Fall 2025

Upper Level Course Descriptions

ENG 331: Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*

*Dr. Candace Barrington*

*CRN 16840 TR 1:40 – 2:55 PM*

This iteration of English 331 offers students the opportunity to read selections from Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* the way difficult things should be read: slowly, collectively, out loud, and with a pencil in hand, a *pleasure* not afforded in many literature classes. Rather than rush through in an attempt at coverage, we will proceed together, line-by-line, reading aloud, translating, and discussing. This process assumes that the pleasure—and transformative power—of learning comes from working hard, persisting, and achieving what once seemed unachievable—all as a valued member of an intellectual community. In addition to preparing for each class meeting’s translation circle, you will have these five requirements:

* you will submit four annotated notecards at the beginning of each class meeting;
* you will write at the close of each class meeting a 10-minute *reflection* on what you learned;
* you will recite from memory the opening lines of *The Canterbury Tales*;
* you will complete a midterm exam; and,
* you will compete a final exam.

ENG 336

*Dr. Brian Folker*

CRN 16841 TR 1:40 – 2:55 PM

This course is about British Literature from around 1789 to 1832, the English Romantic Period.  In English literature it was a vital era of poetic production and aesthetic reevaluation.  In European politics it was a period of unprecedented revolution and war.  Our principal focus will be on the six canonical English poets who continue to dominate most accounts of the period: William Blake, William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and John Keats.  We’ll also read the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, as well as selections of minor poetry, prose, and political commentary.  We will concentrate on the aesthetic and metaphysical assumptions that we can discover in the literature, and where practicable we will speculate about how these assumptions shaped (and were shaped by) the artists’ response to the violent political events of the period.

**ENG 348: American Women Playwrights**

*Dr. Susan Gilmore*

*CRN 15907 M 4:30 – 7:10 PM*

Women playwrights have contributed to American theater from the beginning, but they have also had to fight for a place center stage. We will survey a variety of plays and playwrights that have challenged, enriched, and expanded the canon of American drama from this country’s colonial days to the present. We’ll begin with Mercy Otis Warren’s revolutionary 1775 satire *The Group* and Anna Cora Mowatt’s hit 1845 comedy *Fashion*. Next, we’ll explore pioneering plays by early twentieth-century playwrights, including the 1916 realist one-act *Trifles*, by Provincetown Players co-founder Susan Glaspell, and Sophie Treadwell’s 1928 expressionistic *Machinal*, as well as two short suffrage-themed plays from the 1910s. Moving on, we’ll read Lillian Hellman’s potboiler 1934 drama *The Children’s Hour* and Alice Childress’s bold look at the plight of African American actors in her 1955 metatheatrical *Trouble in Mind*.

Leaping forward into the 1990s and beyond, we’ll consider a range of provocative and timely plays, including Cherrie Moraga’s Heroes and Saints, Paula Vogel’s *How I Learned to Drive*, Wendy Wasserstein’s *An American Daughter*, and Lynn Nottage’s *Ruined*. We will explore the ways in which gender issues surface in these plays, intersect with race, class, sexuality, and other affiliated questions of identity, and inform the sexual politics of production itself. We’ll look at writers and plays that enjoyed considerable popularity and commercial success as well as those working at the margins of mainstream American theater. While our focus will be on the plays as texts, to help bring these plays to life we will also consider their stage histories, read scenes, seek out current productions, and view available film and video excerpts.

**ENG 398 Dunces and Geeks - Satire in Contemporary Fiction**

*Dr. Eric Leonidas*

*CRN 14440 TR 1:40 – 2:55 PM*

In this course, we’ll read two novels—John Kennedy Toole’s *Confederacy of Dunces* and Katherine Dunn’s *Geek Love*—as two different forms of satire that illuminate its capacities for social criticism. Turning to secondary criticism and literary theory, we’ll focus on traditional areas such as class, gender, race, and forms of cultural power, as well as emerging areas like disability studies and ecocriticism. The last part of the semester will engage in a multi-step process intended to develop and refine your approach to writing a substantial research paper.

ENG 398 Dystopias: Wells to Le Guin

*Dr. Deborah Spillman*

CRN 15908 MW 1:40 – 2:55 PM

If the word “utopia,” meaning “no place,” had long referred to an ideal world existing only in the imagination, the Victorian coinage “dystopia” pointed to a world gone wrong that was only too real. Dystopian fiction by authors like H.G. Wells, George Orwell, and Ursula Le Guin has since challenged readers to engage in forms of social critique that parallel many of the methods of contemporary literary and critical theory. While focusing on such works, this course provides English majors with an introduction to literary theory and research and serves as a prerequisite for advanced studies in English at the 400-level. Students will therefore learn how to use library tools and resources while also reviewing selected theoretical approaches, identifying these approaches in secondary readings, and incorporating them in writing assignments. Written assignments will include a short literary analysis, low-stakes brainstorming, an annotated bibliography, a series of drafts, peer responses, and a 12-page research paper.

ENG 445 American Drama

*Dr. Rob Dowling*

*CRN 16845 M 4:30 – 7:10 PM*

American Drama offers a comprehensive survey of American drama over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Playwrights studied include Susan Glaspell, Eugene O’Neill, Tennessee Williams, LeRoi Jones, Edward Albee, Sam Shepard, Wendy Wasserstein, and Tony Kushner, among many others. The broader literary periods of realism and naturalism, modernism, social realism, and postmodernism are covered. Each student is expected to respond to each weeks’ readings with a short writing assignment designed to promote active reading, give one presentation on a week’s readings, write a 7-10 page final research paper, and take a mid-term and a final written exam. (Graduate students are required to submit longer papers and presentations, each more focussed on secondary sources.) We also attend at least one live performance at either the Hartford Stage or the Long Wharf Theater.

American Drama is designed to further develop students’ abilities to read, write, and discuss literature with the analytical skill, fluency, and research capabilities of an English major. To facilitate this, we explore the development of American drama over the last century: the alienation and disillusionment caused by World War I and the modern industrial order; the early stylistic developments away from melodrama and romance and toward realism and naturalism; the avant garde expressionistic developments of the 1920s; and the blend of naturalism and expressionism that ultimately came to define the “American style” of drama. We also cover race relations across the century and into our own time, our nation’s increasingly complex gender relations prior to and following the women’s suffrage movement, and the influence of America’s uniquely diverse racial and ethnic groups on the stage and on the national dialogue writ large.

**ENG 448 Narrative Duplicity in the American Short Story**

*Dr. Bob Dunne*

*CRN 16093 W 4:30 – 7:10 PM*

Traces of postmodernism’s assertions about the instability and indeterminacy of language can be found in some of the earliest American short stories.  In our exploration of short stories from the mid-19th century through the early 20th century, we will grapple with such equivocal ideas as the reasons behind such duplicity, the elusiveness of objective narration, the deceptiveness of popular myths, and the formation of the modern grotesque.  Authors will include Poe, Melville, Twain, Crane, Freeman, Chopin, Gilman, Anderson, Hemingway, and others.

**ENG 488 The Georgic Tradition**

*Dr. Gil Gigliotti*

*CRN 17136 TR 3:05 – 4:20 PM*

This course will explore the long history of the georgic, an ancient poetic genre rooted in didactic farming literature (?!?), that later writers would adapt to engage and critique their contemporary literary, political, philosophical, and even musical worlds. Among the artists whose georgic works will be explored are Hesiod, Vergil, Rafael Landivar, Willa Cather, Mariko Nagai, and John Mellencamp (?!?).