

English MA Fall 2020 course descriptions

ENGL 4010 FDE – Honours Seminar: *Writing the Pandemic* – Dr. Kathryn Walton - ZOOM delivery

As COVID-19 sweeps across the world, it infiltrates and fundamentally alters the everyday lives of people and communities everywhere. This course seeks to understand and document some of the material and cultural impact of this pandemic on our community. This course is both a study of the nature of pandemic literature throughout history and a creation of a record of the current pandemic. Students will begin the course by reading accounts of pandemics both fictional and nonfictional from across history: from plagues in medieval England, to scarlet fever in World War One, to Emily St. John Mandel's fictional Georgia Flu in her novel *Station Eleven*. Students will then craft their own pandemic narratives. A variety of assignments will ask students to uncover and recount their own experiences and the experiences of others in the current pandemic using a variety of writing styles and genre. In so doing, students will both learn what it means to imagine and record a global crisis on the scale of a pandemic and also create a community record of COVID-19. The collective work of the students will be compiled at the end of the course in a writing project that reveals the lived experiences of COVID-19 in our communities.

ENGL/INDI 4012 FDE: Honours Seminar in Indigenous Literatures: *Indigenous Comics & graphic novels* - Dr. Judith Leggatt - ZOOM delivery

A study of the growing field of Indigenous comics, looking at translations of traditional stories into graphic form, the use of comics as ways of addressing social issues, the connections and differences between writers who work primarily in graphic form and Indigenous writers who have started working in the genre after becoming known in other forms, and new Indigenous techniques that transform the comics genre. Graphic texts will be studied in the context of both comics theory and Indigenous storytelling.

ENGL 5110/4013 FDE – Honours Seminar in Medieval Literature: *Translating the Middle Ages* - Dr. Douglas Hayes - ZOOM delivery

Although the popularity of the Middle Ages (roughly 400 to 1450 CE) as an idealized, romanticized, studied, and re-inscribed period of European history began as early as the 16th century, with its obsession with chivalry and courtly love, and culminated in the vogue for rewritings of medieval culture and texts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, from James MacPhearson's "translations" of the poetry of Ossian to the idealized Middle Ages of the Victorian Pre-Raphaelite movement, it was the twentieth century gave rise to the idea of the Middle Ages as an area of academic study and specialized expertise. However, the codifying (and rarifying) of Medieval Studies did not lead to a decline in the popularity of the Middle Ages. Instead, re-inscriptions of medieval literature and culture, from the popular fiction of the medievalists C. S. Lewis

and J. R. R. Tolkien to the dinner theatre of Medieval Times, are more popular than ever. Medieval literary texts have also enjoyed a surge in popularity in recent years, with a number of well-known poets and a popular biographer producing Modern English translations of a number of the central texts of the medieval European literary canon. Our seminar will focus on these 21st-century re-inscriptions of medieval literature with an emphasis not just on the texts themselves but also upon the material and ideological conditions that have led some of today's most well-known poets and popular writers to re-present these texts in Modern English for 21st-century readers. Texts to be studied include Seamus Heaney's translations of *Beowulf* and the poetry of Robert Henryson, Ciaran Carson's translation of the *Tain*, Simon Armitage's translations of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Pearl*, J. R.R. Tolkien's newly posthumously published *Sigurd and Gudrun*, and Peter Ackroyd's 2009 prose retelling of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

ENGL/SOCJ 5215 FDE – Honours Seminar in Literature, Culture and Social Justice: *Narratives of Surplus and Sacrifice* - Dr. Max Haiven – ZOOM delivery

This course examines the articulation of racism and capitalism in contemporary and historical narratives (fiction and non-fiction) across a range of media (e.g. literature, news, film) that explore themes of surplus and sacrifice. It offers an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the systems and structures that produce so-called "disposable populations" at the same time as they generate massive wealth (for corporations and the wealthy). We also take up racializing narratives of austerity, debt and success. Through these themes, students will be introduced to a range of approaches to theorizing how race, capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy are entangled.

ENGL/SOCJ 5510 FDE – Special Topics in Postcolonial Literature: *Gender, Globalization and Literature* – Dr. Anna Guttman - ZOOM delivery

The language of globalization has long been both gendered and sexualized, with capitalist expansion understood in terms of "market penetration." Increasingly, globalization itself is being recognized as a gendered experience. Using contemporary, global literature, and emphasizing non-western and Indigenous perspectives, this seminar explores a number of interrelated questions: How is gender and its articulation culturally-specific? What happens when diverse, culturally encoded ideas about gender and sexuality encounter each other in the process of globalization, via the movement of people, goods, images and ideas? How does globalization impact our understanding of gender, and vice versa? How does globalization affect our understanding of identity? Texts will address a range of topics – from domestic labour, to sex work, to ecotourism – and a variety of gendered identities and sexual orientations.

ENGL 5770 FDE – Advanced Scholarly Methods ** – Dr. Rachel Warburton – ZOOM delivery

This course will offer instruction in graduate-level research, writing, and reading skills. The course will provide an overview of major modes of literary studies scholarship with special attention paid to: conceptualizing a research project; accessing and evaluating primary and secondary sources; and planning, drafting, and revising proposals and essays. The course will build toward a conference of student work.

** This is a required course for all first-year graduate students. Students who have taken English 5790 are not required to take English 5770.

English MA Winter 2021 course descriptions

ENGL 4010 WA: Honours Seminar: *Public Humanities* - Dr. Scott Pound – on campus*

“The Humanities” are the academic disciplines that investigate the expressions of the human mind: Anthropology, Philosophy, History, Musicology, Art History, Modern Languages, Linguistics, and Literary Studies foremost among them. The knowledge produced by these disciplines is highly specialized—it is made by academics for academics. Can these self-contained, self-referential, and self-serving disciplines also serve the public good? Can the knowledge produced by universities be made available to the public in a way that is accessible, engaging, and relevant? If so, how?

It is with these questions in mind that contemporary scholars propose “the public humanities” as a way to engage diverse publics in reflecting on the nature of creativity, meaning, memory, authority, judgment, and learning in relation to current conditions of civic and cultural life. In this course, we will trace the origins and development of the disciplinary humanities and then try to extrapolate from them a set of principles and methods that we can use to mount our own public humanities projects.

ENGL 4010 WAO: Honours Seminar: *TBD* – TBD – on campus*

ENGL 4014 WA – Honours Seminar in 18th & 19th Century Literature: *Victorian Animalities* - Dr. Monica Flegel – on campus*

In this course, we will be examining literature of the Victorian period concerned with animal/human relationships and the animal/human divide. Texts such as Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty*, H. G. Wells’ *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and L. T. Meade’s *Scamp & I* all concern themselves with investigating the boundary between the animal and the human, while also demonstrating the extent to which that boundary is always essentially

unstable. Some broader questions we will therefore concern ourselves with in this course may be: what are the ethics and politics of animal “representation”? To what extent are discussions about animals actually discussions about humanity? Is anthropomorphism wrong, necessary, or a bit of both? And what did the animal other mean for human animals in the Victorian period?

ENGL 5211 WA – Honours Seminar in 17th Century Literature: *Shakespeare & Plague* – Dr. Rachel Warburton – on campus*

Outbreaks of plague occurred throughout Shakespeare’s life and affected his writings and working life in complex ways. He was born in the middle of an outbreak in Stratford upon Avon, he was a young actor during the London outbreak of 1592-94, and was an established theatre owner during the series of outbreaks from 1603-11. During plague outbreaks, the theatres were closed for long periods of time and Shakespeare took to writing some of his best-known plays, such as *King Lear* (1606). But what did he actually write *about* plague? (That question is not as easy to answer as we might hope.) What did his contemporaries write about plague? Might our current experience of Covid change how we read Shakespeare? Can early modern writings about plague and quarantine help us understand our current pandemic?

We will consider whether looking back on how Shakespeare and his contemporaries made sense of an illness for which there was no known cure can help us make sense of our current pandemic moment. Cultural critics and activists have found historical frameworks helpful in other pandemic moments. In the early days of the AIDS epidemic, for example, several scholars compared the early AIDS panic with early modern understandings of disease for political and cultural context (Sander Gilman). In our current pandemic moment, numerous AIDS activists see echoes of AIDS panic the moralizing responses to Covid. This course, then, will pursue several lines of inquiry relating to the representations of plague, HIV/AIDS, and Covid-19 as they relate to Shakespeare’s writings and early modern understandings of disease.

We will begin with Susan Sontag’s *Illness as Metaphor*, which students are encouraged to read before the first seminar meeting. This will provide us with a framework for thinking about how illnesses, in addition to being medical and scientific problems to be “solved”, also become sites of cultural, political, and moralizing discourse. We will also read Sontag’s *AIDS as Metaphor* later in the course when we examine the intersections between early modern understandings of disease and 1980s HIV/AIDS writings with how we are making sense of Covid-19.

ENGL/SOCJ 5215/4017 WAWAO - Honours Seminar in Ecocriticism. *Global Environmental Justice Literature* – Dr. Cheryl Lousley – on campus* – telepresence room

This seminar course examines the diverse ways that contemporary writers and literary studies engage with globalization and the environment as a set of socio-economic,

ethical, and political relations of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The course will explore a range of theoretical approaches to ecocriticism, globalization and representation, which will be applied to close readings of twenty-first-century fiction, poetry, and drama from different parts of the world. Themes will include resource wars, climate change, refugees and migration, petrocultures, capitalism, the social distribution of pollution and risk, human-animal relationships, place and localisms, and social and economic inequalities.

ENGL 5413 WA – Honours Seminar II: *Comics and Graphic Narratives* - Dr. Daniel Hannah – on campus*

This course will examine recent trends in graphic narrative and consider a range of theoretical approaches to reading the form of comics. Some of the questions this course will consider include: what kinds of questions about adaptation are raised by graphic rewritings of? what do graphic narratives reveal to us about the ethics and limits of representation? how do comics reconfigure familiar genres and narrative modes of life-writing, history, reportage, and fiction? what challenges do visual narratives (or image-texts) pose to the conventions of literary criticism and theory?

*** MODE OF DELIVERY (WINTER TERM) SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS COURSES MAY BE REQUIRED TO BE DELIVERED REMOTELY.**