ENGL 7214: Topics in 19th Century American Literature: Aesthetics and Poetics in 19th Century America

Professor Theo Davis

- CRN: 36542
- 3 semester hours
- Wednesday: 3:30-5:45 p.m.
- Location: 400B Holmes Hall
- Fulfills: 19th/20th

For most of the twentieth century, Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson were lauded for being formally innovative in ways utter unlike those of their fellow nineteenth-century American poets, and for being radically critical of the values of bourgeois culture of the time. They were read as figures who rejected the dictates of poetic tradition (in their skewing or abandonment of rhyme, meter, and grammar) and laid a groundwork for modernist poetry. In contrast to such readings, which situated these figures within the field of poetics, scholars have also framed them in relation to the poetry and the culture of their time, regrounding them in a context very different from that of transhistorical poetics. This course aims to introduce students to both historicist and poetics-based ways of reading Whitman and Dickinson, partially just in order to orient us to the theoretical and practical differences between such methods. It also aims to interrogate the theoretical terms in which poetics and historicism are usually framed: what is the logic of the shift, or the choice, between formalist and historicist methods? What other ways of thinking about aesthetics and poetics might there be, which do not presume it to be the opposite of the historical or the political? Thus we will use the case of these two poets to explore theoretical and methodological issues that are relevant to literary studies in general at this time.

Readings will include work by Whitman, Dickinson, and other nineteenth century poets, along with selections of theoretical writing on aesthetics, poetics, new historicism, and historical poetics. Assignments will include frequent short bibliographic and interpretive assignments, leading up to a final bibliography and essay. Student papers could include direct engagements of a poet in relation to a particular theoretical concern, but could also expand to consider the work of other nineteenth-century American poets as well or other theoretical issues (e.g. queer theory, political theory, canon formation, historical poetics).

ENGL 7215: Topics in 20th Century American Literature: Murder and Unbelonging

Professor Kimberly Juanita Brown

- CRN: 34399
- 3 semester hours
- Thursday, 6:15-8:30 p.m.
- Location: 400B Holmes Hall
This course will examine the way murder functions in the global literary imagination, particularly as murder relates to racialized and gendered otherness and influences the structure of artistic representation in the late contemporary era. Writers and filmmakers concerned with marginalized people and the world they inhabit will be investigated, paying close attention to the parameters of homogeneous inclusion while considering the trajectories of those who exist on the literal and metaphorical border of inclusion (inhabiting an engendering as well as an ungendering). We will focus primarily on fictional renderings of historical murders and connect our readings to cultural narratives of violence as experienced through the impoverished body, the postcolonial body, the enslaved body, and the alien/ or foreign body. Relationships between nations, containment, and cultural commodification in The Dominican Republic, India, South Africa and the United States will be incorporated into a cross-cultural understanding of modernity, corporeality, and the repetitions of exclusionary practices. Authors include Truman Capote, Paul Gilroy, Giorgio Agamben, Saidiya Hartman, Frantz Fanon, E.L. Doctorow, Arundhati Roy, Toni Morrison, and Julia Alvarez.

ENGL 7274: Topics in Shakespeare

Professor Erika Boeckeler

- CRN: 35993
- 3 semester hours
- Tuesday: 3:30-5:45 p.m.
- Location: 400B Holmes Hall
- Fulfills: Medieval/Renaissance

American and English literatures of all ages speak through and to Shakespeare. This class is intended for graduate students wishing to acquire a solid grounding in Shakespeare’s plays, regardless of where their primary scholarly focus lies or whether they may eventually teach Shakespeare as generalists or specialists. It familiarizes participants with and promotes original research using local archival resources, including Northeastern’s new Arader prints collection. And it delves into some of the hottest topics and methodologies in current criticism.

We will spend two class sessions on each focus play. Session One will spotlight texts and contexts, reading a smattering of each genre. Session Two will broaden out into recent and some classic critical work as it relates to five topics: 1) Book History/Archival Studies/Bibliography, 2) Maps/Geography/Globalization, 3) Language, 4) Material Studies, 5) Ecocriticism/the Human. Shakespeare scholarship has frequently been the site of innovation in criticism, and we will try our hand at some recent directions (e.g. narratives of personal encounter with Shakespeare, digital Shakespeare) in our responses.
ENGL 7351: Topics in Literary Studies: Cosmopolitanism and the Humanities

Professor Patrick Mullen

- CRN: 35992
- 3 semester hours
- Monday: 3:30-5:45 p.m.
- Location: 400B Holmes Hall
- Fulfills: Theories & Methods - or- 19th/20th (WGSS possible. Consult instructor.)

This course will explore the development of cosmopolitan theory from the Enlightenment to today. We will read key foundational philosophical works by Kant, Marx, and Fanon. We will also engage contemporary theorists such as Bruce Robbins, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Emily Apter, David Harvey, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak. Students will be invited to bring their own projects to the course, which will give them the opportunity to imagine what it might mean to construct cosmopolitan perspectives across a variety of historical and critical contexts. Requirements include a series of short writing assignments and a longer seminar essay.

ENGL 7395: Topics in Writing: Researching Writing

Professor Chris Gallagher

- CRN: 35994
- 3 semester hours
- Tuesday, 6:15-8:30 p.m.
- Location: 400B Holmes Hall
- Fulfills: Theories & Methods - or- Rhet/Comp

This course introduces students to a range of methods and methodologies used to research writing and writers. We will explore how different methods and methodologies allow researchers to frame and pursue different kinds of research questions. We will also consider how methods and methodologies are tied, explicitly and implicitly, to theoretical and ideological frameworks. We will survey a broad range of approaches, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method. While the emphasis will be on person-based studies, we will consider text-based studies, including archival research. We will also examine in depth several studies designed to investigate undergraduate writing development. Students will design an original research study on writers and/or writing in the context of their choice. Advanced students will have the opportunity to pilot or advance existing research studies.

Readings will be bookended by North’s The Making of Knowledge in Composition and Massey and Gebhardt’s recent collection, The Changing of Knowledge in Composition, which revisits North’s book on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. We will read selections from texts about research, such as Kirsch &
Rohan’s Beyond the Archives, Bazerman’s Handbook of Research on Writing, Mortensen & Kirsch’s Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literacy, Johaneck’s Composing Research, Bazerman & Prior’s What Writing Does and How It Does It, McKee & Devoss’s Digital Writing Research, Nickoson & Sheridan’s Writing Studies Research in Practice, Smagorinsky’s Research on Composition, and a recent special issue of CCC devoted to research. We will consider how research studies are framed in major journals in the field such as College Composition and Communication, Composition Studies, and Research in the Teaching of English. We will also read all or part of various studies on undergraduate writing development, such as Haswell’s Gaining Ground, Sternglass’s Time to Know Them, Carroll’s Rehearsing New Roles, Herrington & Moran’s Persons in Process, Beaufort’s College Writing and Beyond, Poe, Lerner, Craig, & Paradis’s Learning to Communicate in Science and Engineering, and Nowacek’s Agents of Integration. Finally, students will be introduced to ongoing research studies being conducted by Northeastern’s rhetoric and composition faculty.