

**Brown University Department of Comparative Literature
Fall 2021 Course Offerings**

PLEASE SEE COURSES@BROWN FOR UPDATES/CHANGES

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

COLT 0510K: The 1001 Nights

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

Professor Elias Muhanna

Course Description

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, orientalist, and Walt Disney, and will consider the *Nights* in the context of its various literary, artistic, and cinematic afterlives.

COLT 0610D: Rites of Passage

Tuesdays/ Thursdays 1:00-2:20

Professor Arnold Weinstein

Course Description

Examines a seemingly universal theme-coming of age-by focusing on texts from disparate periods and cultures. Proposes that notions of "growing up" are profoundly inflected by issues of class, gender and race, and that the literary representation of these matters changes drastically over time. Texts from the Middle Ages to the present; authors drawn from Chrétien de Troyes, Quevedo, Prévost, Balzac, Brontë, Twain, Faulkner, Vesaas, Rhys, Satrapi and Foer. Enrollment limited to 19 first year students.

COLT 0610Q: Before Wikipedia

Tuesdays / Thursdays 10:30-11:50

Professor Elias Muhanna

Course Description

How did humans organize knowledge before Wikipedia? This course explores the fascinating history of encyclopedic texts, archives, and databases in various cultural contexts. We consider issues of book history, the classification of knowledge, and the obsession to collect, compile, and document everything knowable and unknowable in both real and fictional encyclopedias.

COLT 0710N: A Comparative Introduction to the Literatures of the Americas

Tuesdays / Thursdays 2:30-3:50

Professor Luiz Valente

Course Description

Considers the common links between the diverse literatures of North and South America, approached in relation to one another rather than to Eurocentric paradigms. Focuses on the treatment of such topics as the representation of the past and the self, the role of memory and the imagination, the nature of literary language, and the questions of alienation, colonialism and post-colonialism, communication versus silence, and fiction versus history in the works of selected writers from North and Latin America, including García-Márquez, Faulkner, Cortázar, Allende, Lispector, Morrison, Doctorow, Rosa, and DeLillo. Enrollment limited to 15 first year students.

COLT 0710Q: The Odyssey in Literature and Film

Mondays/ Wednesdays/ Fridays 12:00-12:50

Professor Vangelis Calotychos

Course Description

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 0711Q: Writing Love in Korean Literature

Wednesdays 3:00-5:30

Professor Samuel Perry

Course Description

This course looks at literature to explore how intimacy, passion and commitment have been socially sanctioned and redefined in Korea. From Yi Dynasty tales to modern-day webtoons, we will explore the roles different genres have played in the generation of forms of human affect that are themselves intimately tied to Korea's tumultuous history. What does it mean to love, and to write about love, under the conditions of Neo-Confucianism, empire, war, national division, authoritarianism, and the neoliberal marketplace? No prerequisites.

COLT 0810H: How Not to Be a Hero

Tuesdays / Thursdays 9:00-10:20

Professor Kenneth Haynes

Course Description

One of Shakespeare's greatest plays is about a character who was an irredeemable failure: Coriolanus. What can failure teach us? What kind of strength does a language of failure possess? We will read the ancient sources themselves (Livy, Lucian, Plutarch), and modern adaptations of these stories (Bertolt Brecht, T. S. Eliot, Günter Grass). We will also look at other "exemplary" failures who inspired Shakespeare and later literature, including Lucullus and Timon.

COLT 0810L: The Pursuit of Happiness

Mondays / Wednesdays/ Fridays 2:00-2:50

Professor Ourida Mostefai

Course Description

This course will study the emergence of the modern concept of happiness from the ancient ideal of the "good life" to the notion of "pursuit of happiness" as an "inalienable right." We will trace the development of this concept in the early modern period and read representations of the search for happiness in a variety of literary, philosophical, and political texts (including the American and the Haitian Declarations of Independence and the French Declaration of Rights). Readings will include oriental and fairy tales, novels, and essays (by Mme d'Aulnoy, Mme du Chatelet, Montesquieu, Johnson, Fielding, Voltaire, and Rousseau, among others).

COLT 0811I: Classical Mythology and the Western Tradition

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

Professor Molly Ierulli

Course Description

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 1210: Introduction to the Theory of Literature

Mondays / Wednesdays / Fridays 9:00-9:50

Professors Susan Bernstein and Marc Redfield

Course Description

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 1420E: The Nineteenth-Century Novel (ENGL 1561I)

Tuesdays / Thursdays 1:00-2:20

Professor Marc Redfield

Interested students must register for [ENGL 1561I](#)

Course Description

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, and, if time allows, James and/or Proust. Enrollment limited to 20.

COLT 1430B: Art and Exemplarity in Medieval and Early Modern Literature

Tuesdays / Thursdays 2:30-3:50

Professor Alani Hicks-Bartlett

Course Description

In this course, we will cover a selection of Early Modern tragedies from various literary traditions (English, French, Italian, Spanish), to critically discuss and analyze dramatic representations of gender and race as portrayed on the Early Modern stage. Considering moments of renegotiation, critique, and resistance towards dominant hierarchies, we will give especial attention to marginalized characters, and/or to characters who are explicitly gendered or racialized in the plays in which they appear. We will accompany our reading of primary-source texts with selections from contemporary critical theory on gender and race, which will provide an important springboard for intersectional analysis.

COLT 1430D: Critical Approaches to Chinese Poetry

Tuesdays / Thursdays 9:00-10:20

Professor Dore J. Levy

Course Description

Examination of works of Chinese poetry of several forms and periods in the context of Chinese poetic criticism. Knowledge of Chinese not required, but provisions for working with original texts will be made for students of Chinese language.

COLT 1440P: Nationalism and Transnationalism in Film and Fiction

Tuesdays / Thursdays 6:40 – 8:00

Professor Vangelis Calotychos

Course Description

Reports of the demise of nationalism always seem greatly exaggerated. How are notions of transnationalism dependent on rewriting the nation? This course revisits films of world cinema acclaimed for their national cachet from a transnational perspective and in dialogue with their literary intertexts. We will study these films' fictional narration, cinematic articulation, and critical reception and consider how they signify in multinational networks of funding, distribution, production, conception, and critical reception. Students will analyze the political, ethical, and artistic stakes of confronting difference as both a located and universal stance or commodity. Films and texts chosen from across the globe.

COLT 1440U: The Listener (Literature, Theory, Film)

Thursdays 4:00-6:30

Professor Peter Szendy

Course Description

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 1710D: Exercises in Literary Translation

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

Professor Stephen Foley

Course Description

Exercises and investigations in the history, theory, and practice of literary translation. Students pursue individual projects for translation workshops. Common exercises draw on Shakespeare translation, from classic translations in Europe to unique examples like Nyerere's Swahili Caesar and current projects like Shakespeare in Modern English or The Chinese Shakespeare.

Prerequisite: one foreign-language course in literature at 1000-level (or equivalent).

Class Notes

Additional Information to Course Description / Class Notes: "In place of the Friday class meeting, we will conduct an online CANVAS Discussion Friday to Sunday,"

COLT 1810P: Literature and Medicine

Tuesdays / Thursdays 10:30-11:50

Professor Arnold Weinstein

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to examine a number of central issues in medicine--disease, pain, trauma, madness, the image of the physician-- from the distinct perspectives of the sciences and the arts. Texts will be drawn from authors such as Sophocles, Hawthorne, Gilman, Tolstoy, Kafka, Anderson, O'Neill, Hemingway, Ionesco, Vergheze, Barker, Sacks, Foucault, Sontag, Scarry, Gawande and others. Open enrollment course: lecture + section.

COLT1815T: Censorship and the Arts

Tuesdays / Thursdays 9:00-10:20

Professor Esther Whitfield

Interested students must register for HMAN 1975F

Course Description

Who decides what we read and view? Censorship has a long history in authoritarian states and religious institutions, but where else has it taken shape, today and in the past? This course engages with a series of once "banned" literary and artistic works alongside creative and legal critiques of censorship. Addressing recent forms of censorship in the arts and the political sphere - exhibit closings, book burnings, redaction, classification - and the acts of protest, whistle-blowing, and document-dumping that aim to circumvent these, the course explores ideas of public interest, national defense, and decency that underpin decisions to restrict.

COLT 2650B: Speed: Fast and Slow in Literature and Philosophy

Tuesdays 1:00-3:30

Professor Susan Bernstein

Course Description

"Our time is running out of time:" this is a feeling that lingers on since the advent of a modernity that allows for less and less lingering. It reaches its apex with the Anthropocene understood as maximal contrast between the deep time of geology and the short temporality of human history. Our collaborative seminar will trace the genealogy of accelerationism to futurism and nihilism, while also approaching boredom as a philosophical question. It will offer readings (slow and fast) of classics of literature that stage the (fast or slow) passing of time (Goethe's *Second Faust*, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*).

COLT 2650W: Vision and Visualization in Literature: The Rhetoric of Enargeia

Thursdays 4:00-6:30

Professor Joseph (Jay) Reed

Interested students must register for [CLAS 2110K](#).**Course Description**

How does writing make us see? We will study rhetorical concepts of "vivid description" (enargeia, phantasia, evidentia) from ancient Greek and Roman theory and literary practice and follow their reception in later periods and literary traditions, including modern evaluations of their significance (all readings in English). Taking texts from poetry, historiography, philosophy, and elsewhere, we will explore "vividness" particularly in terms of tropes of persona-fashioning (prosōpopoeia) and subject-positioning, with attention to the ethical and ideological implications that that may entail, and explore its relations with such topics as ecphrasis, narratology, and spectacularity

COLT260X ((GRMN 2662F: Police, Strike, Justice: Revisiting Walter Benjamin's "Critique of Violence"))

Mondays 3:00-5:30

Professor Gerhard Richter

Interested students must register for GRMN 2662K

Course Description

"Toward a Critique of Violence" (1921) is one of the young Benjamin's most enigmatic, provocative, and enduring achievements. On the occasion of its 100th anniversary, this seminar will revisit the text, paying particular attention to its intricate arguments concerning the relations among violence, law, the police, justice, religion, the death penalty, critique, and the philosophy of history. Inquiring into the conceptual and political work that Benjamin's text performs in its own historical time as well as in ours, we will examine interpretations of it by Marcuse, Derrida, Agamben, Hamacher, Gasché, and others. In English. Graduate students from diverse fields welcome.

COLT 2830B: Frameworks of Antiquity: Disciplines, Discourses, Politics

Mondays 3:00-5:30

Professor Tamara Chin

Course Description

At least since decolonization, the study of antiquity has been a battleground for conflicting projects (imperial, colonial, national, indigenous, religious, feminist and queer, etc.). This seminar explores disciplinary formations that have supplied rival groups with cognitive maps, narratives of identity formation and transformation, and assets for real and symbolic capital. We will explore key disciplinary sites of debate—in archaeology, philology, philosophy, Scriptural and Classical studies, and history—concerning the distribution of groups (of people, languages, races), the establishment of spatial and temporal boundaries, and the limits of what can be argued, shown, possessed, and claimed to be true.

COLT 2830D: Retouch: The Imaginaries of Repair

Thursdays 1:00-3:30

Professor Ariella Azoulay

Interested students must register for HMAN 2401E

Course Description

Retouch is a term often associated with repair—of a print, a photograph, a piece of cloth—while it also bespeaks the capacity to induce or to bring about what could have been unjustly left unattended, silenced, forgotten, or, on the contrary, what may have required covering, concealment, or removal (from sight). This collaborative seminar explores different gestures, modalities, and initiatives of repair and reparation, redress and restoration, return and redistribution, remedy and recuperation. Attending to the lasting structures of imperialism, racial capitalism, and gender violence, we seek ultimately to imagine and to theorize the retouch of shared worlds.

(Updated 9/15//21)