

Fall 2014

CMLT-C 513 Narrative

Prose of the Everyday: Narrative Form in the Nineteenth Century Novel and Novella

Meets with GER-G 575

Instructor: Johannes Turk

Thursday, 4-6:30pm

Woodburn Hall 205

This course examines canonic nineteenth-century novels and novellas reaching from Balzac to Stifter, Flaubert, and Fontane. Its focus is one of the characteristic features of nineteenth-century literature: its preoccupation with the everyday that Hegel calls aptly the “prose of life.” What seemed to hold no significance for higher art, quotidian life, becomes a major focus of modern literature and could well constitute its most significant innovation. It is represented in the seemingly artless diction called “prose.”

The course will unfold the historical, aesthetic, and political implications of the different ways in which everyday reality – ephemeral observations, quotidian objects, insignificant days, inconspicuous encounters, ordinary emotions and events etc.– is represented in literary texts. On the one hand, ordinary life is ennobled with the dignity of literary form. It becomes part of an intrigue that endows it with importance. At the same time it is shown as a pawn of historic, economic, and social forces that can intensify and aggrandize but also destroy this life. Alternatively, the quotidian decomposes literature’s established plot structures and disentangles its intrigues into a myriad of observations. What is the significance of the fascination with the everyday? And how can we understand the history of prose, this apparently formless form that contradicts significant paradigms of the literary?

A crucial part of the etymology of prose that can help us understand its literary significance is its relation to the Latin “pro-versa,” forward looking. According to Franco Moretti, the advent of prose means that more complex sentences become possible once rhyme and meter are abandoned: Hypotaxis replaces parataxis. This course will explore how these structures inaugurate new narrative forms.

The course is taught in English and will end with the discussion of excerpts from Modernist novels by Proust, Musil, and Kafka. Literary scholarship, paintings, and excerpts from philosophic texts will be discussed in addition to these texts. They will be available on On-Course.

CMLT-C 523 Medieval Literature

Literature by Women in Medieval Europe

Meets with MEST-M 502

Instructor: Rosemarie McGerr

Tuesday & Thursday, 1-2:15pm

Ballantine Hall 231

This course explores the rich tradition of texts authored by women during the Middle Ages in Europe. Our primary readings come from the ninth through fifteenth centuries and were written in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, and England, some in Latin and some in vernacular languages. The readings include secular and spiritual texts from a wide range of genres: lyrics, plays, letters, vision accounts, romance narratives, allegorical narratives, and autobiography. The list of authors includes “saints” and “heretics,” members of royal courts and members of the merchant class, mothers and nuns. In each case, we will examine the text from multiple perspectives. Among the issues we will address are the position of medieval women in relation to literary, civic, and theological authority; the role of literacy in medieval definitions of authorship; the construction of gender within the individual texts; and the relationship of medieval women’s texts to modern conceptions of feminist writing.

Our readings will include works by Dhuoda of Septimania, Hrotsvit von Gandersheim, Marie de France, Hildegard von Bingen, Heloise, the troubairitz, Hadewijch of Brabant, Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, Christine de Pizan, Margery Kempe, and Florencia Piñar.

All readings will be available in modern English. No previous experience with medieval European literature required.

Students will each lead two class discussions on assigned critical or theoretical readings. Students will also choose a comparative topic for a research project on a topic related to the course readings, submit a project proposal with preliminary bibliography (2-3 pages), and complete the written research project (20-22 pages) at the end of the semester.

CMLT-C 525 The Renaissance & The 17th Century

Meets with HIST-H 615 and REN-R 501

Instructors: Sarah Van der Laan & Robert Schneider

Wednesday, 6:15-8:45pm

Ballantine Hall 137

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 538 The Twentieth Century II

Afro-Cosmopolitanism

Instructor: Akin Adesokan

Tuesday, 4-6:30pm

Ballantine Hall 246

A seminar on the intellectual relationships between the African continent and the progressive world in the second half of the 20th century, focusing upon three related historical and aesthetic formations: the recovery of African agency in the pre-1945 collaborations between nationalists and diasporic and liberal intellectuals and activists; the rise of tricontinental liberation movements and anti-colonial artistic

cultures (cinema, literature, music) for which the journal *Présence Africaine* and the Cuban revolution were catalysts; and the unfolding reassessments of postcolonial political culture in the aftermath of Soviet communism and apartheid regime. The course works with the premise that these formations are unavoidably internationalist, given that the leading figures are diasporic intellectuals dealing with issues of race and class in multiple contexts. Readings will be organized around the decisive place of the African continent in the structural relations between contemporary discourses of cosmopolitanism and the global migrations of the late-19th century.

CMLT-C 573 Comparative Topics in Middle Eastern and Western Literature

Voyages through *The Thousand and One Nights*

Meets with CMLT-C 370

Instructor: Paul Losensky

Monday, Wednesday & Friday, 11:15am-12:05pm

Ballantine Hall 105

Sindbad, Scheherazade, Ali Baba, and Aladdin—the stories of these characters have been retold so often that they have become part of our global literary imagination. In this course, we will examine how *The Thousand and One Nights*, or *Arabian Nights*, took shape in medieval Islamic culture and, like Sindbad, voyaged around the world. To begin our journey, we will study the origins and structure of the work, its narrative techniques, typical character types, and the social values and aspirations they embody. We will then map the travels of the *Nights* around the world through the history of its translations into western languages, comparing some of its many English versions. Finally, we will track the stories of the *Nights* into the mediums of visual art and film and discuss a few of its many rewritings in modern literature by authors such as William Beckford, E. A. Poe, Jorge Luis Borges, John Barth, and Naguib Mahfuz. In the course of our voyage, we will make land in the realms of narratology, Orientalism, and gender and translation studies.

CMLT-C 581 Workshop in Literary Translation

Instructor: Bill Johnston

Tuesday & Thursday, 2:30-3:45pm

Woodburn Hall 205

This workshop will focus on practical issues of literary translation. We will consider the problems of translating poetry, prose, drama, and other genres. Class time will be devoted to the analysis of existing translations, workshops on translation issues, and to work on our own translations. A strong emphasis will be placed on professional aspects of literary translation such as publication and representation. Evaluation will be by a series of practical assignments revolving around short translation projects in different genres. A wide range of languages will be represented in class, though we will always be translating into English. You will need a thorough knowledge of English and at least one other language. No prior experience of literary translation is required.

CMLT-C 611 Topics in Literature Genres Modes/Forms

Writing Structured Verse

Meets with CMLT-C 405

Instructor: Douglas Hofstadter

Tuesday & Thursday, 1-2:15pm

Ballantine Hall 011

In the twentieth century, structured verse suffered a dramatic decline, in favor of free verse. This effectively meant that the sonic or musical charm of poetry, long considered a central element of the art, was lost, replaced by more abstract and less accessible features. As a result, a large fraction of well-educated people today find much of modern poetry austere, and possibly even opaque and meaningless.

Is structured or “musical” verse completely outdated, or can it be revived and made to live and express important ideas today? The premise of this seminar is that structured verse deserves a central spot in today’s poetry. Students in this seminar will thus read and write structured verse of many forms, including novel forms that they themselves dream up. We will also study and critique structured and nonstructured verse by a wide variety of authors and lyricists, including Dante Alighieri, Alexander Pushkin, Clément Marot, Cole Porter, Oscar Hammerstein, Kellie Gutman, Vikram Seth, Dylan Thomas,

John Updike, Richard Wilbur, Vladimir Nabokov, William Carlos Williams, Seamus Heaney, Jay Curlin, Marilyn Stone, Douglas Hofstadter, and many others, some well-known, some little known.

Students' grades will of course be based primarily on a portfolio of their own works written over the semester, but also on their day-to-day contributions to the in-class discussions of poetry, its aims, and its degrees of success and failure.

Sources consulted will include

Alexander Pushkin: Eugene Onegin (in various translations)

Vikram Seth: The Golden Gate

John Updike: Collected Verse

Richard Wilbur: New and Collected Poems

Willis Barnstone: The Secret Reader

e. e. cummings: 100 Verse Selections

Kellie Gutman: A Cup of Tea with Lunacy

Jay Curlin: Selected Verse

D. Hofstadter: Le Ton beau de Marot

CMLT-C 790 Studies in Film and Literature

Watching

Meets with CMLT-C 310

Instructor: Eyal Peretz

Tuesday & Thursday, 2:30-3:45pm

Ballantine Hall 141

What exactly are we doing when we watch, be it a painting, a film, passerby people on a crowded street, a deer in the forest, a profile on Facebook, or an item through the window of a shop? In distinction from our activity of SEEING, which seems to imply a capacity for recognizing or identifying something - for example when we say we see a cat we mean that we recognize a cat in our field of vision, that we know

that a cat is right there - when we are busy watching it seems that we are LOOKING FOR, that we are on a search after, something we do not yet know or recognize, something that we possibly cannot yet even give a name to. What is it that we are looking for when we watch? What is it that, at a certain moment in our experience, seems to transform our vision from everyday seeing into exploratory watching? This course will examine these questions through films, paintings, photographs, and YouTube clips, as well as through literary, philosophical, and psychoanalytic texts. We will be following a double thesis: First, it is in the work of art that the question of watching finds its most elaborate and profound articulation, and second, a historical thesis, that one of the main phenomena of the age that we have come to understand as modern is the fact that the question of watching has been increasingly implicated in it with the development of new technologies of watching, technologies that not only make us watch differently (through binoculars, microscopes, cameras, etc.) but that turns us into those who are increasingly BEING WATCHED, through surveillance cameras, GPS devices, etc.