

**Brown University Department of Comparative Literature
Spring 2022 Course Offerings**

(Please see Courses@Brown for any updates of courses)

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

COLT 0710B: Very Short Poetry: From Tanka to Twitter

Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays 10:00-10:50

Professor Jeffrey Niedermaier

Course Description

Though implicit and explicit claims have been made for the novel as a universal form, the novel does not match the very short poem in terms of ubiquity across history and cultures. Reading a set of very short poems each week, we will move across ages and continents, from Greek and Latin epigrams to the Japanese “haiku” and its precursors, from the early modern sonnet to experiments with poetic constraints in the computer age. Primary sources will be juxtaposed to touchstones of theory, neat ideas, and provocative essays. All readings available in translation as well as in the original.

COLT 0710C: Introduction to Scandinavian Literature

Tuesdays/Thursdays 10:30-11:50

Professor Arnold Weinstein

Course Description

An introduction to major works of Scandinavian writers, painters and filmmakers over the past 150 years. Figures include Kierkegaard, Ibsen, Strindberg, Munch, Hamsun, Josephson, Södergran, Lagerkvist, Vesaas, Cronqvist, Bergman, August and Vinterberg, as well as children's books by Astrid Lindgren and Tove Jansson.

COLT 0710X: Fan Fiction

Tuesdays/Thursdays 9:00-10:20

Professor Dore J. Levy

Course Description

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 0710Z: Comedy from Athens to Hollywood

Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays 11:00-11:50

Professor Molly Ierulli

Course Description

This course will look at ancient comedy from its birth in Athens and Rome through Renaissance incarnations to the 19th and 20th century, including novels and films as well as plays. We will survey the main topics of comedy, from Aristophanes' focus on the absurdities of daily and political life in Athens to the Roman codification of a genre of everyman in love and in trouble. We will also examine how later writers and filmmakers use both traditions to give comedy its subversive power of social commentary.

COLT 1310E: A Classical Islamic Education: Readings in Arabic Literature

Wednesdays 3:00-5:30

Professor Elias Muhanna

Course Description

This seminar introduces students to the essential texts of a classical education in the Arabic-Islamic world. What works of poetry, literary criticism, belletristic prose, biography, geography, history, and other disciplines were considered staples of a well-rounded education in medieval Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, or Fez? Emphasis will be placed on close and patient readings of primary sources. At least three years of Arabic required.

COLT 1310G: Silk Road Fictions

Mondays 3:00-5:30

Professor Tamara Chin

Course Description

This course introduces students to East-West comparative work. We will explore the history and politics of different methods of literary comparison, and diverse definitions of East and West. In particular we will ask how assumptions of cultural contact or isolation shape the way we bring together, say, a Chinese and a Greek poem, or interpret a documentary film about modern Indonesia. Themes will include: the “Silk Road,” as a historical framework of cultural exchange across Afro-Eurasia; the “Axial Age” of independent civilizations; Orientalism; Hellenism; Pan-Asianism. The filmmaker of *The Act of Killing* will visit.

COLT 1310Q: England and the Renaissance (ENGL 1311N)

Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays 10:00-10:50

Professor Stephen Merriam Foley

Interested students must register for ENGL 1311N

Course Description

New approaches to Latin and Greek letters—the studia humanitatis—that flourished in 14th century Italy rapidly emerged in England in the early 16th century. What does it mean to claim that England had a renaissance? Texts include More's *Utopia* and *Richard III*, Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, Ascham's *Scholemaster*, poetry from Wyatt and Surrey through Jonson, Donne, Herrick, and Milton.

COLT 1420F: Fantastic and Existentialist Literatures of Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil

Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:30-3:50

Professor Stephanie Merrim

Course Description

Jorge Luis Borges proclaimed that South American writers can "wield all themes" without superstition, with irreverence. This course examines the ways in which 20th century writers from Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil appropriated European fantastic and existentialist fictions, taking them in new directions. Readings, in English or original languages, include Borges, Cortázar, Onetti, Lispector. Prerequisite: previous college literature course(s).

COLT 1422M: Reading the Short Story

Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays 1:00-1:50

Professor Vangelis Calotychos

Course Description

This course invites students to explore the pleasurable challenges of close reading within the context of a compressed form, the modern short story. Select works from the nineteenth century onwards—many of them masterpieces, some hidden gems from around the world—will help us question what we think they mean and how we know this. We will develop practices and techniques for articulating such quandaries even as we observe how sociocultural themes, theories of interpretation, and literary movements intertwine with expressions of the self and the politics of identity.

No prerequisites. Open to all undergraduates.

COLT 1610A: The Sublime (ENGL 1901N)

Mondays 3:00-5:30

Professor Marc Redfield

Interested students must register for ENGL 1901N

Course Description

This course tracks the notion of the sublime from its classical sources through eighteenth-century British and German poetry and philosophy, to twentieth-century theory, with some consideration of the visual arts and other media. Authors to be studied include Longinus, Milton, Burke, Wordsworth, Kant, Hegel, Derrida, Lyotard, Jameson, among others. Enrollment limited to 20 juniors and seniors.

COLT 1610Y: Of Friends and Enemies

Tuesdays/Thursdays 1:00-2:20

Professor Gerhard Richter

Course Description

"And so will believe in our stellar friendship, though we should have to be terrestrial enemies to one another," Nietzsche says. How are friendship and enmity construed in the Western traditions? What are the philosophical and ethical implications of dividing one's personal, cultural, and political world into friends and enemies? What is the elusive relation between friendship and community, hospitality, war, and mourning? We will scrutinize the history and theory of friendship and enmity through close readings of writers such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Montaigne, Kant, Emerson, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Schmitt, Blanchot, Nancy, and Derrida. Students from diverse fields welcome.

COLT 1813N: Early Modern Women's Writing

Fridays 3:00-5:30

Professor Stephanie Merrim

Course Description

Interested in women writers, feminism? If so, it's vital to understand their early modern origins. This course explores the rich feminist tradition enacted in the often edgy texts of women writing on the cusp of modernity. We study writers from England, France, Latin America, North America, and Spain, focusing on self-fashioning, gender and sexuality, love and marriage, imagined worlds, religion, eccentricity, and writing and fame. Authors include Anne Bradstreet, Margaret Lucas Cavendish, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Mme de Lafayette, María de Zayas. Enrollment limited to 20. Texts and class in English.

COLT 1813Q: Literature and Judgement

Thursdays 4:00-6:30

Professor Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg

Course Description

There exists a close but complex relationship between the acts of making literature and making judgments. This course will explore some of these relationships and ask, for instance: how does judgment weigh upon the literary act? how do literary considerations bear on our making judgments? what criteria are called forth in both of these moments? Texts treated will be literary, critical-analytical, legal, and cinematic, and include such authors as Arendt, Benjamin, Derrida, Freud, Henry James, Kafka, Kant, Primo Levi, Nietzsche, Tolstoy and Verga.

COLT 1814U: Politics of Reading

Tuesdays/Thursdays 6:40-8:00

Professor Peter Szendy

Course Description

What do we do when we read? And do we even do something, or, as Blanchot suggests, do we rather let be? While being true to Michel de Certeau's plea for a "politics of reading" and an "autonomy of the reader", we will question its binary logic (active vs. passive): 1. by looking closely at the (de)construction of a "sovereign reader" in Hobbes' Leviathan; 2. by analyzing the reading imperative—"Read!"—as it is staged in Plato's and, above all, in Sade's erotics; 3. by taking seriously Walter Benjamin's paradoxical intuition that one should "read what was never written".

COLT 2720D: Translation: Theory and Practice

Mondays 3:00-5:30

Professor Dore J. Levy

Course Description

This seminar will address the theory and practice of translation, and their place in the Humanities. Essays by translators, authors and scholars will be drawn from a range of languages and contexts, as will literary and historical texts. Each participating student will work on a substantial translation project over the course of the semester. The seminar is open only to graduate students; a strong knowledge of at least one language other than English is required.

COLT 2820A: New Directions for Comparative Literature

Wednesdays 12:00-2:30

Professors Esther Whitfield and Kenneth Haynes

Course Description

In this seminar we will read a number of recent critical and theoretical works (not limited to the humanities) which may fruitfully suggest new directions for literary studies. Our readings may include topics such as the new history of capitalism, sociological approaches to the modern choice architecture of emotions, recent philosophy of science, border studies and migration, decolonization, ecocriticism and public humanities. Participants will be expected to contribute to the syllabus according to their own research interests.

COLT 2821X: Approaches to the Han Dynasty

Tuesdays 10:00-12:30

Professor Tamara Chin

Course Description

This graduate seminar aims to give students a grounding in both traditional and recent approaches to Han dynasty literature, culture, and history. We will look at both excavated and received traditions from a range of disciplinary perspectives (philology, archaeology, history, comparative literature). Reading knowledge of classical and modern Chinese required.