medieval cultural anxieties, such as an overt concern with the instability of gender, the rewards and responsibilities of privilege, the constraints of social rules, and the significance of religious or “national” identity. These themes demonstrate the major ways in which medieval romance provides a commentary on cultural politics, and by focusing on them specifically, the seminar will examine the emergence and development of medieval romance, its generic shape, its production, and its audiences.

Readings:
Readings will focus primarily on the French and English tradition and will include Marie de France’s Lais, Aucassin et Nicolette, Eret et Enide, as well as Sir Gowther, and The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell, as a prelude to a readings from the Auchinleck manuscript, which is
a collection of romances and devotional texts. The Auchinleck manuscript features *Amis and Amiloun, Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild, Guy of Warwick, Sir Degaré, and The King of Tars*, among others. As a course that fulfills a requirement in Manuscript, Print Culture, and Editing, we will consider how the preservation of these romances in one manuscript affects our understanding of them as a whole.

The English romances will be read in the original Middle English; all others in translation. To supplement our discussions, we will read selected theoretical articles and a significant amount of literary criticism about romance.

**Assessment:** Students can expect to write a book review, write a series of short papers over the readings, compile an annotated bibliography, and develop a seminar project culminating in a 20-page paper.

This course meets:
- a requirement for medieval literature
- a requirement for the Manuscript, Print Culture, and Editing track
- a requirement in Graduate Seminars

**English 5555N: Graduate Seminar: Prose Fiction**

**Christie Hodgen**

**W 7:00 pm – 9:45 pm**

This graduate-level workshop is devoted to the study and crafting of the short story, with an attendant focus on publication, and the short fiction ‘market.’ Our readings will consist of several prize-winning first story collections, likely including the work of Edward P. Jones, Aleksandar Hemon, Mary Gaitskill, Ander Monson, Tony Varallo, and Rebecca Lee; in addition, students will be required to read several issues of a literary journal of their choice. Coursework will include: two short story submissions (15-30 pages each), weekly Blackboard responses to our reading, several short ‘imitation’ assignments, written responses to peer work, and of course rigorous, thoughtful participation in our workshop discussions. Each student will also compile a report assessing the aesthetics of his/her chosen literary journal, and prepare a story to submit for publication.

Please note: Creative Nonfiction students are welcome in this workshop, and may submit personal essays in the place of short stories.