

Fall 2013

CMLT-C 501 (1888) Intro to Contemporary Literary Studies: | P. Dove | M 8:00 am - 10:30 am | 3cr

This course provides an introduction to important debates concerning literature and the principles and methodologies of its study. What is literature? What distinguishes it from other modes of cultural production? What roles have been envisioned for it in modern societies? Or does the “what is?” question in fact presuppose too much, because it assumes what has yet to be demonstrated (that literature has a stable identity or essence)? If that is the case, then could an experience with what we call literature in turn help bring to light questions about other forms of knowledge and discourse whose truth criteria we tend to take for granted? We will approach these questions with an eye to some of the serious challenges facing Comparative Literature and the Humanities today, in the context of global forces and tendencies that today call into question or oblige us to rethink the national boundaries and institutions upon which the ideas of national literature and Comparative Literature are founded. We will also take into account challenges to the traditional configuration and mission of the university—and particularly of the Humanities—that arise in conjunction with new forms of technology and new ways of organizing labor and production. Since Plato, one of the major concerns surrounding literature has been the suspicion that literary language has no “being” or “essence” of its own, and that rather than helping bring truth to light, literature only introduces more confusion and uncertainty in the world. One of the key lines of questioning in this course will be to interrogate the Platonic critique of mimesis and to ask what kind of response(s) literature itself—if we can presume to know that this “itself” refers to—might offer to theoretical attempts to define, compartmentalize and control its movement. Such questions become especially pressing today with the emergence of new forms of mobility (of people, technology and capital) as well as new forms of control around the globe. For organizational purposes we will divide the semester into four sections, each of which will define and examine a particular concept or problem related to literature and contemporary literary theory: “representation,” “difference,” “ideology” and “world”/“event.” Primary texts will be drawn from a variety of theoretical schools and tendencies, including Marxism and post-Marxism, deconstruction, feminism, structuralism and post-structuralism, postcolonial and subaltern studies, and psychoanalysis.

Comp Lit graduate students must also enroll in C502.

CMLT-C 502 (1889) Fields and Methods of Comparative Lit

P. Dove | W 9:05 am – 9:55 am | 1 cr

See above description

CMLT-C 513 (32507) Narrative | R. McGerr | TR 1:00 – 2:15 pm | 4 cr

This course will introduce students to the variety of narrative forms found in literatures from different times and cultures. We will examine some of the ways in which critics and theorists interpret the aesthetic, psychological, and philosophical aspects of narrative. Among the issues we will explore are the social functions of narrative texts, the relationship of gender and narrative form, the role of intertextuality in narrative tradition, and the interplay of closed and open forms of narrative. In addition to examples of myth, fairy tale, parable, and legend, we will study more complex forms such as epic, romance, frame narrative, and novel. The readings for the course will include texts from ancient times to the twentieth century. We will begin with a selection of myths, fairy tales, legends, and ancient and modern fables, and then turn to longer narrative forms: *The Odyssey*, *The Tale of Genji*, *The Arabian Nights*, *Yvain*, *Inferno*, *The Decameron*, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Things Fall Apart*, and *In the Labyrinth*. Students in C513 will have additional reading assignments in critical commentary and meet for an additional hour per week TBA. Writing Requirements: Two reports on critical readings, a proposal for a comparative research project, and the completed research project.

CMLT-C 525 (29369) Topics: Renaissance | S. Van der Laan and R. Schneider | R 6:15 pm – 8:45 pm | 4 cr

The early modern period in European history begins in the late Middle Ages and arrives at the threshold of the Enlightenment, encompassing the birth of humanism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the European wars of religion, and the scientific revolution. This team-taught course will chart both historical continuity and cultural change to ask how this rich, paradoxical, and often contradictory age remains profoundly distant from our own yet laid the foundations of the modern world. The course will be organized as a series of interlocking investigations into the forces that shaped the early modern world: courts and court culture, book and print culture, networks of knowledge, humanism, neostoicism. It will explore the impact of those forces across national and disciplinary boundaries, drawing on both primary texts and secondary readings. Blending cultural history and literary criticism, this course will introduce students to a wide range of methodological and theoretical approaches to studying the distant past.

CMLT-C 603 (12850) Topics: Puzzles & Puzzlers | J. Emery | MW 2:30 pm - 3:45 pm | 4 cr

This course will consider the relation of literary art to a class of quasi-artistic objects, namely puzzles of various kinds. We will read texts in which puzzles operate as metaphors for literature, texts that suggest that they are themselves puzzles susceptible to solution by the wary reader, and texts that suggest that the world is a kind of puzzle to be interpreted along the lines of a literary inquiry. We will read novels by composers of puzzles together with the puzzles they composed, examine puzzle classics in media ranging from jigsaw to crossword, and spend some time with the Lilly Library's collection of mechanical puzzles and puzzle books (the largest of its kind in the world). Along the way, we will broach the theoretical issues that make puzzles an essential point of perspective onto literary art. Does our interpretation of a literary text arrive at a "solution" to a problem posed by the artwork? Why do verbal

artworks, like puzzles, so often operate by frustrating and mystifying the reader? Are aesthetic texts like poems qualitatively different from verbal diversions like crosswords, and if so what constitutes that aesthetic quality? We may discuss detective novels, futurist verse, and Anglo-Saxon riddle poems in addition to works by William Shakespeare, Alexander Pushkin, Edgar Allen Poe, Herman Melville, Leo Tolstoy, Innokentii Annensky, Viktor Shklovsky, Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov, James Merrill, Georges Perec, and Anne Carson.

CMLT-C 670 (27565) Topics in Cross-Cultural Studies: Biopolitics and Postcolonial Discourse | A. Adesokan | M 4:00 pm – 6:30 pm | 4 cr

As a discourse of identity, postcoloniality has brought institutional respectability and redress to important questions of difference—race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and the like. One criticism of postcolonial studies, however, is that the emphasis on these questions is often uneven and instrumentalist. This seminar proposes to pitch selected classics of postcolonial studies against the currents of critical theory such as transnationalism, micropolitics, and biopolitics in order to examine this criticism and others like it. We will do this by engaging several compelling postmodernist propositions (the exhaustion of difference, the fragmentation of political reason, the deterritorialized rule of empire) and equally compelling contemporary ideas about unequal exchange, actual human suffering, economic logic, and the politics of knowledge. Among the questions informing this seminar are: How do we make sense of the ubiquity of acts of impunity across different parts of the world at a time when legalism is perhaps at its strongest? What is the relationship between “disorder” and “inventiveness”? What does culture (as in “local culture” or “high culture”) mean today?