

Tentative Listing of 2024-25 English Courses

Small= 0-2 sections; **Medium**=3-4 sections; **Large**=5+ sections

WLO=ACCEPTING WAITLIST APPS ONLY: This applies to new courses or other courses that have not been pre-allocated sections.

English students: *While these courses should be in addition to the 7 courses per semester you apply for, please do sign up if you are interested--sections may well open up!*

Fall 2024

English 10. Literature Today **M**

Stephanie Burt

All literature was contemporary at some point, but the literature that is contemporary now provides special opportunities for enjoying, questioning, and understanding the world. Literature Today focuses on works written since 2000—since most of you were born. It explores how writers from around the world speak to and from their personal and cultural situations, addressing current problems of economic inequality, technological change, structural prejudice, and divisive politics. We will encounter a range of genres, media, and histories to study contemporary literature as a living, evolving system. The course uniquely blends literary study and creative writing—students will analyze literature and make literature. The conviction that these practices are complementary will inform our approach to readings and course assignments.

English 20 001. Literary Forms **S**

Christopher Pexa

This foundational course for English concentrators examines literary form and genre. We explore some of the many kinds of literature as they have changed over time, along with the shapes and forms that writers create, critics describe, and readers learn to recognize. The body of the course looks to the great literary types, or modes, such as epic, tragedy, and lyric, as well as to the workings of literary style in moments of historical change, producing the transformation, recycling, and sometimes the mocking of past forms. While each version of English 20 includes a different array of genres and texts from multiple periods, those texts will always include five major works from across literary history: Beowulf (epic), The Winter's Tale (tragicomedy or romance), Persuasion (comic novel), The Souls of Black Folk (essays; expository prose), and Elizabeth Bishop's poems (lyric). The course integrates creative writing with critical attention: assignments will take creative as well as expository and analytical forms.

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English 20 002. Literary Forms **S**

Leah Whittington

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English 97. Literary Methods S

Namwali Serpell

This course, taught in small groups and required for concentrators, introduces theories, interpretive frameworks, and central questions about literature and literary media. What do we do when we read? What is an author? What do we mean by "literature" itself? How might we compare and evaluate interpretations? How do the historical, social, cultural, and legal frameworks around a text shape its meanings and its effects? Combining major critical and theoretical writings with primary works, the course investigates how literary production and interpretation are informed by philosophical and aesthetic traditions, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, national and post-colonial identities, and the material forms in which literature circulates, from parchment books to the internet. Students will also practice fundamental literary research methods through close engagement with Harvard libraries.

English 102m. Introduction to Old English: Charms, Herbals, Folk Medicine, Miracle Cures S

Daniel Donoghue

This course combines language study with the investigation of a critical theme. The narratives set for translation provide a thematic coherence as we dig into the language of Old English, which is the vernacular used in England from the sixth century until about 1100. Although some of its features remain recognizable today, Old English needs to be learned as a foreign language with its own spelling, pronunciation, syntax, and so on. The term begins with an emphasis on grammar, which will be covered in graduated steps until midterm, after which the readings and translation will take up more of our class time.

The unifying theme of the readings will be remedies to preserve the health of the human body. Old English literature offers an abundance of medical texts, including herbal remedies and magical incantations. Some come from ancient Greek and Latin sources, while others are local folk recipes. Some are fantastical, some are known to be effective, and others clearly rely on the placebo effect. The readings will move from simple prose to intricate poetry. An end-of-term project will assign each student a short Old English magical charm—think of it as a human utterance charged with power to control nature. With the help of personal coaching, each student will produce a literal and a creative translation.

English 121s. Shakespeare from Beginning to End S-M

Stephen Greenblatt

We will begin with Shakespeare's early slasher play, *Titus Andronicus*, and read works from the full course of his career, sampling all of his major genres: comedies, histories, tragedies, and romances. Along the way, we will consider one or more of the "problem plays" that challenge all generic categories. In addition to his writing for the stage, we will read his long erotic poem, "Venus and Adonis" and a selection of his sonnets. We will learn about the Elizabethan theater and publishing industry, the class system, and the government censorship. And we will acquire a sense of Shakespeare dominant styles, his methods, and his recurrent obsessions.

English 145a. Jane Austen's Fiction and Fans M

Deidre Lynch

When, at the end of the eighteenth century, Jane Austen began to write, the novel was still liable to be dismissed by serious readers and writers on both moral and aesthetic grounds. Austen's achievement helped to transform the genre, helping establish fiction as the form that (paradoxically enough) explains reality and as the form that

explains us to ourselves. In this class we'll read all six of Austen's novels and study the contribution they made to the remaking of modern fiction. Though our emphasis will fall on these works' place in the literary culture of Austen's day and on their historical contexts in an era of political, social, and literary revolution, we'll also acknowledge the strong and ardent feelings that Austen's oeuvre continues to arouse today. To that end, we'll do some investigating of the frequently wild world of contemporary Austen fandom and the Austenian tourism, shopping, adaptations, and sequels that nurture it. At the same time, we'll also remember that Austen knew fandom from both sides; part of our work this semester will be to learn about the early-nineteenth-century cultures of literary appreciation in which Austen both enrolled the heroines of her fiction and enrolled herself.

English 151an. The Age of the Novel S-M

Tara Menon

What does the novel still have to offer? As newer genres—movies, television, Youtube, TikTok—compete for our attention, why do people still immerse themselves in long works of prose fiction? And why do certain nineteenth-century British novels continue to captivate so many readers to this day? In this course, we will read four nineteenth-century novels by four authors that many consider to be the greatest writers that have ever lived: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit*, and George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. We will pay close attention to technique: how do these novels work? And we will also explore social and political themes: what are these novels about? At every stage, we will consider the unique capacities of narrative fiction: what can the novel do that other genres can't? Implicitly and explicitly, this course will argue first, that these superlative nineteenth-century novels let us see the world (not only then but also now) in new ways, and second, that the novel is a tool for thinking that beats all others. Alongside these texts, we will watch film, television and theatre adaptations as well as read contemporary criticism to better understand the enduring legacy of these canonical works.

English 178n. The American Novel Since 1900 S

Namwali Serpell

This course is a survey of the American novel since 1900: its forms, patterns, techniques, ideas, cultural contexts, and intertextual networks. We will pay special attention to questions of aesthetics, epistemology, and ethics—e.g. what is beautiful? how do we know? what should we do?—in the American milieu over the course of the twentieth century and beyond.

We will read around ten authors selected from among the following: L. Frank Baum, Don DeLillo, Ralph Ellison, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Lisa Halliday, Ernest Hemingway, Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, Valeria Luiselli, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Cormac McCarthy, N. Scott Momaday, Toni Morrison, Maxine Hong Kingston, Vladimir Nabokov, John Okada, Thomas Pynchon, Marilynne Robinson, Philip Roth, Leslie Marmon Silko, Jean Toomer, Nathaniel West, Richard Wright, Edith Wharton...

English 180aw. American Women Writers S

Maggie Doherty

This course is organized thematically, and loosely chronologically, around the vexed and contested category of American women's literature. Our readings and discussions will prompt questions about this central theme. How do we define "women" or "women writers"? What does the literature produced by such writers look like? How do the writers in our course engage with social and political questions, particularly those relating to gender, race, and other markers of identity? Where is America, and what does it mean to write about it? How do women writers participate in—or challenge—the American literary tradition? Could the writers in our course be said to have developed a literary tradition of their own? Through critical analysis of texts from a range of writers—including Emily Dickinson, Edith Wharton, Toni Morrison, and Cristina Rivera Garza—we will collectively propose provisional answers to these questions. As we do so, we will also develop our critical reading and writing skills through the completion of formal and informal writing assignments.

English 187nd. Indigenous Literatures of the Other-than-Human WLO

Christopher Pexa

"Indians are an invention," declares an unnamed hunter in Gerald Vizenor's (*White Earth Ojibwe*) 1978

novel, *Bearheart*. The hunter's point, as Vizenor has explained in interviews and elsewhere, is not that Indigenous peoples don't exist, but that the term "Indian" is a colonial fiction or shorthand that captures, essentializes, and thus erases a vast diversity of Indigenous lives and peoples. This course begins from the contention that other categories, and maybe most consequentially that of "nature," have not only historically borne little resemblance to the lived lives of Indigenous people but have been used as important tools for capture and colonization. We will begin with European writings on the "noble savage" who lives harmoniously in a state of Nature, then move to Indigenous writers and thinkers whose work refuses this invention, along with its corollary category of the supernatural. We will spend most of our time reading 20th- and 21st- century Indigenous literary depictions of other-than-human beings and Indigenous relationships with those beings, highlighting how forms of kinship with them are integral to Indigenous ways of understanding difference, to acting like a good relative, and to Indigenous practices of peoplehood. Readings may include works by Billy-Ray Belcourt, Ella Deloria, Louise Erdrich, Stephen Graham Jones, Leslie Marmon Silko, Leanne Simpson, Kim TallBear, and Gerald Vizenor, among others.

English 187r. Thinking Through Writing: Science Themes S-M

Claire Messud and Melissa Franklin

This is an open-enrollment writing course, cross-listed in both English and Physics, that requires writing 300 words a day, 4 days a week, all semester, responding to prompts. We will consider a variety of writing genres and ways to engage with science concepts: non-fiction, journalism, fiction, poetry, etc. The writing portion of the class aims to enable students above all to explore writing freely, with the expectation that they will learn how to express themselves more lucidly and effectively as they grow in literary understanding. This year's theme is "The Time Things Take." In science, we ask questions like: what is the lifetime of a particle; how long does it take for raindrops to fall; how long does it take the universe to expand; how long does it take a rocket ship to reach infinity. And we ask ourselves how we might measure these times. This course will consider scientific concepts, the questions we can pose about them, and the thought experiments we might perform. The literary portion of the class involves close readings of these texts from a writerly perspective, also addressing questions of time and narrative, including pacing and form. We will examine precision in diction and syntax, the use of metaphor and other rhetorical strategies.

The course has no prerequisites in either English or Physics. There will be no problem sets. The course will involve two lectures per week + a section. The final assessment will be a portfolio and a presentation.

English 191rw. Reading for Fiction Writers M

Neel Mukherjee and Laura van den Berg

There is no writing without reading. This is an unimpeachable and incontrovertible fact that all writers know. Ask any writer why they became a writer, and they'll tell you that it's because they read. Octavia Butler, who came from a poor family, once said that she became a writer because she had access to public libraries. Books, in other words; they showed her what was possible. What kind of training in reading prepares one to become a writer? This is an open-enrollment creative writing course that will introduce you to some extraordinary writers who will inspire you, make you think, make you quarrel with them, fill you with wonder and awe and, sometimes, bafflement. It is by no means representative in any way, nor is it exhaustive, nor does it have any historical ordering. It is meant to be a stepping-stone to possibilities, to greater imaginative and creative worlds.

The list is diverse in terms of genres. We will read sci-fi (Ursula K. Le Guin, Butler), fairytale inspired fiction (Angela Carter, Helen Oyetemi), metaphysical fiction (Leo Tolstoy), realist fiction (Alice Munro, Mavis Gallant). We will consider fiction through the lens of race and gender and politics (Mavis Gallant, Edward P. Jones, Vivek Shanbagh, Annie Ernaux), and read several writers who wrote in languages other than English (Anton Chekhov, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar). We will learn how to read closely, to interpret stories and novels, to figure out what literary works mean and, most importantly, how they embody their meanings in form. We will look at the wide spectrum of effects writers create in their texts. We will also be asking ourselves throughout the semester: How do writers read other writers? What are the technical things they look out for when they are reading? These conversations will, in turn, inform the creative work you generate this semester.

This class will be co-taught by two creative writing faculty members, Professors Laura van den Berg and Neel Mukherjee. The lecture component of the course will meet twice a week, Mondays and Wednesdays, for 75 minutes per session; one of those classes will be largely devoted to craft Q & A and workshopping student writing. You will also meet for an hour-long section (separate from the weekly lectures) each week where you'll have the opportunity to do your own creative writing. This will involve writing exercises, imitations of writers we will be reading, flash fiction, and other writing prompts.

English 199ad. Adaptation: The Art of Retelling S

Anna Wilson

“What makes a good adaptation? Why retell an old story? This class explores texts that are in conversation with others: adaptation, translation, fanfiction, parody, the sequel or prequel (authorized or unauthorized), the remix, and the critical retelling. We will think about the role of form, genre, and media in adaptation, the decisions involved in transposing a story from one genre to another, from novel to screen or stage, from the printed page to digital archive, across times, contexts, languages, and audiences. We will also consider the legal frameworks, cultural institutions, and audience expectations that constrain adaptation: what is the nature of authorship? How much can a person own a text, or a character? How far can an adaptation go before audiences no longer recognize, or even refuse, an adaptation? What economic and cultural roles do adaptations play in our contemporary media landscape? The final assignment will include the option to create your own adaptation using some of the critical models we have explored. This is a lecture and discussion class accessible to non-concentrators.”

GenEd- Fall

N/A

Other Courses Taught by the English Department- Fall

HUMAN 10a. A Humanities Colloquium: From Homer to Morrison L

Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Menand, Jesse McCarthy, Ambrogio Camozzi Pistoja, Kathleen Coleman, Alison Simmons

A Humanities Colloquium: from Homer to Morrison: 2,500 years of essential works, taught by six professors. Humanities 10a will tentatively include works by Homer, Sophocles, Sappho, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Descartes, Mary Shelley, Marx, Kafka, Du Bois, and Morrison. One 75-minute lecture plus a 75-minute discussion seminar led by the professors every week. Students will receive instruction in critical writing one hour a week, in writing labs and individual conferences. Students also have opportunities to participate in a range of cultural experiences, ranging from plays and musical events to museum and library collections.

(Note: The hiring process for HUM 10a will be handled by Arts & Humanities. Interested applicants are asked to sign up in CATS.)

Spring 2025

English 20. Literary Forms S

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English 97. Literary Methods S

Alan Niles

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English 103g. Advanced Old English: Scribes and Manuscripts S

Daniel Donoghue

Building on the basic grammar and translation skills learned in English 102, this course introduces students to Old English literature in its most immediate context: the manuscripts that preserve their earliest copies. The weekly task of translation will be supplemented by consistent attention to the manuscript contexts of Old English literature. The texts will include selections from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the OE Genesis with its illustrations, Exeter Book Riddles, Beowulf, and others. The instruction will guide students through basic principles of manuscript study. As a special event we will invite a professional calligrapher to instruct students—equipped with a goose quill!—on the traditional skill of calligraphy. At the end of the term, with the help of personal coaching, each student will edit and translate manuscript folios in a collaborative edition of an Old English text.

English 110ff. Medieval Fanfiction **S**

Anna Wilson

Fanfiction is a surprisingly powerful tool for examining medieval literature. It sheds light on the dynamics of rereading and transformation that characterizes medieval literary culture, which in turn deepen our own understanding of the nature of creativity. In this class we will read some twentieth- and twenty-first century retellings of medieval stories, including fanfiction, alongside medieval literary texts that rewrite, reimagine, or let their authors star in pre-existing stories. This medieval fanfiction will include different takes on the medieval superhero Sir Gawain (including the 2020 movie starring Dev Patel), unauthorized additions to *The Canterbury Tales*, and medieval Christian devotional manuals which encourage their readership to participate in imaginative exercises where they imagine themselves as participating in events in the life of Jesus Christ. Along the way we will learn what medieval readers and writers thought of questions like, what is an author? What is literature? What is a character? And what happens in our brains when we read?

English 131p. Milton's *Paradise Lost* **S-M**

Gordon Teskey

This course focuses on Milton's most famous work, *Paradise Lost*, the greatest long poem in English and the only successful classical epic in the modern world. Milton went totally blind in his forties and composed *Paradise Lost* by reciting verses to anyone available to take them down, like the blind prophets and poets of legend. Yet the moral and political questions he raised—what is the human? what is gender? what is the political? what is religion? what is dissent? what is legitimacy? what is revolt?—are surprisingly enduring and modern. His own solutions to these questions may not be ours, but his ability to provoke thought on them speaks to our time. We will consider how Milton generates the sublime and how he builds great scenes and characters, especially his most famous one, Satan.

English 141. When Novels Were New **WLO**

Deidre Lynch

What was it like to read and write a novel at a moment before that term named a stable category and before the genre's conventions were established? How did it feel to be a writer or reader in an era when the novel was (as some authors put it in the middle of the eighteenth century) "a new species" or "a new province" of writing?

This class is devoted to the remarkable record of literary experimentation that forms the history of the early novel. As we study works by Aphra Behn, Mme de Lafayette, Daniel Defoe, Eliza Haywood, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Frances Burney, and Jane Austen, we'll attend particularly to questions of genre and genre hierarchy, fictionality and realism. To investigate what was novel about novels, we will ponder, for instance, how novels differ from epics or histories or the news in newspapers. That pondering will give us rich new insights into the formal devices that empowered this new kind of fiction as it claimed--unlike its predecessors in the narrative line-- to tell the truth: a claim that would eventually, by the time of Jane Austen, underwrite the novel's emergence as the crucial genre of modern times. At the same time, we will also investigate what this emergence can tell us about modernity itself--about love, sex, and marriage, consumer capitalism, race, and empire. We'll cap our reading by pairing Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* with an extraordinary novel in letters from 1808 (only recently rediscovered, and anonymously published), *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*.

English 157. The Classic Phase of the Novel **S-M**

Philip Fisher

A set of major works of art produced at the peak of the novel's centrality as a literary form: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Madame Bovary*, *Anna Karenina*, *Middlemarch*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Buddenbrooks*. Society, family, generational novels and the negations of crime and adultery; consciousness and the organization of narrative experience; the novel of ideas and scientific programs; realism, naturalism, aestheticism and the interruptions of the imaginary.

English 172ad. American Democracy WLO

John Stauffer and Roberto Unger

Democracy, inequality, and nationalism in America. The white working class and American politics. Class and race. Identities and interests. Conditions for socially inclusive economic growth and for the deepening and dissemination of the knowledge economy. Alternative directions of institutional change, viewed in light of American history. Democratizing the market and deepening democracy. Self-reliance and solidarity.

We explore and discuss the past, present, and especially the future of the American experiment among ourselves and with invited guests: thinkers, politicians, social activists, and entrepreneurs.

Readings drawn from classic and contemporary writings about the United States.

English 182ca. Literature Under Capitalism WLO

Jesse McCarthy

Literature has been profoundly shaped by the advent of modern industrial capitalism. Since the Industrial Revolution, traditional social orders focused on local marketplaces have been supplanted by a global market society driven by an economy fueled by financial speculation. Perhaps not coincidentally, this same period witnessed the rise of the modern novel. The novel is therefore the perfect vehicle in which to examine ‘the way we live now,’ to borrow the famous title of Anthony Trollope’s novel inspired by the financial scandals of the 1870s. Can fiction help us to unveil the role of money in our lives? Its significance, how it shapes, corrupts, enhances, and deforms desire and ultimately how we understand the good life and what prevents or allows us to achieve it? Does art and literature suffer or flourish under a society dominated by bourgeois taste? How do we find meaning in a world of fluctuating values and transactional relations? How are age-old philosophical questions about freedom, love, death, inequality, language, and art, get reflected in the literature of this age? In addition to reading classic texts about the nature and functioning of capitalism itself by Adam Smith and Karl Marx, we will read mainly novels and some non-fiction by authors such as Sally Rooney, Bret Easton Ellis, George Orwell, Guy de Maupassant, Raven Leilani, Don DeLillo, Martin Amis, Joan Didion, and Marcel Proust.

English 185e. The Essay: History and Practice M

James Wood

Matthew Arnold famously said that poetry is, at bottom, “a criticism of life.” But if any literary form is truly a criticism of life, it is the essay. And yet despite the fact that all students write essays, most students rarely study them; bookshops and libraries categorize such work only negatively, by what it is not: “non-fiction.” At the same time, the essay is at present one of the most productive and fertile of literary forms. It is practiced as memoir, reportage, diary, criticism, and sometimes all four at once. Novels are becoming more essayistic, while essays are borrowing conventions and prestige from fiction. This class will disinter the essay from its comparative academic neglect, and examine the vibrant contemporary borderland between the reported and the invented. We will study the history of the essay, from Montaigne to the present day. Rather than study that history purely chronologically, each class will group several essays from different decades and centuries around common themes: death, detail, sentiment, race, gender, photography, the flaneur, witness, and so on. In addition to writing about essays – writing critical essays about essays – students will also be encouraged to write their own creative essays: we will study the history of the form, and practice the form itself. Essayists likely to be studied: Montaigne, De Quincey, Woolf, Benjamin, Orwell, Primo Levi, Barthes, Baldwin, Sontag, Didion, Leslie Jamison, Hanif Abdurraqib, Helen Garner, Cathy Park Hong.

English 185rj. Race and Jurisprudence S

Louis Menand

How has the American judicial system dealt with racial discrimination, racial segregation, racial exclusion, and systemic or institutional racism? Has the design of the American legal system made it easier or harder to remedy

cases of racial inequality and injustice? What should we expect from the courts in the future?

We study cases involving Americans of African and of Asian ancestry, beginning with Dred Scott and ending with the Harvard College admissions case. The primary readings are legal documents: the Constitution, judicial opinions, and the statutes judges interpret. We'll analyze the opinions in order to understand the jurisprudential logic that led to their outcomes. We will see, by doing this, how courts are constrained by the system that was designed by the Constitution's framers and by the traditions of the common law. We will also consider the historical context in which these cases were decided, but the main focus of the course is on Supreme Court opinions. Two papers, a midterm, and a final exam.

English 197ls. Introduction to Indigenous Literary Studies: Poetry, Prose, and Politics WLO

Christopher Pexa

Introduction to Indigenous Literary Studies: Poetry, Prose, and Politics" introduces students to critical conversations in English, Indigenous Studies, and related disciplines by exploring key themes of sovereignty, land, kinship, and futurity.

GenEd- Spring

GenEd 1050. Act Natural

David Levine

"To thine own self be true," runs the famous line in Hamlet. But which self? And why? And who's judging? Does this injunction to be authentic even make sense today, when profiles proliferate online and surveillance is ubiquitous? Acting—the art of creating and reproducing selves—can help us navigate these questions. Just as every century's approach to acting tells us something about their idea of personhood, so too can our own era's quandaries around empathy, personae, identity, work, art-making and politics be explored through our approach to acting. This course will examine the construction of private and public selves across eras and disciplines, through a combination of lectures, screenings, readings, and talks. Sections and examinations will be practice-based, focused on a single basic task: students will be asked to turn into each other over the course of the term. THIS COURSE IS OPEN TO ACTORS AND NON-ACTORS.

This is a lecture course with a strong practical component. Full course meets Wednesdays from 12pm-2:45pm for lecture and acting workshops, with additional mandatory discussion sections (1h/week) to be scheduled on Thursdays/Fridays. No previous experience of acting or English classes is required, although a willingness to immerse yourself in both reading and performance is expected.

(TBD: The assignment process for this course may be handled outside of the English Department process and therefore may not appear in CATS.)

GenEd 1133. Is the U.S. Civil War Still Being Fought? M

John Stauffer

Most of us were taught that the Civil War (which most Northerners called a "Rebellion") was fought on battlefields chiefly in the American South between the years of 1861-1865. In this narrative, the North won and the South lost. But what if the issues were never resolved? What if the war never ended? This course analyzes the ways in which the United States is still fighting the Civil War, arguably THE defining event in U.S. culture. In each class, we connect current events to readings and themes from the past, highlighting how and why the war is still being fought. From Nat Turner's slave rebellion in 1831 to the riot (or battle) in Charlottesville and the seditious conspiracy to overthrow the 2020 presidential election results, we explore the ways in which the South has won the war, even though the Rebellion was destroyed and the Constitution radically altered. We explore the different kinds of war—ideological, political, cultural, military, and para-military—that placed the unfreedom of blacks—as slaves, serfs, and prisoners—at the center of larger conflicts over federal versus state and local rule;

welfare; globalization; and "free trade." We analyze the Civil War in literature, art, politics, photography, prints, film, music, poetry, speeches, and history, while also discovering how these cultural forms worked to shape our memory of the event itself. We will on occasion have guest speakers. By the end of the course, we will be able to understand how and why contemporary U.S. debates are rooted in this defining narrative, and we will better understand the dilemmas the nation faces today.

GenEd 1183. The English Language Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow L

Daniel Donoghue

How does the English language shape our world? And how does the world shape English? Our "world" includes our most intimate thoughts and feelings, but it also can expand into an ever-widening social network; either way, whether personal or global, the English language has a profound and reciprocal relation with its speakers. This is not a traditional grammar course, warning against dangling participles. Instead, you will discover that notions of correct grammar have a surprising and whimsical history. But our inquiry goes much further: Why is English spelling so weird? Is the language morphing online? Will innovations in HipHop and Spanglish become standard? How did an obscure medieval dialect expand to become a world language? What did Shakespeare sound like? How do we know? Is the spread of world Englishes endangering its coherence as a language? Is that a problem? The course is guaranteed to unsettle some common assumptions, and the English already familiar to you will become more quirky and fascinating. Besides thrilling your inner word geek, the knowledge you gain will sharpen your writing skills and make you a more perceptive reader. You will also gain greater confidence about the place of *your* English in *your* world.

GenEd 1186. The Age of Anxiety: Histories, Theories, Remedies L

Beth Blum

The poet WH Auden described the 1940s as "the age of anxiety," but he could have been describing our own stress-ridden times. With attention to the concept's cultural history and evolution, this course focuses on the cultural life of anxiety—the most common class of contemporary mental health condition--today. We'll investigate anxiety's causes and treatments, which actually tend to overlap, including: the internet, psychopharmacology, climate awareness, therapeutic culture, and self-help. We will ask: What role has the stereotype of the anguished artist played in romanticizing mental suffering as a precondition of genius? How does the stigma of anxiety figure differently for disenfranchised and minority authors? The course combines practical and theoretical perspectives to examine the relation between anxiety and creativity and to engage with various aesthetic responses—from comedy to literature and film—to the troubles of being that anxiety designates.

Other Courses Taught by the English Department- Spring

HUMAN 10b. A Humanities Colloquium: From Joyce to Homer L

Luke Menand, David Elmer, Tara Menon, Beth Blum, Jay Harris, and Sean Kelly

2,500 years of essential works, taught by six professors. Humanities 10b will likely include works by Homer, Sappho, Sophocles, Virgil, Dante, Boccaccio, Montaigne, Austen, Du Bois and Joyce, along with the Book of Genesis. One 75-minute lecture plus a 75-minute discussion seminar led by the professors every week. Students will receive instruction in critical writing one hour a week, in writing labs and individual conferences. Students also have opportunities to participate in a range of cultural experiences, ranging from plays and musical events to museum and library collections.

(Note: The hiring process for HUM 10b will be handled by Arts & Humanities. Interested applicants are asked to sign up in CATS.)