

Brown University
DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE COURSE OFFERINGS
SPRING 2021

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

COLT0510Q –How Poems See (Cross Listing ENGL 0100Q)

(Online)

Professor Stephen Foley

Course Description

What makes poems and pictures such powerful forms of life? Why do pictures have so much to tell us? How do we see things in words? How do graphic images, optical images, verbal images, and mental images together constitute ways of understanding the world? Looking at poems and images from Giotto and Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Dickinson and Turner through such modern poets and painters as Stevens, Ashberry, Warhol and Heijinian, we will study sensory and symbolic images, the uses and dangers of likeness, and the baffling confluence of concrete and abstract, literal and figurative, body and mind, matter and spirit.

COLT1610E: Crisis and Identity in Mexico, 1519-1968

Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-3:50 – Online

Professor Stephanie Merrim

Course Description

Examines four moments of crisis/critical moments for the forging of Mexican identity: the “Conquest” as viewed from both sides; the hegemonic 17th century; the Mexican Revolution as represented by diverse stakeholders; the “Mex-hippies” of the 1960s. We especially explore how key literary, historical, and essayistic writings have dealt with Mexico's past and present, with trauma and transformation. Readings include works by Carlos Fuentes, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Octavio Paz, Juan Rulfo, and the indigenous Nican Mopohua on the Virgin of Guadalupe. All in English. No prerequisites.

COLT 0610L: Murder Ink: Narratives of Crime, Discovery, and Identity

Monday/Wednesday/Friday 11:00-11:50 – Online

Professor Molly Ierulli

Course Description

Examines the narrative of detection, beginning with the great dramatic whodunit (and mystery of identity) *Oedipus Rex*. Literary texts which follow a trail of knowledge, whether to establish a fact (who killed Laius?) or reveal an identity (who is Oedipus?) follow in Sophocles' footsteps. We read Sophocles' intellectual children. Readings include: *Hamlet*, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Woman in White*, and other classic novels and plays. We also analyse seminal films of the genre, including *Laura* and *Vertigo*. Will include the twentieth-century detective story, with particular attention to women writers and the genre of the female private eye.

COLT 0611B: Global Detective Fiction

Monday/Wednesday/Friday 10:00-10:50

Professor Emily Drumsta

Course Description

Though often marginalized as unserious or lowly “genre fiction,” the detective plot has interested and influenced literary figures ranging from Jorge Luis Borges and Thomas Pynchon to Tzvetan Todorov and Frederic Jameson. In this course, we examine both the origins and the afterlives of the detective plot in fiction from around the world. We focus especially on the figure of the detective as reader and the commentaries detective fiction offers on reading itself. After beginning with “classics” by Poe, Conan Doyle, Chesterton, Chandler, we move on to examine select novels and stories from Europe, the Middle East, the Americas, and Africa. At the end of the course, students will write a 10 to 15-page research paper on a topic of their choosing OR a detective story (or other creative project developed in consultation with the professor) of their own authorship.

COLT 0710I: New Worlds: Reading Spaces and Places in Colonial Latin America

Fridays 3:00-5:30 - Online

Professor Stephanie Merrim

Course Description

An interdisciplinary journey-combining history, literature, art, film, architecture, cartography-through representations of the many worlds that comprised the colonial Hispanic New World. We traverse the paradisiacal Antilles, the U.S. Southwest, Tenochtitlan/Mexico City, Lima, Potosí. We read European, indigenous, and Creole writers, including: Columbus, Las Casas, Bernal Díaz, Aztec poets, Guaman Poma, Sor Juana. In English. Excellent preparation for study abroad in Latin America. Enrollment limited to 19 first year students.

COLT 08100: Civilization and Its Discontents

Tuesday/Thursday 1:00-2:20 – Online

Professor Arnold Weinstein

Course Description

Investigates the age-old tension between order and chaos as a central dynamic in the making and interpretation of literature. Texts will be drawn from drama, fiction and poetry from Antiquity to the present. Authors include Sophocles, Shakespeare, Racine, Beckett, Prevost, Bronte, Faulkner, Morrison, Blake, Whitman, Dickinson, and Rich.

COLT1310P: Silk Road Fictions (Cross Listing EAST 1310)

Fridays 9:00-11:30 Online

Professor Tamara Chin

Course Description

The course introduces students to cross-cultural comparative work, and to critical issues in East-West studies in particular. We will base our conversations on a set of texts related to the interconnected histories and hybrid cultures of the ancient Afro-Eurasian Silk Roads. Readings will include ancient travel accounts (e.g., the Chinese novel Journey to the West, Marco Polo); modern fiction and film (e.g., Inoue Yasushi, Wole Soyinka); and modern critical approaches to the study of linguistic and literary-cultural contact (e.g., Lydia Liu, Emily Apter, Mikhail Bakhtin, Edward Said). Topics will include bilingual texts, loanwords, race and heritage, Orientalism. No prior knowledge of the topic is expected and all texts will be available in English.

COLT 1411E: New Race in Gender in Early Modern Theater

Tuesday/Thursday 10:30-11:50

Professor Alani Hicks-Bartlett

Course Description

In this course, we will cover a selection of Early Modern tragedies from various literary traditions (English, French, Italian, Spanish), to critically discuss and analyze dramatic representations of gender and race as portrayed on the Early Modern stage. Considering moments of renegotiation, critique, and resistance towards dominant hierarchies, we will give especial attention to marginalized characters, and/or to characters who are explicitly gendered or racialized in the plays in which they appear. We will accompany our reading of primary-source texts with selections from contemporary critical theory on gender and race, which will provide an important springboard for intersectional analysis.

COLT1430H: Poetry, Art, and Beauty

Online

Professor Stephen Foley

Course Description

What does it mean to be beautiful in classical and European literature and the arts? How do poems and works of visual art embody beauty? How is the idea of beauty defined by thinkers from Plato to Benjamin and Danto? Works include Sappho, Plato, Aristotle, Catullus, Horace, Petrarch, Kant, Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Rilke, Benjamin, Stevens. Works of art considered range from the Lascaux caves through renaissance classical painters like Giotto and Raphael to contemporary installations.

COLT 1430I: Poetry of Europe: Montale, Celan, Hill

Thursdays 4:00-6:30

Professor Kenneth Haynes

Course Description

The fifty years between the Second World War and the formation of the European Union was a period in which the meaning of "Europe" was placed under great strain. The class will examine the strains and debates about Europe within the lyric poetry of several literary traditions. It will take the form of close historical, formal, and critical readings of three books of poems in their entirety: Montale's *The Storm and Others* (1956), Celan's *No-One's Rose* (1963), and Hill's *Canaan* (1997). Enrollment limited to 25.

COLT 1431B: Modern Arabic Poetry

Mondays 3:00-5:30

Professor Emily Drumsta

Course Description

An advanced course with readings in modernist Arabic poetry, beginning with the so-called neo-classical poets and proceeding through Romanticism and Modernism, from Egypt to Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and beyond. We will examine such recurring themes as love, loss, and longing; war, exile, and homeland; cultural heritage (turath) and creative innovation (ibda'); gender and

genre. All readings in Arabic; at least three years Arabic language study (or equivalent) required for enrollment.

COLT1610X: Marx, Nietzsche, Freud: The World Is Not What You Think (Cross Listing-GRMN1661P)

Tuesday/Thursday 10:30-11:50 – Online

Professor Gerhard Richter

Course Description

We will familiarize ourselves with the key insights of three major German-language writers: Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. Each transformed how we read the modern world, from the ideology of capital to the question of religion, from the function of art to the unsettling claims that sexuality makes on us. They help us explore the intricate interplay between reason and its dark underbelly, a fragile interaction that makes us who we are. This course is for all Brown students who do not wish to graduate without having grappled seriously with the ideas of these transformative thinkers. In English.

COLT 1810G: Fiction and History

Wednesdays 3:00-5:30

Professor Luiz Valente

Course Description

How the historical fiction that has flourished over the past four decades challenges the notions of objectivity and totalization, while providing alternative viewpoints for the reconstruction and reinterpretation of the past. Authors considered include Grass, Doctorow, DeLillo, García-Márquez, Allende, Danticat and Gordimer. Theoretical texts by White, LaCapra, Benjamin, Ricoeur, and Chartier. Films such as *The Official Story* and *Europa, Europa* will be viewed and incorporated into the discussions. Prerequisite: two previous courses in literature. Enrollment limited to 25. Instructor permission required.

COLT 1810N: Freud: Writer and Reader

Mondays 3:00-5:30

Professor Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg

Course Description

A broad survey of Freud's writings, with particular emphasis on psychoanalysis' relevance to literary theory and cultural analysis. Readings include Freud's major works, as well as secondary sources focused on applications to literary studies.

GRADUATE COURSES

COLT2520I: Ancient Bucolic Poetry (Cross Listing - CLAS 2021R)

Thursdays 4:00-6:30 – Online

Professor Josep Reed

Course Description

This seminar studies the corpus of ancient Greek and Latin bucolic poetry (including Theocritus, Virgil's Eclogues, and other texts) and its reception through the early modern period. How is

bucolic to be delimited as a genre? What are its intertextual and cultural origins within the Hellenistic, specifically Ptolemaic, culture in which Theocritus worked? What persists, and what changes, in the reception of Theocritus' dialogues through the later Hellenistic, Augustan, later Roman, and early modern periods? We will pay special attention to the ways this poetry mirrors or filters political changes and implies different ideological positions.

COLT2650T: Foundations of Literary Theory (Cross Listing - POBS 2600C)

Fridays 10:00-12:30

Professor Luiz Valente

Course Description

Designed to provide a solid foundation on the development of literary theory from its ancient roots in Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Plotinus to the contemporary period. Includes Kant, the Russian Formalists, Lukács, Jakobson, Bakhtin, Barthes, Derrida, Ricoeur, Said and others. Conducted in English.

COLT 2822D: Literature and Politics in the Age of Revolution

Wednesdays 12:00-2:30 - Online

Professor Ourida Mostefai

Course Description

Explores the major ideas and practices that radically transformed culture and society in the early-modern period in Europe and in the Atlantic. We will explore the challenges to political, cultural and religious traditions by analyzing the major debates over the questions of equality, freedom, progress, religious toleration, and happiness. Special attention will be paid to new definitions of citizenship and political rights, the role of women in the public sphere, and the critique of slavery. We will conclude by devoting particular attention to debates surrounding the French and Haitian Revolutions. Texts will include novels, plays, philosophical essays and political pamphlets.