402 1U/1G DESCRIPTIVE ENGLISH GRAMMAR, D. Baron. MW 2-3:15

This is a course in English linguistics. We will study the English language: how we use it; how it uses us. We will learn and practice techniques for describing English, both its words and sentences and larger elements of discourse in context. We will look at the social, historical, and political forces that shape language and its use. And we will suggest ways to use what we learn about language both in the classroom and in the professional world.


404 U3/G4 ENGL GRAMMAR FOR ESL TEACHERS, Ionin. MWF 11

Adaptation of modern English grammar to meet the needs of the ESL/EFL teacher, with special emphasis on the development of knowledge and skills that can be used in the analysis of the syntax, lexis and pragmatics of English.

407 1U/1G INTRO TO OLD ENGLISH, C. Wright. TUTH 2-3:15

In this course you will learn to read Old English prose and poetry in the original language, which was spoken by the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of England from the sixth through eleventh centuries. We will begin with some easy prose readings (the story of Adam and Eve from Genesis, and a thousand-year-old classroom skit about Anglo-Saxon “career choices”). As you gradually master the basics of Old English grammar we will work our way up to literary narrative prose such as the Anglo-Saxon historian Bede’s story of Cædmon’s miraculous transformation from cowherd to poet; King Alfred’s plan for reforming English education through a “great books” scheme (some things never change ...); and Ælfric’s story of the martyrdom of King Edmund, slain by Vikings invaders (and featuring Edmund’s decapitated talking head). Then in the second half of the semester we will read some of the finest short Old English poems, including The Wanderer and The Seafarer, two elegiac poems of exile; The Battle of Maldon, recounting the heroic defeat of an English army by the Vikings; The Dream of the Rood, a mystical vision of the Crucifixion, as told by the Cross; and The Wife’s Lament, about a woman abandoned by her former lover. We’ll conclude with a couple of excerpts from Beowulf, about a Germanic hero’s battles with a man-eating monster, his vengeful mother (the monster’s, that is), and a dragon. Along the way we will learn about aspects of Anglo-Saxon history, culture, and art.

Note: This course fulfills the Pre-1800 requirement for English majors, and it may be used to fulfill the language studies elective option for Teaching of English students (with permission from an advisor).

For graduate students the course is 4 hours credit and will involve an additional hourly meeting per week (time and place to be arranged).

418 1U/1G SHAKESPEARE, L. Newcomb. TUTH 12:30-1:45

This course explores six or seven Shakespearean plays from several dramatic genres, with an emphasis on developing distinct critical approaches. A recurring theme is that the features that made these plays popular in their day--their fluid staging, their playful language, their confrontation of familial, national, gender, and racial tensions--still allow the meanings of ‘Shakespeare’ to keep multiplying through readers, performers, and adapters. That diversity compels us to use multiple interpretive frames to look at the plays: close reading; informal staging; film analysis; feminist, historicist, postcolonial, and queer studies critical approaches; theories of performance as resistance to power structures. Be ready for proactive discussion, performance experiments, a rare-book library visit, and attending at least one live production of a Shakespeare play on campus. Written assignments include informal writings, two focused short papers, a longer paper based on guided research (7-9 pp.), and a final exam.

423 1U/1G MILTON, Perry. TUTH 9:30-10:45  
Requirement: Pre-1800 (Renaissance)

This course examines the life and work of the hugely influential and arguably great poet John Milton (1608-1674). That is more complicated than it sounds, though, since in addition to the grand poems for which he is chiefly remembered, Milton wrote a wide variety of kinds of poetry and prose and was an active and engaged participant in an enormously turbulent stretch of British history. In addition to being a poet, he was at different times known to his contemporaries as a brilliant polemicist with an international audience, a government spokesman, a controversial religious thinker, a licentious divorcer, a heretic, and an old, blind outcast. In all of his writings, Milton grapples with a set of questions—about liberty, equality, patriotism, duty, marriage, gender, learning, faith, writing, aesthetics, citizenship, ethics etc.—that are powerfully interrelated for him and that are still of urgent concern to us in numerous ways. Students who read his writing with care in this class can expect to be challenged, enlightened, angered, and delighted by turns.

429 1U/1G 18TH CENTURY FICTION, Pollock. MWF 1  
Requirement: pre-1800 (18th century)

This course will examine the link between European colonialism and the development of recognizably modern fiction during the course of the long eighteenth century—a period commonly referred to as the Enlightenment—in England, France, and the Americas. We will analyze travel both as a literal means of disseminating “enlightenment” between cultures, and as a metaphor for describing the formation of the “enlightened” person, an idealized subject defined by her/his movement into trans-cultural spaces where complicated ethical and political dilemmas must be negotiated. Indeed, one of the influential legacies of these Enlightenment fictions (or fictions of Enlightenment) has been their formulation of cosmopolitanism as a solution to the often violent clash between cultures. The popular narratives we’ll study test the Enlightenment’s cosmopolitan ethos by imagining European observers in a wide range of locales: Brazil, West Africa, the Caribbean, Persia, the Ottoman Empire, Abyssinia, and Egypt, to name a few. Time permitting, we will finish by reading some recent philosophical work on the question “What is Enlightenment?” and we will attempt to answer that question ourselves. Texts by Montaigne, Behn, Defoe, Montesquieu, Swift, Montagu, Johnson, Voltaire, and Equiano.

Requirements: active participation, journal responses, three essay projects, and a final exam.

442 1U/1G BRITISH LIT SINCE 1930, Gaedtke. TUTH 2-3:15

Returns of the Repressed - This course will consider how unresolved problems of the past continue to haunt the contemporary British novel. “Returns of the Repressed” may range from personal traumas and difficult truths that have not been fully processed to groups of people who have suffered systematic inequality and violence. The semester will be divided into sections devoted to these returns including the traumas of two world wars, the aftermath of the global British empire and its collapse, Britain’s uneasy relationship to immigrants and postcolonial subjects, shifting gender roles and changing conceptions of sexual identity, and concerns about the novel’s continued relevance in the context of emergent, scientific discourses and new media. In examining these issues, we will ask how innovations in contemporary British fiction enable us to rethink larger questions about nationality, trauma, historical responsibility, and their narration. Readings will include works by Pat Barker, Kazuo Ishiguro, Jeanette Winterson, Zadie Smith, Tom McCarthy, Hanif Kureishi, and China Miéville.

455 1U/1G MAJOR AUTHORS, Loughran. TUTH 11-12:15

TOPIC: Weird Writers: Poe, Lovecraft, VanderMeer, Miéville

Poking weird stuff: From the Lovecraftian-Goreyian pen of artist John Kenn.

This course will be devoted to three centuries of the strange, as imagined in the minds of Edgar Allan Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, Jeff Vandermeer, and China Miéville. “Weird fiction” is now a legitimate generic designation (Google it!), carrying with it an implicit celebration of the otherworldly, the deviant, the unimaginable—the weird. For these four authors, that means a series of encounters with madmen, mushroom-people, extra-terrestrials, and other Lovecraftian blob-monsters of the deep. Some questions we might ask this semester include: what is the relationship between weird literature today and earlier (also weird) literary modes like the Gothic and science fiction? Why are weird stories, which often carry with them some form of horror or discomfort, so pleasurable and so popular, especially today? But most of all, what makes something weird—and does the when of that weird matter? In what sense, in other words, are Poe’s maniacs nineteenth-century maniacs? How are Lovecraft’s monsters archaeological artifacts from the early twentieth century? And what might we learn about the norms of
our own moment from the post-apocalyptic fantasies of Jeff VanderMeer and China Miéville? Along the way we’ll read novels and stories from these four major authors, play at least one videogame based on their imaginings, and investigate supporting scholarship from a range of posthuman theorists—a body of work that, it turns out, is just as interested in weird things as these four weird writers are.

455 2U/2G MAJOR AUTHORS, Somerville. TUTH 9:30-10:45
TOPIC: James Baldwin

Harlem, Paris, Istanbul. Novelist, essayist, playwright, poet. Preacher, civil rights activist, expatriate writer. Defying any single classification, genre, or location, James Baldwin (1924-1987) and his writing continue to complicate the ways we think about twentieth-century American literature, especially the overlapping histories of African American literature and lesbian/gay literature. This course will offer an opportunity to study Baldwin’s writing in depth, including works such as Notes of a Native Son, Giovanni’s Room, Another Country, The Fire Next Time, Going to Meet the Man, and Go Tell It On the Mountain. We will also view the film documentary I Am Not Your Negro (dir. Raoul Peck, 2016). At the same time, we will consider the literary, cultural, and political contexts of Baldwin’s writing, including the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, the early lesbian and gay liberation movement, and the Black Power movement. Along the way, we will read selected critical and theoretical scholarship that sheds light on the politics of race, sexuality, and representation in Baldwin’s work.

500 G INTRO TO CRITICISM & RESEARCH, Koshy. W 3-5:20

This course will offer a historical survey of the major texts and schools that orient contemporary scholarship in the humanities and interpretive social sciences. It examines the emergence of key modern concepts of critique in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Kant, Hegel, and Marx); and the evolution of historically distinct forms of critique in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in response to the problems of capitalism, fascism, colonialism, and globalization. The last section of the class will focus on contemporary developments in critical theory including critical race theory, feminist and queer theory, indigenous studies, posthumanism, and ecocriticism, among others. The course is designed for first-year graduate students and for students interested in studying the development of critical theory in a systematic way. An introduction to the methods of critical theory, this course will equip students to examine the premises, concepts, and discourses that underpin economic systems, social and political formations, and cultural production.

The course will meet twice a week: once a week, along with graduate students from theory seminars in other departments, for talks run through the Modern Critical Theory Lecture Series (Tuesdays, 5:15-6:45 pm); and once a week for regular seminar meetings restricted to registered students. The Modern Critical Theory Lecture Series talks will be integrated with the seminar course material, and will be presented by guest speakers from UIUC and, occasionally, from off campus.

514 E SEMINAR IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE, Barrett. F 1-2:50
same as MDVL 514
TOPIC: Nature and the Non-Human in the Chivalric Romances of Medieval and Early Modern England

A man or woman on horseback in the midst of a trackless forest—this is the archetypal protagonist of chivalric romance. From an ecocritical perspective, it’s also an actor-network, an assemblage of companion species (human, horse, tree) enmeshed in an ongoing process of natureculture. Textualized as romances, these entanglements participate in the co-constitutive articulation of civilization (bios) and wilderness (zoe). They seek to establish the primacy of the human over the non-human (and are thus kin to the ecological crises of our own twenty-first-century moment), but they simultaneously demonstrate (consciously or not) humanity’s inability to achieve such separation and autonomy. The knight in shining armor may defend his people from monstrous werewolves (Marie de France’s Bisclavret) and witches (Edmund Spenser’s Duesa) and green giants (the Gawain-Poet’s Sir Bertilak), but he is just as often a predatory monster himself (e.g., the cannibalistic Richard Lionheart, the diabolical Sir Gwthther, or the rapist-knight of Chaucer’s Wife of Bath’s Tale), calling into question the utility of monstrosity as category. Over the course of the semester, we’ll explore these and other interspecies interactions, familiarizing ourselves with both the romances of the past and the ecocriticism of the present. Our assignments will combine brief reading responses with the obligatory seminar paper, and our texts will cover some five centuries of literary production in the British Isles, beginning with Marie’s twelfth-century Lais and ending with Spenser’s Faerie Queene. Be sure to bring your own critical interests to the class: the ideas outlined in this brief description are only a starting point for our ecologically-inflected discussion of genre.
Graduate Literature Courses
Fall 2017

519 T SEMINAR IN SHAKESPEARE, L. Newcomb. TH 3-4:50
TOPIC: Shakespeare and/as Romance

While Shakespeare’s lifetime is now celebrated as a golden age of drama, literary prestige was more often attached to the mode of romance: globetrotting, multi-strand narratives in prose, verse, or an artful combination. Key texts in this mixed mode included the most prestigious Elizabethan literary achievement, Sir Philip Sidney’s Arcadia; the first original fiction published by an Englishwoman, Lady Mary Wroth’s Urania; some of the best-selling fiction titles of the period (Robert Greene); wild fantasies (Margaret Cavendish) and misadventures (Francis Kirkman). Shakespeare drew romance elements into plays repeatedly: in the early Comedy of Errors, cross-dressing comedies such as Twelfth Night, and the genre-busting ‘late plays’ of his final writing years. In the mid-nineteenth century, Edward Dowden decided that these late plays constituted an author-specific genre of “Shakespearean romance”; he saw romance as a ‘native’ English world of fantasy rather than as a much-replicated international mode. Today, critics recover early modern mixed romances precisely because they investigate nation, gender, race, desire, privilege, and geopolitical encounter on a fantasized plane. Since such concerns also dominate Shakespeare’s last plays, Dowden’s category shifts from misnomer to something more fruitful. Why is early modern romance newly productive for scholarship today? How do new understandings of the romance mode allow us to interpret, contextualize, dramatize, and teach certain plays anew? Is the work of romance nostalgic or utopian, socially regressive or progressive? Our study of these intersecting genres will range from hands-on library work to theoretical analysis. Final research papers may trace an early modern text in historical context or in later reception. Anthology and select single titles TBA.

527 R SEMINAR 18TH C LITERATURE, Nazar. TH 1-2:50
TOPIC: Women’s Friendship in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture

In A Serious Proposal to the Ladies (1694), the early feminist philosopher Mary Astell argued that the best way to fight centuries of neglect of female education was to separate women, at least temporarily, from an abusive world by creating “Protestant numeries” around the country. Here middle and upper-class women could escape the “tyranny” of custom and the trivial pursuits prescribed for their sex, substituting Descartes and the Bible for the dubious pleasures of their looking-glasses and unreliable male flattery. Don’t look to men for your self-worth, Astell repeatedly urged her female readers. Look instead to yourselves and to admirable women friends, who will help you perfect both faith and judgment, and enable you to create a heaven on earth—a garden “where there are no serpents to deceive you.” Astell’s striking comments about women’s friendship find echoes and correspondences throughout the long eighteenth century: in the friendship poetry of Katherine Philips (“Orinda”), Anne Finch, and Mary Chudleigh; in novels envisioning utopian female communities such as Sarah Scott’s Millenium Hall (1762) and Mary Wollstonecraft’s Wrongs of Woman or Maria (1798); and in epistolary novels foregrounding relationships between women, including Samuel Richardson’s Clarissa (1747-48), Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s Julie, or The New Heloise (1761), and Henry Mackenzie’s Julia de Roubigné (1777). While scholars of the eighteenth century have long lamented the gender and other exclusions implicit in Jurgen Habermas’s classic account of the bourgeois public sphere, our understanding of eighteenth-century publics and counterpublics remains limited by the neglect of female friendship as a topos of Enlightenment letters. This seminar explores various imaginings of female friendship and solidarity in eighteenth-century fiction, poetry, and educational and philosophical treatises, and situates these representations in the context of recent debates within feminist and public-sphere theory.

537 G SEMINAR VICTORIAN LITERATURE, Courtemanche. M 3-4:50
TOPIC: Victorian Radical Politics

The roots of many of today’s political conflicts can be found in the 19th century. In Britain, these included the abolitionist movement (inspired by evangelical religion); the working-class Chartist movement for electoral reform; first-wave feminism, free love, and the rise of the suffrage movement; Irish nationalism, terrorist violence, and the push for Home Rule; the rise of socialism, the Trades Union movement, and the Labour Party; and anarchist radicalism inspired by Tolstoy and Kropotkin. Readings will include works by William Morris, Peter Kropotkin, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Bernard Shaw, George Gissing, William Carleton, Sidney Owenson, Edward Carpenter, and Olive Schreiner, along with historical and theoretical background.
This seminar approaches later American literature by focusing specifically on poetry—as a genre, as a social practice, and as a mode of utterance that recurrently needs defending. We will begin with Dickinson and Whitman, before turning our attention to 20th- and 21st-century poetic practices. Special attention will be given to the lyric, in order to situate its historical emergence and problematic centrality after romanticism. The course functions as an introduction to various kinds of formalist criticism by studying a range of poetic forms as bearers of meaning and history. Major poet-critics to be read include Susan Stewart on metrical haunting, Allen Grossman on the phenomenology of poetic presence, Charles Bernstein on L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetics, Susan Howe on poetic materiality, and Mark Doty on description. We will also read Jonathan Culler on the lyric and Caroline Levine on rhythm.

The course doubles as a theory seminar insofar as it investigates meta-questions that poems pose about poetry, about the determinants of human subjectivity, about vocalization, and about how sounds acquire meaning. We will be reading poems but also discussing different methods of reading them. No special background in poetry, theory, or American literature is required. The overall aim is not to cover a particular period of literary or cultural history but to challenge how you think about poetry. This seminar is open to, and welcomes, practitioners (MFA students). Requirements include: diligent reading of all assigned material, active participation in seminar discussion, and a final research paper (20-30 pp).