

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE COURSES

Spring 2025

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

COLT
0510K

The 1001 Nights

E. Muhanna

MWF 1:00-1:50

Explores the origins, performance, reception, adaptation, and translation of the *1001 Nights*, one of the most beloved and influential story collections in world literature. We will spend the semester in the company of genies, princes, liars, slaves, mass murderers, orientalists, and Walt Disney, and will consider the *Nights* in the context of its various literary, artistic, and cinematic afterlives.

COLT
0611D
NEW

Third World Literature and Thought 1950-1970

M. Pabon

MWF 2:00-2:50

This course offers an introduction to Third-Worldist thought and literature, focusing on the shifting relationship between the Soviet Union, anticolonial nationalist movements, and leftist internationalist currents during the years 1955-1973. How did literature contribute to the formation of the Third-Worldist project, and how did the Third-Worldist project inform the writing of literature? We will approach these questions by examining the role of conferences, print periodicals, and supranational organizations like the Afro-Asian Writers Association in shaping new understandings of the politicized function of literature. At the same time, we will pay close attention to the aesthetic categories and literary forms that mediated a powerful sense of solidarity between far-flung revolutionary actors.

COLT
0710Q

The Odyssey in Literature and Film

V. Calotychos

MWF 12:00-12:50

Examines reincarnations of the Homeric figure of Odysseus in contemporary literatures and film as modernist figure, postcolonial subject, and existentialist hero. How is the Odysseus myth altered from culture to culture (Greece, Rome, Ireland, the Caribbean)? How is it re-visioned in different historical periods and from different perspectives (feminist, marxist, postcolonial) and genres (epic, poetry, the novel, film, drama)? Major authors include Homer, Virgil, Tennyson, Joyce, Kazantzakis, Cavafy, Seferis, Atwood,

Walcott; criticism by Bakhtin, Edith Hall, Adorno, Derrida. Films include works by Angelopoulos, the Coen brothers; Singer's *Usual Suspects*, Mendes' James Bond offering *Skyfall*, and Kubrick's *2001: Space Odyssey*.

COLT
0710X

Fan Fiction

D. Levy
TTh 1:00-2:20

What is imitation (sincerest form of flattery) to literary canons? Vergil's *Aeneid* appropriated Aeneas from the *Iliad*, Joyce's *Ulysses* modernized the *Odyssey*. Admiration as a source of inspiration is a major force in the evolution of fiction. "Fan Fiction" explores intriguing characters in greater detail and new contexts, allowing them new lives in contemporary imagination. This course presents pairs or sets of works that are explicitly linked by the intimate relation of imitation. Classic readings will be paired with their mostly contemporary updates, including *Pride and Prejudice/Murder at Pemberley*, *Heart of Darkness/State of Wonder*, and *Monkey/Tripmaster Monkey*.

COLT
0811I

Classical Mythology and the Western Tradition

M. Ierulli
MWF 8:00-8:50

Reads classical texts that expound the fundamental mythological stories and elements of the Western tradition, then will read selected texts from the Renaissance through the twentieth century that utilize these myths. Ancient texts covered will include the Epic of Gilgamesh, Hesiod's *Theogony and Works and Days*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Later texts will include Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece*, Milton's "Lycidas," and lyric poetry by Keats, Shelley, Browning, Swinburne, Rilke, Auden, and Yeats. This course is suitable for anyone wishing to understand the classical background to Western literature.

COLT
0812V
NEW

Troy: City, Legend, Literature

M. Ierulli
MWF 10:00-10:50

This course will examine the legend of Troy: the struggle for and loss of the great city, and the inevitability of the lives destroyed of both besieged and besiegers, Trojans and Greeks. The city and its destruction are the earliest surviving Western literature, and are a continuous presence through the centuries. Some themes to be examined will include self and other in the narrative, the human and the divine, and fate and free will. We will also analyze how different cultures and times both adopt and adapt the characters for nation-building.

COLT
0812X
NEW

Culture, Climate, and the Anthropocene's Others

C. Climer
TTh 10:30-11:50

Using the theoretical framework of the Anthropocene, this course considers a wide array of aesthetic codes—from Ovidian elegy and Shakespearean tragicomedy to zombie

narrative and postcolonial ghost stories—to investigate how distinct cultural forms contest, recast, and, at times, reinstate the (often-hierarchical) boundaries between human and nature, human and animal, and human and human. Through a sampling of poetry, narrative, and film, we will explore the uneven terrain of the Anthropocene, in which the feedback loops of race, class, gender, and other forms of social difference, along with geography itself, continue to separate humans, even as evidence mounts for the inseparability of humans from the rest of the planet, including its nonhuman inhabitants. Course materials will be provided in English and include works from Ishirō Honda, Octavia Butler, Colson Whitehead, Tommy Orange, J.M. Coetzee, and Bong Joon-Ho, among others.

COLT
1210

Introduction to the Theory of Literature

S. Bernstein; M. Pabon
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 Shidyaaq, Tahtawi, Zaydan, Shawqi, Bustani, and others, alongside historiographical and theoretical texts. **At least three years of Arabic required.**

COLT
1310V
NEW

Potential History of the Jewish Muslim World

A. Azoulay
W 3:00-5:30

We will study the Jewish Muslim world and the role of different imperial and colonial technologies (e.g., granting and denying citizenship, art, the museum, the archive) which brought it to its end, thus normalizing the dissociation of Jews from Muslims. We will ask what remains when a world is being destroyed, what continues to be transmitted and what can still be reclaimed. Students will be invited to experiment with different modes of accounting for imperial destruction, countering the amnesia it produces, and reclaiming corporeal memory through objects and craft making. The Maghreb will be our point of departure, but students are invited to explore other imperial geographies in their presentations. The seminar draws on Azoulay's new book *The Jewelers of the Ummah* and engages with texts by Franz Fanon, Hannah Arendt, Sylvia Wynter etc.

**COLT
1310W
NEW**

Interpretating Literature on Stone, Paper, and Film

**N. Kanchan
T 4:00-6:30**

This course examines the interpretation of globally renowned epics and classic literary works in South Asia and in its diaspora. Beginning with the sculptural, performed (both in South and Southeast Asia), written, and Bollywood imaginings of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, we move into painted and cinematic re-tellings of West Asian classics such as Layla Majnun and tales from the Arabian Nights. Rounding up this course would be Bollywood interpretations of the Shakespearean plays Comedy of Errors, Romeo and Juliet, and Macbeth along with Kamila Shamsie's novel Home Fire, a re-imagining of Sophocles' play Antigone in the contemporary British Muslim community in the United Kingdom.

**COLT
1440U**

The Listener (Literature, Theory, Film)

**P. Szendy
Th 4:00-6:30**

Listening is not only the supposedly peaceful, welcoming activity that verges on mere receptive passivity. Listening or not listening also has to do with the exercise of power and this is the reason why we have a responsibility as listeners. In order to explore what could be described as the politics of listening, we will follow multiple paths that will lead us from the strategies of listening in concert venues to the medical practice of auscultation and the generalization of surveillance techniques. Our seminar will interweave readings in literature or theory (Kafka, Nietzsche, Calvino, Foucault, Chekhov, Freud, Deleuze. . .) and screenings of selected filmic scenes.

**COLT
1441A**

The Serial Imagination: Literature and Journalism in the 19th Century

**K. McLaughlin
TTh 10:30-11:50**

An introduction to the emergence of mass culture in nineteenth-century England and America with particular attention to fiction and nonfiction writing in the periodical press during this period. We will examine some of the key historical developments that led to the rise of mass-market journalism and how it shaped public opinion on issues such as urban poverty, modernity, and slavery. We will also consider aesthetic questions raised by serialization and the relationship between fiction and nonfiction in journalism. Authors include Dickens, Poe, Melville, Stowe, Stevenson, and West. Visits to the Hay Library to consult original materials.

**COLT
1810G**

Fiction and History

**L. Valente
M 3:00-5:30**

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 19. Instructor permission required.**

**COLT
1813O**

Adventures of the Avant-Garde

M. Clayton
TTh 2:30-3:50

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.

**COLT
1815F**

Memory, Commemoration, Testimony

S. Bernstein
MWF 1:00-1:50

In this course we will study problems of remembering and forgetting in a variety of texts including poetry, philosophy, psychoanalysis, memoirs, public monuments, memory studies and trauma theory. We will explore the roles of language and representation in dealing with the past, the temporality of the self, the operation of the unconscious, the memorial and the monument. We will also look at the politics of memory in relation to the cultural traumas of slavery, the Holocaust, Viet Nam and 9/11. Readings from Rousseau, Hegel, Wordsworth, Proust, Derrida and de Man; Freud, Caruth, Saidiya Hartman, Segalen; Arendt and Reznikoff.

GRADUATE COURSES

**COLT
2720C**

Literary Translation

D. Levy
W 3:00-5:30

Study and practice of translation as art and a potent form of literary criticism. Translation is an act of interpretation, which informs the language of the translator and the text as a whole: context, intent, and language. Discussion will include the impact of cultural difference, tone and time on translation, and the role of analytical as well as intuitive understanding of the original in the translator's endeavor.

**COLT
2822A**

War

E. Whitfield; K. Haynes
T 1:00-3:30

Study and practice of translation as art and a potent form of literary criticism. Translation is an act of interpretation, which informs the language of the translator and the text as a whole: context, intent, and language. Discussion will include the impact of cultural

difference, tone and time on translation, and the role of analytical as well as intuitive understanding of the original in the translator's endeavor.

**COLT
2822R**

Metals, Mining, and Jewelry: Making the World Anew

A. Azoulay
M 12:00-2:30

In this seminar we describe and analyze how the colonial order mined the world, focusing mainly on North Africa and South America. Metals are conveyors of powers, and are seated in pre-colonial mythologies, cosmologies, and ways of being in the world. In this collaborative theory/praxis course we ask with others (Walter Rodney, Eduardo Galeano, or Guamán Poma) how these can be reclaimed through the exercise of the gestures and techniques of below-the-ground materials. What would it mean practically to overturn the histories of plunder, theft, and evacuation and imagine beyond them? A central aspect of the course is to make and visit jewelry as immanent to social and spiritual fabrics. We acknowledge the presences and excesses of the materials we work with and engage these objects beyond the colonial and monocultural imagination.

**COLT
2830R**

The Darkness of the Lived Moment

G. Richter
M 3:00-5:30

What is a moment? What will a moment have meant? Is a moment completely over as long as I can still conjure it in memory? The more one thinks about the moment, the more inscrutable it appears. Seemingly the most basic of experiences, the moment remains nevertheless shrouded in darkness, as already Plato, in the late dialogue *Parmenides*, worried. Our seminar will examine the "darkness of the lived moment," as Ernst Bloch, the great political philosopher of hope, named it. What appears in the immediacy of our experience, is actually far removed from our understanding, but it does open onto an unforeclosed futurity. We will contemplate this darkness of the lived moment in a constellation of works drawn from literature and the arts; and in relation to theoretical texts by such thinkers as Bloch, Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, and Blanchot.