DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

COURSE OFFERINGS 2015 – 2016

Note: Because courses in comparative literature are general rubrics under which a variety of topics are offered, students may repeat courses provided that the topics are different.

Primarily for Undergraduates

COLT 0510 LITERARY CREATION AND LITERARY DISCOURSE

COLT 0510C - The World of Lyric Poetry
Lyric poetry is the prime mode for conveying emotion in many cultures, from ancient times to the present day. This course will survey the variety of forms and themes from the earliest texts from Greece, Rome, China and Japan, then the glories of the Renaissance and the Tang Dynasty, then move to the challenges for lyric expression in the modern world. For first year students only. FYS
Dore J Levy
Spring

COLT 0510O - Twentieth-Century Experiments
In this course, we will read some of the most experimental and adventurous literature of the 20th century. Instead of understanding texts as mirrors of social reality, we will consider them as laboratories—spaces for testing out, working through, or mixing up new ideas, categories, and ways of seeing and feeling. We will pay special attention to 20th-century international avant-garde movements, including Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism, and we will explore the relation of the literary avant-garde to the avant-garde in painting, cinema, and music.
Hannah Freed-Thall
Spring

COLT 0610 THE FUNCTIONS OF LITERATURE

COLT 0610D - Rites of Passage
Examines a seemingly universal theme—coming of age—by focusing on texts from disparate periods and cultures. Proposes that notions of "growing up" are profoundly inflected by issues of class, gender and race, and that the literary representation of these matters changes drastically over time. Texts from the Middle Ages to the present; authors drawn from Chrétien de Troyes, Quevedo, Prévost, Balzac, Brontë, Twain, Faulkner, Vesaas, Rhys, Satrapi and Foer. Enrollment limited to 20 first year students. FYS
Arnold Weinstein
Fall

COLT 0610L - Murder Ink: Narratives of Crime, Discovery, and Identity
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.
Molly Ierulli
Fall
**COLT 0610X - Convulsive Beauty: Hysteria and the Arts**

Hysteria marks the presence of a traumatic memory that arouses wild bodily symptoms, treated psychologically by putting feeling into words. Often considered a particularly female ailment, hysteria has been read by feminist scholars as a deviant, desirous language of the female body. This course considers the boundaries of pain and pleasure, madness and lucidity, and the personal and the political.

Natalie Adler  
Spring  
C hour

**COLT 0710 - LITERATURE AND ITS HISTORY**

**COLT 0710Z - Comedy from Athens to Hollywood**

This course will look at ancient comedy from its birth in Athens and Rome through Renaissance incarnations to the 19th and 20th century, including novels and films as well as plays. We will survey the main topics of comedy, from Aristophanes' focus on the absurdities of daily and political life in Athens to the Roman codification of a genre of everyman in love and in trouble. We will also examine how later writers and filmmakers use both traditions to give comedy its subversive power of social commentary.

Molly Ierulli  
Spring  
F hour

**COLT 0711E – Reading and Writing African Gender**

In this course, we will examine ways that gender and literary genre figure in postcolonial African writing, and in its reception. We will closely read novels by four significant women authors: Mariama Bâ (Senegal), Zoë Wicomb (South Africa), Tsitsi Dangarembga (Zimbabwe), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria). We will also read short, lesser-known texts, such as Richard Rive's *Riva* and Binyavanga Wainaina's *The Missing Chapter*, that question boundaries of gender, genre, and sexuality.

Cullen Goldblatt  
Fall  
B hour

**COLT 0711F – Arabic Literature: The Qur'an to Darwish**

The course offers an introduction to Arabic literature from ancient Arabian poetry to contemporary Palestinian novels. Topics include desert poetry, the Qur'an, medieval Muslim court literature, popular literature, Arabic literary theory, and the emergence of modern Western genres, with a focus on Palestinian literature as a test-case. We will engage first-hand with Imru’ al-Qays’ Qifa Nabki, al-Jahiz’s *Books of Misers*, Ibn Hazm’s theories about love, Mahmoud Darwish’s *I Come from There*, and Emile Habiby’s *The Pessoptimist*. All readings are in English.

Avigail Noy  
Spring  
P hour

**COLT 0810 - IDEAS, MYTHS AND THEMES**

**COLT 0810G - Equity: Law, Literature, and Philosophy**

Justice, rigorously applied, yields injustice. This paradox haunted Western aspirations toward legal and political justice from antiquity to the Renaissance. It necessitated the formulation of a complementary principle, equity, whose job it was to correct or supplement the law in cases where the strict application of it would lead to unfairness. In England, equity was enforced by a separate system of law, and it was a weighty, ambiguous term of great emotional force, with a
particular appeal to Shakespeare. After its decline, Dickens and Kafka wrote two of the greatest literary works set in a world without equity.

Kenneth Haynes
Fall

**COLT 0810I - Tales and Talemakers of the Non-Western World**
Examines many forms of storytelling in Asia, from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* to works of history and fiction in China and Japan. The material is intended to follow the evolution of non-western narratives from mythological, historical and fictional sources in a variety of cultural contexts. Topics will include myth and ritual, the problem of epic, tales of love and the fantastic, etc.

Dore Levy
Fall

**COLT 0810M - Uncanny Tales: Narratives of Repetition and Interruption**
Close readings of short narratives with special attention to how formal and thematic elements interact to produce the effects of uncertainty, anxiety and incoherence peculiar to "the uncanny." Topics include: the representation of the self in images of the arts; the representation of speech; instabilities of identity and spatial and temporal boundaries; doubles, monsters, and automatons. Texts selected from: Walpole, Shelley, Hoffmann, Kleist, Poe, Dostoevsky, Freud, Wilde and Kafka.

Susan Bernstein
Fall

**COLT 0812A – Hamlet/Post-Hamlet**
Shakespeare’s Hamlet is perhaps the most widely read, performed, adapted, parodied and imitated literary text of the western tradition. In this seminar we will begin by reading/re-reading the play before turning to a number of appropriations of Shakespeare, both in the west and non-west, in order to address social and aesthetic issues including questions of meaning and interpretation, intertextuality and cultural translation. First Year Seminar. Enrollment limited to 20.

Karen Newman
Fall

**COLT 0812B – What is Colonialism? - Archives, Texts and Images**
What does it mean to spring from the soil, to be indigenous, autochthonous? How do we understand and represent the relationship between a specific environment and those inhabiting it? As some kind of mystical bond? As a function of Darwinian adaptation? Does it entitle us to ownership? Can we possess land? Can land possess us? This course will explore questions such as these through readings from Herodotus, Marco Polo, Ibn Fadlan, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and others.

Ariella Azoulay
Spring

**COLT 0812C – From the Earth: Landscape, Ethnicity and the Question of Autochthony in Literature**
What does it mean to spring from the soil, to be indigenous, autochthonous? How do we understand and represent the relationship between a specific environment and those inhabiting it? As some kind of mystical bond? As a function of Darwinian adaptation? Does it entitle us to ownership? Can we possess land? Can land possess us? This course will explore questions such as these through readings from Herodotus, Marco Polo, Ibn Fadlan, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and others.

Meera Viswanathan
Fall E hour

COLT 0812F – Exotic Encounters: Travel Literature in the Age of Exploration
This course will examine narratives of real and fictional encounters with foreign and exotic lands and peoples. We will study the ways in which writers, explorers, missionaries and scientists responded to their experiences of travel to America, Asia, and Europe and how their writings shaped a certain vision of the world. Among topics to be studied: voyages of exploration and discovery, the Grand tour and its avatars, and colonial travel. We will read novels, diaries, correspondence and essays by Behn, Defoe, Swift, Graffigny, Voltaire, Sterne, and Goethe and modern critical thinkers, including Rousseau, Lévi-Strauss, Todorov, Bhabha, and Pratt.

Ourida Mostefai

Spring G hour

For Undergraduates and Graduates

COLT 1210 INTRODUCTION TO THE THEORY OF LITERATURE
An historical introduction to problems of literary theory from the classical to the postmodern. Issues to be examined include mimesis, rhetoric, hermeneutics, history, psychoanalysis, formalisms and ideological criticism (questions of race, gender, sexuality, postcolonialism). Primarily for advanced undergraduates. Lectures, discussions; several short papers.

Susan Bernstein & Zachary Sng

Fall D hour

COLT 1410 STUDIES IN DRAMA

COLT 1410U Shakespeare in Perspective
We study Shakespeare together with selections from other writers or thinkers, including those who have written about Shakespeare (e.g. Nietzsche, Emerson, Coleridge), and those who can illuminate interpretive problems in Shakespeare (e.g. Plato, Melville).

Peter Saval

Fall I hour

COLT 1410L – Philosophy and Tragedy
Explores the intersection of philosophy and tragedy in western literature. Readings may include Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Hegel, and Nietzsche.

Peter Saval

Spring I hour

COLT 1410N – Found in Translation: Literature to Film in Japan
Contrasting the demands of the text versus the screen, we will read eight to ten works of modern Japanese literature and view the film versions of each in order to discuss the problem of translation from one medium to another. Possible works for inclusion are Rashomon, Harp of Burma, Woman in the Dunes, and The Makioka Sisters. Finally, we will consider manga (the graphic novel) and its adaptation into anime.

Meera Viswanathan

Spring K hour
COLT 1420 STUDIES IN NARRATIVE

COLT 1420B - A Mirror for the Romantic: The Tale of Genji and The Story of the Stone
In East Asian Buddhist culture, the mirror is a symbol of the mind in both its intellectual and emotional aspects. These masterworks detail the lives and loves of Prince Genji, cynosure of the medieval Japanese court, and Jia Baoyu, the last hope of an influential Chinese clan during the reign of Manchus. We examine both works as well as the sources of Genji and literary aesthetics of the Tang dynasty. Prerequisites: CO 71, RS 83 or 88, or permission of the instructor.
Dore Levy
Fall

COLT 1420Y - Gigantic Fictions
Terms such as ‘epic,’ ‘mammoth,’ ‘gigantic,’ and even ‘loose, baggy monsters’ have been coined to describe examples of literary discourse that inordinately exceed the normative boundaries of fiction. How are we to understand these narratives? What is the relation between literary gigantism and mimesis? How do ‘gigantic fictions’ threaten to break their literary bounds? What holds these mammoth narratives together? What impels authors to elect such a grand scope for literary representation? We explore these questions and others through close reading of several works deemed to be among the most gargantuan from authors such as Rabelais, Murasaki Shikibu, Tolstoy and Joyce.
Meera Viswanathan
Fall

COLT 1421Q - Word and Image: Ekphrasis
An examination of the tradition of illustrated narratives from the pre-modern to the modern periods: the ancient Indian epic the Ramayana, the early eleventh-century Japanese Genji Monogatari, the medieval English Canterbury Tales, the late eighteenth-century Marriage of Heaven and Hell, as well as the contemporary graphic novel Persepolis and examples of Japanese manga. Discussion will focus on the nature of iconography and symbolism; the historical privileging of text over image; the significance of parallel visual and verbal representation and its implications for culturally-specific theories of reading. Instructor permission required.
Meera Viswanathan
Spring

COLT 1422C – Proust and Woolf
When Virginia Woolf began reading Proust’s In Search of Lost Time in the spring of 1922, she was astonished. As she put it at the time, “scarcely anyone so stimulates the nerves of language in me.” Declaring the book a “miracle,” Woolf describes the experience of reading Proust as a nearly physical pleasure: “one has to put the book down and gasp.” This course will explore the major works of these two eminent modernists. It will focus on the surprising ways in which Proust and Woolf play on the “nerves of language,” renewing the novel’s capacity to represent sensation, imagination, and environment.
Hannah Freed-Thall
Fall

COLT 1430 STUDIES IN POETRY

COLT 1430D - Critical Approaches to Chinese Poetry
Examination of works of Chinese poetry of several forms and periods in the context of Chinese poetic criticism. Knowledge of Chinese not required, but provisions for working with original texts will be made for students of Chinese language.

Dore Levy
Spring

COLT 1430H Poetry, Art, and Beauty
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. LILE

Stephen Foley
Spring

COLT 1431A The Philosophical Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets
The thrill of reading these poems for me includes speculations that are sometimes called “philosophical”: speculations about the erotic desire for the beautiful, the problem of being and seeming, and the relationship of madness and poetry. Works of philosophy may help us to interpret and develop those speculations. The course will read Shakespeare’s sonnets very closely, and will include philosophical writings from Plato to the present day.

Peter Saval
Spring

COLT 1610 STUDIES IN THEORY AND CRITICISM

COLT 1610N Ecological Thought
This course will serve as an introduction to the new interdisciplinary field of the environmental humanities. Discussing an exciting range of texts and films—from Mary Shelley, Virginia Woolf, and Arundati Roy to Ridley Scott and Werner Herzog—we will investigate how literary and cinematic works make ecological crisis perceptible. The following topics will be central to our discussions: garbology (especially hoarding, collecting, and the relation between trash and modern poetry); “slow violence” and postcolonial environmentalism; queer ecology; biopolitics; the representation of non-human animals; the effects of 24/7 consumerism; and the political uses of ecological nostalgia, disgust, grief, and wonder.

Hannah Freed-Thall
Spring

COLT 1710 INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY TRANSLATION

COLT 1710C Literary Translation
Exercises and investigations in the history, theory, and practice of literary translation. Prerequisite: at least one foreign-language course in literature at 1000-level (or equivalent).

Kenneth Haynes & Esther Whitfield
Fall

COLT 1810 STUDIES IN THE LITERATURE OF IDEAS

COLT 1810G - Fiction and History
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 Luiz Valente

Spring N hour

**COLT 1810N - Freud: Writer and Reader**
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.
Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg

Spring M hour

**COLT 1812V - War, Anti-War, Postwar: Culture and Contestation in the Americas**
This course addresses the relationship among language, war and the arts from the mid-twentieth century on. Even as armies engage in combat around the globe, the term "war" legitimates a much broader spectrum of situations, lending them the structure of organized hostility and the moral opposition of right to wrong. From the "Cold War" to the "War on Terror", to Argentina's "Dirty War" and Cuba's "War on Imperialism", literature, cinema, visual arts and community-based projects have responded to real and rhetorical declarations of "war." Drawing from U.S. and Latin American contexts, we will explore a range of responses and challenges. DVPS
Esther Whitfield

Fall I hour

**COLT 1813O - Adventures of the Avant-Garde**
In the early years of the twentieth century, a series of artistic movements rippled across the Western hemisphere, exploding conceptions of art and culture while reconfiguring international relations. Explores those movements, from their predecessors (Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé), through overlapping –isms (Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, Vorticism, Expressionism, Dada, Surrealism), to avatars in the Americas. In keeping with the avant-garde's cross-pollinating spirit, we study texts from a variety of traditions, forms, and genres: from poetry through prose to manifestoes, from painting and photography to film, music, and dance, touching on questions of translation and translatability between languages, cultures, and art-forms. Enrollment limited to 25
Michelle Clayton

Spring E hour

**COLT 1814C - Plato’s Phaedrus and Symposium**
The course will be dedicated to a slow reading of these two passionate and profound works of art, which are too great to be domesticated by any one discipline. Secondary readings may include Homer, Aeschylus, Apuleius, Augustine, Ficino, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche.
Peter Saval

Fall Q hour

**COLT 1814D - Politics and Fictions of the Orient: The Invention of Orientalism**
This course will explore the myth of the Orient that develops in Enlightenment Europe in the wake of the extremely popular and influential translations of *The Arabian Nights*. We will focus on narratives of the encounter between East and West, on the discovery and construction of the Oriental “Other,” and on its representation in the literary and visual culture of the Enlightenment. Particular attention will be paid to the topos of the harem and the theme of oriental despotism. Readings will include Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters*,...
Comparative Literature – Course offerings 2015-2016

Voltaire’s *Zadig*, Johnson’s *Rasselas*, Beckford’s *Vathek*, Lady Montagu’s *Turkish Embassy Letters*, and other “oriental” tales.

*Ourida Mostefai*

**COLT 1814G - Political Commitment in Arabic Literature**
This course will explore the history of and debates surrounding political consciousness and commitment in modern Arabic literature from the mid-20th century to the present. Through close readings of mainly novels, novellas, and short stories, we will ask how, why, and with what consequences Arab authors have challenged political realities with literary expression. We will trace the diverse strategies by which authors articulated their criticisms and envisioned justice grounded in their political context. Topics and themes will include socialist realism, resistance literature, alienation, self-criticism, and responses to colonialism and censorship. No knowledge of Arabic required.

*Gregory Halaby*

Q hour

**Primarily for Graduate Students**

**COLT 2650  THEORY OF LITERATURE**

**COLT 2650M - Literary Theory I: Continental Aesthetics and the Question of Politics**
This course examines important moments in the theorization of the relationship between art and politics in the twentieth century. Beginning with the foundation of modern aesthetics in the work of Kant and Hegel, we will go on to consider debates among the Frankfurt School thinkers in the 1940s and 50s (Adorno, Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin); feminist critiques of visuality and perception in the 1980s (Laura Mulvey, Griselda Pollock); and post-structuralist attempts to reconfigure the relationship of aesthetics and politics by figures such as Deleuze, de Man, Derrida and Rancière. Enrollment limited to 15.

*Marc Redfield and Timothy Bewes*

N hour

**COLT 2650Q - What is Critique**
Few concepts have enjoyed as much authority and sustained engagement over the past 250 years of Western modernity as the concept of "critique"—from German Idealism to contemporary critical theory. Beginning with the formulation of critique in Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason, we will trace various trajectories and practices of critique in thinkers such as Schlegel, Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, Benjamin, Horkheimer, Adorno, Derrida, and Foucault, who revisits the politics of critique by asking: "How is it possible…not to be governed like this and not for that purpose and not by those people?" Taught in English.
Students from various fields welcome. (interested students should register for GRMN 2661D - What is Critique)
Gerhard Richter
Fall
0 hour
rev. 07/08/2015