

# COMPARATIVE LITERATURE COURSES

## Fall 2022

### UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

COLT  
0510R

#### War and the Arts: Guantanamo, Twenty Years On

E. Whitfield  
MW 8:30-9:50

In January 2002, the first captives in the so-called "War on Terror" were flown to the Naval Station Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, for indefinite periods of detention that for some lasted over twenty years. More than a century earlier, in 1901, the Platt Amendment was signed into U.S. law, enabling the lease "in perpetuity" that gives the U.S. military exclusive use of the forty-square mile naval station, despite the Cuban government's objection. Participants in this seminar will assess the legal and political arguments that have structured "Guantánamo" as an exceptional space, of grave concern to human rights advocates and scholars. At the same time, however, and drawing on poetry, art and memoirs by detainees and military personnel at the base and by Cubans living near its border, we will consider an alternative Guantánamo of sympathies, solidarities and shared space.

COLT  
0812O

#### Reading Art in Literature

D. Levy  
TTh 9:00-10:20

This course will explore the role of art objects in poetry and prose from East Asia and the west. How are objects represented in literature, and how does the language of art inform texts? Authors from antiquity to today have described works of art in their texts to reveal essential aspects of their cultures: heroic destiny, fatal struggles between life and art, and glimpses of the sublime. Readings include ekphrasis from antiquity, poetry from East Asia and the west, and fiction by Wilde, Balzac, Hawthorne, selections from The Tale of Genji and The Dream of the Red Chamber, and others.

COLT  
0812S

#### Non-human Rights and Wrongs

D. Mullins  
MWF 10:00-10:50

"Even the creature has rights," says Campion in HBO's Raised by Wolves. Our course will ask after the past, present and future of rights, including interpreting literature, television and film to imagine who (or what) might one day possess them. Only persons

have rights, but the essence of personhood flickers and blurs like a phantom, somehow common to corporations, human beings, boats and cities, among other "things." Like ghost-hunting lawyers we'll trace the word "person" from the Ancient Greek theater mask (prosopon) through Christianity's thought of the Trinity (God as "one substance, three persons") up to contemporary legal cases regarding animal rights such as the 'monkey selfie' case. Key authors include: Kafka, Cixous, Plato, Shelley, Chevillard, Zizioulas. Media screened includes: Blade Runner 2049, Solaris, Caprica. Students from all disciplines are welcome.

**COLT  
0812T**

**Hideous Monsters of the Mind: Monster Literature,  
Monster Theory, and American Identities**

**N. Kahn**  
**MWF 2:00-2:50**

What do ancient beliefs about headless men and giants have in common with rap music and free love? Strangely enough, a single word has been used to refer to each: "monster." In this course, we examine how monsters from European literary and intellectual traditions are translated into American culture. We begin with a survey of pre-modern traditions: the "Monstrous Races" described by Pliny the Elder, the prodigies of Aristotle and Cicero, and the biological/medical tradition that was extrapolated from a hybrid reading of Hippocrates and Macrobius. After following these traditions in Medieval and Early Modern writing, the bulk of the course reads from key moments in American history where resurrected monsters policed (and infiltrated) the boundaries of emerging American notions of identity and difference: from white supremacist pseudoscience to black abolitionism, and from "freak shows" to postmodern performance art.

**COLT  
0812U**

**Beyond Yellowness: Representations of Race and  
Ethnicity in East Asia**

**B. Yang**  
**MWF 12:00-12:50**

What do race and ethnicity mean to regions outside Europe and North America? How did the perceptions of different physiological and cultural features define premodern and modern East Asia? Since when and for what reasons did some people, whom Marco Polo considered "white," become racially Asian or yellow in literary and cinematic representations? This survey course will demystify East Asian homogeneity and discuss how various literary, cinematic, and critical works from antiquity up to the modern era present notions and issues related to race and ethnicity in the region now known as East Asia. The reading material will include excerpts from The Zuo Tradition, The Travels of Marco Polo, Bai Juyi, Min Jin Lee, Orientalism, and others. The course will be taught in English, and no prior knowledge of Asian cultures or languages is required.

**COLT  
1210**

**Introduction to the Theory of Literature**

**S. Bernstein; J. Niedermaier**  
**MWF 11:00-11:50**

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.

**COLT  
1310J**

**The Arab Renaissance**

**E. Muhanna**  
**W 3:00-5:30**

Explores the 19th-century Arabic cultural renaissance known as the Nahda. Topics include intellectual encounters between Europe and the Middle East, the birth of the Arabic novel, and the rise of Islamic modernism. We will read selections from the works of Shidyaq, Tahtawi, Zaydan, Shawqi, Bustani, and others, alongside historiographical and theoretical texts. At least three years of Arabic required.

**COLT  
1410S**

**Classical Tragedy**

**M. Ierulli**  
**MWF 1:00-1:50**

This course will read the great Greek tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and some Senecan tragedy. We will then read Renaissance and later tragedies that use the classical world as a setting, such as *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar*, and tragedies that rewrite classical themes, including O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

**COLT  
1420J**

**The Nineteenth-Century Novel**

**M. Redfield**  
**TTh 1:00-2:20**

This seminar examines how British and French nineteenth-century novels thematize history, memory, representation and desire. Authors to be studied include Austen, Stendhal, Balzac, Dickens, Flaubert, Eliot.

**COLT  
1421V**

**Modernisms North and South: James Joyce and Roberto Bolaño**

**M. Clayton**  
**MWF 12:00-12:50**

James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Roberto Bolaño's *The Savage Detectives* (1998) are weighty, influential, often intimidating works that bookend literary production in the twentieth century. Both are also moving narratives about humans with different sorts of artistic, emotional, and bodily ambitions, grappling with new forms of subjective and collective life in modernity, trying to work out their own place within social, political and artistic systems. Join Stephen Dedalus, Leopold and Molly Bloom, Ulises Lima and a cast of minor characters as they make their way through the hearts, minds, memories, and nervous systems of a range of modern metropolises.

**COLT  
1710C**

**Literary Translation Workshop**

**E. Whitfield**  
**W 1:00-3:30**

The primary focus of this course is the practice of literary translation as an art. Using the workshop format, each student will complete a project by the end of the semester. Examples and theoretical texts will illuminate the historical,

ethical, cultural, political, and aesthetic values that underlie every translation, keeping an eye towards opening up the field beyond inherited practices to consider the contemporary implications of our choices, intentions, and purposes in translation. Open to all levels. Heritage speakers are welcome, collaboration is permitted, and an open-spirited approach to this developing and fascinating practice is strongly recommended.

**COLT  
1815T**

**Narratives of Disability in Greek and Latin  
Literature in Greek and Latin Literature**

**H. Silverblank**  
**T 4:00-6:30**

What is disability? What makes someone disabled, or enabled, now and in the past? How was disability conceptualized in ancient Greek and Latin sources? How do ancient Mediterranean narratives of disability provide insights into disability histories, presents, and futures? What is the relationship between disability, society, politics, power, and oppression? In this course, we take an interdisciplinary approach to the question of how Greek and Latin writing represented complex ideas about embodiment, society, and community. Our course material traverses the intersections between critical disability studies, disability justice movements, ancient literature, and classical studies. We will work together to adapt the course experience to meet the access needs, interests, and unique wisdom of the particular community of students enrolled in the class.

**GRADUATE COURSES**

**COLT  
2520F**

**Theories of the Lyric**

**S. Bernstein**  
**F 3:00-5:30**

Through readings of recent critical discussions of the lyric genre, we will explore more general methodological problems of literary theory. Questions to be raised include: the role of form, structure and tropes in analyzing poetry; problems of subjectivity and voice; the relation between poetry, history and politics; the function of reading; and the problematic "objectivity" of criticism. Readings from Jakobson, Benveniste, Jauss, Benjamin, Johnson, De Man, Lacoue-Labarthe, Agamben, Badiou and Derrida. Focus on poets Hölderlin, Baudelaire and Celan.

**COLT  
2822J**

**Living On: Theories of Survival**

**G. Richter**  
**M 3:00-5:30**

Sometimes one unexpectedly lives on. Lyotard once wrote that "survival implies that an entity that is or should be dead is still alive." The idea of survival emerges

with special force after traumatic events: global pandemics, genocidal wars, the death of a loved one, personal crises. Yet what if survival were not something added on to life but rather constituted it? Our seminar will test the hypothesis that surviving is the most intense and powerful form of living possible. Readings will be drawn from literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and critical theory, including Kafka, Benjamin, Freud, Canetti, Derrida, Lyotard, and Agamben. We will also examine Lear's philosophical case study of radical vulnerability as it emerges in the aftermath of the Crow Nation facing eradication of their way of life, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*. Diverse graduate fields welcome.

COLT  
2822K

### Virgil's Aeneid

J. Reed  
W 3:00-5:30

We will read through the whole of Virgil's Aeneid in the original Latin, raising and discussing interpretive questions that can include—but are not limited to—the poem's political dimension and its representation of Roman identity, its relation to Augustan culture and the wider cultures of the ancient Mediterranean, its Greek and Roman models and how it changes them, its narrative and narratological style, and its reception in later cultures, including the Aeneid's influence on European and other imperial discourses and the 20th- and 21st-century contestation of its ideological thrust.