

# Graduate Courses in English

## 2025-26

Course Title	Fall	Winter	Spring
Eng 410 <b>Introduction to Graduate Study</b>	<b>Mann, Justin</b> Thursday 10:00-1:00		
Eng 411 <b>Studies in Poetry</b> <i>Modern Poetry &amp; Poetics</i> [post-1800]		<b>Froula, Christine</b> Thursday 2:00-5:00	
Eng 422 <b>Studies in Medieval Literature</b> [pre-1800] <i>Chaucer</i>	<b>Phillips, Susie</b> Monday 2:00-5:00		
Eng 434 <b>Studies in Shakespeare &amp; Early Drama</b> [pre-1800] Fall - <i>Global Shakespeare</i> Spring - <i>Shakespeare's Environmental Theory of Humankind</i>	<b>Wall, Wendy</b> Tuesday 2:00-5:00		<b>Shannon, Laurie</b> Wednesday 2:00-5:00
Eng 435 <b>Studies in 17th-century Literature</b> [pre-1800] <i>Epic, World, History</i>		<b>West, Will</b> Tuesday 2:00-5:00	
Eng 451 <b>Studies in Romantic Literature</b> <i>Lyrical Environments</i> [pre/post-1800]	<b>Wolff, Tristram</b> Thursday 2:00-5:00		
Eng 461 sec 20 <b>Studies in Contemporary Literature</b> [post-1800] Fall - <i>Asian American Literature</i> Winter - <i>The Environmentalism of the Poor</i> Spring - <i>Hannab Arendt: Poetry, Politics &amp; Thought</i>	<b>Huang, Michelle</b> Wednesday 2:00-5:00	<b>Dimick, Sarah</b> Thursday 2:00-5:00	<b>Gottlieb, Susannah</b> Tuesday 2:00-5:00
Eng 461 sec 21 <b>Studies in Contemporary Literature</b> [post-1800] Winter - <i>Possibility within Form: The Grotesque Body and the Global Novel</i> Spring - <i>The Planetary in Contemporary Art</i>		<b>Abani, Chris</b> Monday, 2:00-5:00	<b>Mwangi, Evan</b> Thursday 2:00-5:00
Eng 465 <b>Studies in Colonial &amp; Postcolonial Literature</b> [post-1800] <i>Postcolonial Method</i>		<b>Nadiminti, Kalyan</b> Wednesday 2:00-5:00	
Eng 471 <b>Studies in American Literature</b> <i>The Modernist Novel in Black and White, 1929-1954</i> [post-1800]			<b>Stern, Julia</b> Thursday 2:00-5:00
Eng 481 sec 20 <b>Studies in Literary Theory &amp; Criticism</b> <i>Reading Form</i>			<b>Jackson, Lauren</b> Monday 2:00-5:00
Eng 481 sec 21 <b>Studies in Literary Theory &amp; Criticism</b> <i>Theorizing Black Genders &amp; Sexualities</i>			<b>Bey, Marquis</b> Wednesday 2:00-5:00
Eng 496 <b>MFA Poetry Workshop</b> (MA and PhD by application)	<b>Abani, Chris</b> Monday 10:00-1:00		<b>Betts, Tara</b> Tuesday 10:00-1:00
Eng 497 <b>MFA Fiction Workshop</b> (MA and PhD by application)	<b>Martinez, Juan</b> Tuesday 9:30-12:30	<b>Abani, Chris</b> Monday 9:30-12:30	
Eng 498 <b>MFA CNF Workshop</b> (MA and PhD by application)	<b>Schulman, Sarah</b> Wednesday 2:00-5:00		<b>Hernández, Daisy</b> Thursday 9:30-12:30
Eng 520 <b>Professionalization Workshop</b> (PhD only)		<b>Breen, Katy</b> Tuesday 2:00-5:00	
Eng 570 <b>Seminar in Teaching College Composition</b> (available to any interested student)			<b>Lenaghan, Elizabeth</b> TBD
Eng 571 <b>Teaching Creative Writing</b> (1st-year MFA+MA only)		<b>Seliy, Shauna</b> Wednesday 10:00-1:00	



# Fall Quarter

## English 410

### Introduction to Graduate Study

Justin Mann

This course will offer students an introduction to current theories and methods in literary studies. Students will grapple with key questions and debates that guide research and teaching in the humanities in the twenty-first century. The course begins with an inquiry into the history of the institution, the field(s) of literary studies, broadly conceived, and the questions of center and periphery that remain central to our work. We will then shift to an investigation of contemporary keywords guiding literary studies in the present.

Foregrounding the disorienting effects of the literary, the course begins by examining the history of the discipline and its institutions, including shifting definitions of our objects of study; the histories of exclusion and inclusion that accompany these shifts; and, issues of canonicity, especially as they relate to empire building both within and outside the academy. Then, we will explore the methods of literary critique, thinking about what is at stake in the objects we study and the ways we choose to read them. Finally, we will engage with challenges to the traditional organizing principles of our field, including its archives, geographies, periodization.

#### Texts include:

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, ISBN 978-0241386019  
Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, ISBN 978-0679745426  
Chris Eng, *Extravagant Camp*, ISBN 978-1479834662  
Faith Barter, *Black Pro Se*, ISBN 978-1469685977  
Sarah Dimick, *Unseasonable*, ISBN 978-0231209250  
Maia Gil'Adi, *Doom Patterns*, ISBN 978-1478031208  
Noémie Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness*, ISBN 978-1512826074

## English 422

### Studies in Medieval Literature

Chaucer

Susie Phillips

From the fifteenth-century glossators to twenty-first-century critics, readers of the *Canterbury Tales* have sought to interpret and contain Chaucer's constantly shifting, experimental poem. The text poses numerous interpretative puzzles—the myriad objects of the poem's irony, the cultural politics of its author, the “identities” of its characters, and the demographics and ideologies of its intended audiences, to name a few—puzzles that have been “solved” in strikingly different ways at different historical moments. This course takes as its subject the *Canterbury Tales* and its reception history, exploring of both the poem's multiple interpretative contexts and the hermeneutic conundrums it poses to them. As we read the *Tales*, we will consider the narratives (and

narrative conventions) that Chaucer translates and transforms and the contemporary voices with whom he is in dialogue—both in the fourteenth century and the twenty-first. We will investigate the ways in which the tales circulated both individually and as a collection (which tales were the most popular? how and by whom were they published? with which other texts did they travel?) and analyze the various paratexts that accompanied them (glosses, prologues, illustrations, and “spurious” links and tales). Alongside this early publication context, we will explore current conversations in Chaucer criticism and the scholarly history and contemporary public debates to which it responds. Analyzing the *Tales* through a wide array of methodological lenses, we will use Chaucer's experimental poem as methodological and interpretative testing ground, placing its multivalent narratives in dialogue with feminist and queer theory, critical race studies, disability studies, animal studies, and the Global Middle Ages, in addition to new and old materialities and historicisms. Seminar members are encouraged to treat the course as an interpretative lab, bringing their own methodological interests and questions to bear on the *Tales* in both seminar discussion and their final projects.

#### Texts include:

*The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Jill Mann, ISBN 978-0140422344 (~\$25)  
Also acceptable: *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Larry D. Benson or *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson are  
Textbooks available at Norris Center Bookstore.

## English 434

### Studies in Shakespeare & Early Drama

Global Shakespeare

Wendy Wall

Appropriation, Adaptation, Reinvention: scholars have deployed these terms to theorize ways that 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century artists—working in different media across the globe—use Shakespeare's plays as a vital cultural and creative resource. These artists' acts of cultural translation offer sites for exploring complex social and political issues, including colonialism and postcolonialism, racial and ethnic tensions, gender fluidity, same-sex desire, structural violence, and legal inequities. In this course, we will focus on *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet* to explore transformations of Shakespearean drama through a range of media (print, theater, and film). We'll attend to creative reworkings such as Toni Morrison's *Desdemona*, Shishir Kurup's *Merchant on Venice* (a play about Hindu, Muslim, and Latina/o cultures in modern Los Angeles), James Lujan's *Kino and Teresa* (a play about star-crossed love in colonial New Mexico), the teen flick *O*, and *Te Tangata Whai Rawa o Weniti* (*The Māori Merchant of Venice*).

All course assignments are structured to support the development of foundational research competencies in the humanities, with emphasis on formulating viable research questions, engaging responsibly with sources, and constructing evidence-based arguments. The final project invites students to undertake an

original research inquiry into any global adaptation or afterlife of any Shakespearean play.

**Texts include:**

Toni Morrison, *Desdemona*, ISBN 135027027X

Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. Halio, Oxford World Classics 1<sup>st</sup> ed, ISBN 019953585X

Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Thompson, Honigmann, The Arden 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, ISBN 1472571762

Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*. The Arden 3<sup>rd</sup> series ISBN 1903436915

**English 451**

**Studies in Romantic Literature**

*Lyrical Environments*

Tristram Wolff

This course serves as an introduction to the “greater romantic lyric,” as well as an abbreviated survey of lyric theory. While tracking the sequence and dialogue of a handful of key critical paradigms from the last half century, we will investigate how lyric poetry situates its reader in a universe of discourse through rhetorical address, affective cues, and social disposition. The “environments” in question do connote familiar romantic scholarship on “nature poetry,” and the relations of language to nature; but we’ll be thinking about “nature” here bearing in mind that for the romantics and their newer interlocutors, natural “environments” implicate social space and psychic geographies as well. Relevant critical work will be drawn from romantic studies, phenomenology, critical race theory, feminist standpoint theory, affect studies, critical geography, and linguistic anthropology. As time allows, we’ll refer as well to work by living poets that distinctively (and sometimes self-consciously) reconfigures conventions for lyric space and scenes of address laid down in the romantic era.

**Readings** (all available on Canvas):

Poetry includes readings by Wheatley, Coleridge, Robinson, Wordsworth, Clare, Smith, Barbauld, Keats, Hemans, Shelley, Yearsley

Theory and criticism includes readings by G. W. F. Hegel, J. S. Mill, Frantz Fanon, Roman Jakobson, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Raymond Williams, V. N. Voloshinov, Denise Riley, Lauren Berlant, Stanley Cavell, Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins, Donna Haraway, Erving Goffman, Judith Butler, Sara Ahmed, Doreen Massey, Bakary Diaby, Susan Stewart, Nate Mackey, Camille Dungy, Geoffrey Hartman, Erica Hunt, Barbara Johnson, William Wimsatt, Rei Terada, Paul de Man, Virginia Jackson, M Ty.

**English 461**

**Studies in Contemporary Literature**

*Asian American Literature*

Michelle Huang

This graduate seminar serves as an introduction to the field of Asian American literature, with a twin focus on classic texts and core debates. In addition to highlighting the richness and complexity of this literary tradition, the class will pressure key critical terms and paradigms such as representation, authenticity, genre & form, voice & lyric, history & archive, and of course, race. Participants will be exposed to a range of methodologies for close reading for racial formation as a formal feature of textual composition, as well as gain proficiency with Asian American literature’s relationship to central and emergent debates within American literary studies.

Some questions for consideration include the following: What do the many subjects and locations of Asian American literature tell us about the capaciousness of the category itself? What tensions and resonances arise when critical race and ethnic studies meet theories of representation? How are conventional modes of understanding racial identity in literature transformed when put in relation with theories of migration, imperialism, economics, and the environment?

**Texts:**

Assigned texts will likely include primary texts by Maxine Hong Kingston, Chang-rae Lee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Karen Tei Yamashita, Monique Truong, Frank Chin, Lesley Tenorio, Lê thị diễm thúy, Ruth Ozeki, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and Mei-mei Berssenbrugge.

Secondary texts will include work by Lisa Lowe, David Eng, Kandice Chuh, Colleen Lye, Joseph Jonghyun Jeon, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Rachel Lee, among others. Please verify before purchasing texts.

Primary texts will be available at Norris bookstore.

All secondary materials will be uploaded to Canvas.

# Winter Quarter

## English 411

### Studies in Poetry

*Modern Poetry & Poetics*

Christine Froula

When Fenollosa wrote that the dawn of the twentieth century turned a new page in the book of a rapidly shrinking world—a “startling chapter,” with “vistas of strange futures,” “world-embracing cultures half weaned from Europe,” “hitherto undreamed responsibilities for nations and races”—he framed modernity’s historical condition as a breaking of the bounds of closed cultures founded on collective belief systems (The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry). Fenollosa anticipates Edward Said’s concept of worldliness, and of worldly creative and critical practices, as the arduous shift from monocentric cultures to multicentric cultures, in collision, dialogue, and creative, visionary translation and mistranslation of all kinds. What then is at stake for modernist poets, poetry, and poetics?

In the spaces and voids created by crises of common belief during this period marked by endless national, racial, and international struggle—not least, racialized imperialisms and two technologically-driven world wars—there emerged a “revolution of the word.” Our seminar will explore some of the myriad ways in which poets responded to modernity’s shattered epistemic and ontological worlds and to the imperative to imagine, dream, create, “make it new”—to bring into being new poetics, in dialogue with other languages and traditions: poetics of moral witness; of form (lyric, epic, fragment, hymn, prose poem); of voice (dramatic monologue; persona); of location (e.g., Yeats’s poems of colonial, revolutionary, and postcolonial Ireland); of sonic and visual word and line (vers libre/free verse; creative typography; performance modes). We’ll consider some key perspectives, influences, debates, contentions, experimental breakthroughs, and abject failures that arose from poets’ distinct senses of the past, the turbulent present, and the collective future.

At the heart of our seminar will be poems and closely related prose writings, to be drawn from Caedmon, Arnold, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Whitman, Dickinson, Yeats, Pound, WWI trench and civilian poets, Eliot, Williams, Toomer, Stein, Tagore, Auden, Margaret Walker, Hughes, Brooks, Walcott, Dove, Erdrich, Lee, Merwin, others suggested by students. Alongside them, we’ll read selections from historical, critical, and theoretical texts, such as Benjamin, DeMan, Culler, Johnson, Venuti, Ramazani; and we’ll meet with Special Collections Librarian Jason Nargis to learn about modernism’s material publishing culture—little magazines, small presses, first editions. In consultation with the instructor, students will design course projects that draw upon their particular research interests, theoretical predilections, and critical sense to speak to our seminar’s common goals.

## English 435

### Studies in 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Literature

*Epic, World, History*

Will West

Ezra Pound called epic “a poem including history,” connecting and distinguishing two aspects of what may be the most ancient of all poetic forms. Epic poems articulate stories that are also histories; they represent history, and as they are passed from age to age and culture to culture—as they pass into history—they become history themselves, of their world and of their own form. Individual epics emerge from many different worlds—of archaic Greece, newly imperial Rome, colonial Americas, revolutionary seventeenth-century England, the myriad-minded Caribbean archipelago of the twentieth century, among others—and take it upon themselves to contain and express worlds, the one they emerge from and other, possible worlds. Individual epics and epic as a genre have been associated with primitive nationalism and imperialist ambition but also with resistance to them, especially among contemporary writers who have explored epic as a critique of the universal solvency of the novel. In this course we will explore the resources of epic as a poetic form that makes worlds and histories, and also theories of the genre.

Readings will be drawn from epics like Homer’s Iliad (and Alice Oswald’s Memoriam); Vergil’s Aeneid (and Renaissance imitations like those of Maffeo Vegio, Camões’ Lusiads, or Ercilla’s Araucana); Dante’s Inferno (and Lorna Goodison’s Jamaican reframing); Milton’s Paradise Lost (and Lucy Hutchinson’s responsive Order and Disorder, Blake’s Milton or Pullman’s Dark Materials or Malcolm X’s revolutionary Milton); Joyce’s Ulysses; and Derek Walcott’s Omeros, as well as theorists of epic, history, and worlds including Bakhtin, Greene, Lukacs, Adorno Moretti, Herder, Schiller, Voltaire, Ovid, Quint, Tasso, and others.

## English 461, sec 20

### Studies in Contemporary Literature

*The Environmentalism of the Poor*

Sarah Dimick

After detailing Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier’s influential distinction between “full-stomach” and “empty-belly” environmentalism, this course focuses on literary engagements with the latter. We track class and environmentalism through literature set in electronic waste dumps, tent cities of the unhoused, and disaster zones. Via this reading, we catalogue the capacities and limitations of literary modes associated with poverty—including social realism, the documentary, and sentimentalism. This class delves into environmental knowledge and movements emerging from communities subjected to poverty, but it also attends to unsettling slippages between practices of environmental simplicity and experiences of economic deprivation. Primary texts will be drawn from 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century literature of the United States and the global South.

## **English 461, sec 21**

### **Studies in Contemporary Literature**

*Possibility within Form: The Grotesque Body and the Global Novel*

Chris Abani

The novel has often been seen as a vehicle for nation and tradition building. But the form also contains the ability to subvert these categories. Subversion in this case is a decrowning of power, the process of constructing an alternate history, state, or community of ideas. Carnival and the grotesque, as theorized by Bakhtin, will guide our reading, as we explore the body as a site of narrative and a powerful tool of subversion. We will read five novels - from Finland, the UK, China/Tibet, Japan and Nigeria – as vehicles of the transnational and necessarily transitional sites of narrative. I will provide some foundational secondary reading, but a big part of this course is the student doing research for readings to support their theories. Our focus is on a guided close reading. We will question what these novels and the bodies created by them can reveal about the form of narrative, subversion and its dialogue between traditions.

## **English 465**

### **Studies in Colonial & Postcolonial Literature**

*Postcolonial Method*

Kalyan Nadiminti

Is there such a thing as a postcolonial method? If so, what are its spatial, temporal, and theoretical constructs as well as its limits? This course examines the rise and evolution of postcolonial studies as a disciplinary apparatus across literature, history, and culture. The course will examine how postcolonial theory thinks through vectors of colonialism, capitalism, race, and gender in distinct ways. This course will begin with key theoretical texts like Orientalism and Masks of Conquest, work through major debates of the 1980s to 2000s around postcoloniality, literary form, and subaltern historiography, before spending the last third of class around race and contemporary imperial formations. In effect, we will think about the formation of postcolonial studies both through and against Cultural Studies, the Subaltern studies group, invocations of the Third World, the institutional development of Global South theory, and finally the fiercest critiques of postcolonial studies like Dalit studies and decolonial studies. Postcoloniality has been invoked to modify categories like the unconscious and sovereignty, but faulted for its aura and exoticism: how do these approaches allow us to think about the future of postcolonial studies and its core political commitments?

Readings will include BR Ambedkar, M.K. Gandhi, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Stuart Hall, Sylvia Wynter, Gayatri Spivak, Ranajit Guha, Natalie Melas, Neil Lazarus, and others. We will also dip into some literary texts like Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, and Shehan Karunatilaka's *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*.

## **Eng 520**

### **Professionalization Workshop**

Katy Breen

The aim of this course is to offer PhD students an open and supportive community for discussing professionalization issues of all kinds. It is intentionally designed to be low stress, with P/NP grading and little-to-no homework. Class meetings are intended to help you make the most of your time at NU while also preparing you for positions after graduation. Some sessions will focus on the academic genres that you'll need to master over the next few years, including the dissertation chapter, the prospectus, the conference abstract, and the course description. Others will be more strategic, addressing issues such as managing committee expectations and navigating difficult relationships. Many class meetings will have a hands-on component, aimed at producing working drafts of documents such as the (academic) CV and the (nonacademic) resume. Time will be reserved in each class session for questions and unstructured discussion (with the option to submit questions anonymously if that is more comfortable). I promise that my answers will be as straightforward as possible.

# Spring Quarter

## English 434

### Studies in Shakespeare & Early Drama

*Shakespeare's Environmental Theory of Humankind*

Laurie Shannon

This seminar will work across Shakespeare's genres -- comedies, tragedies, and tragicomic hybrids -- to consider the ways they might all be read as "versions of pastoral." Reading plays that show a preoccupation with our cosmic place and the sense of an often hostile environmental situation for humans, we'll trace Shakespeare's worry that we, alone among all other species, do not "belong" to nature, but stand apart from it (and not in a good way). The critical concept of Shakespearean "green worlds" first arose to describe the retreats into nature and away from society that typically occur in the comedies. A removal to the green world -- getting "back to Nature" -- enables a rebalanced socio-political life to be officially restored. But how well does this traditional sense of a salubrious Nature hold up, especially if we consider comedies and tragedies together? Against what, exactly, is the human social order defined and established, and from what apparently threatening "laws of Nature" is it supposed to defend us? In other words, what might an environmental or even a planetary perspective entail . . . around 1600?

As we consider a "human epoch" that sweeps from the idea of Eden to the Anthropocene, we find a special torsion in the idea of nature in Shakespeare's era. We will take time to think about the ways Shakespeare's premodern vision of human existence might amplify our thinking about contemporary environmental crises. To provide locales for our focused readings of *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *King Lear*, and *The Winter's Tale*, contextual materials will range among selections from Genesis, Theocritus, Sappho, Plato, Ovid, Pliny, Thomas More, Michel de Montaigne, Edmund Spenser, George Gascoigne, John Gerard, Richard Hooker, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and Thomas Hobbes, to writing by William Empson, Rachel Carson, Raymond Williams, Amitav Ghosh, Donna Haraway, and Dipesh Chakrabarty.

## English 461, sec 20

### Studies in Contemporary Literature

*Hannah Arendt: Poetry, Politics & Thought*

Susannah Gottlieb

This course takes its point of departure from a careful reading of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt's massive study of Nazi totalitarianism and its origins in anti-Semitism and European imperialism. For the first three weeks of the class, we will read the three sections of the *Origins* along with a selection of Arendt's contemporaneous writings on issues at the heart of her study: wide-scale statelessness and forced migration; racism and imperial expansion; totalitarian propaganda and the "holes of oblivion." Arendt recognized that the *Origins* posed a question that remained

unanswered in that work: faced with the manufacture of living corpses, what preserves our humanity and redeems our actions?

Arendt's next major work, *The Human Condition*, thus moves toward an analysis of the conditions and modes of human activity: from the biological life process, to the world-creating capacity of homo faber, to the urgency and fragility of human action. As we read *The Human Condition*, which seeks to answer the question posed by the *Origins* by accounting for what European philosophy has generally failed to analyze with sufficient clarity—namely, the dimensions of the "active life"—we examine Arendt's attempt in the same period to review and, in her own way, deconstruct the concepts of thinking around which the ideal of a "contemplative life" concretized.

This prepares us for a reading in the final weeks of the seminar of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, where she re-conceptualizes evil as a certain implementation of systematic thoughtlessness. As we examine these three major works, each of which is a reflection on the relation between language and politics, we will continually attend to the varying ways in which Arendt sought to understand where poetry stands in relation to human "conditionality," and we will use her often-neglected suggestions in this regard to develop an Arendtian poetics.

## English 461, sec 21

### Studies in Contemporary Literature

*The Planetary in Contemporary Art*

Evan Mwangi

This graduate seminar investigates how the "planetary" emerges as a critical, ecological, and aesthetic problem specifically within the contemporary—its temporalities, epistemologies, and shifting claims to newness. With sustained attention to late 20th and 21st century artistic and literary production, the course examines how contemporary art and theory articulate, contest, or reimagine the interface between planetarity and the contemporary as concept, period, and mode of attention. At the same time, the seminar foregrounds how the contemporary provides a critical vantage from which to reconsider foundational aesthetic formations, inviting students working in earlier periods to explore how older artistic and intellectual traditions acquire new resonance when approached through planetary and ecological epistemes. In tracing these contemporary formations, the course also foregrounds the subtle but persistent allusions the contemporary makes to foundational aesthetic and intellectual traditions, revealing how early period frameworks continue to structure, haunt, and inflect present day planetary thinking. Emphasis will be placed on the fostering of holistic humanistic perspectives attentive to the tensions, disjunctions, and transformative ruptures that unfold across temporal scales. A corollary objective of the course is to bring planetary ecology—its crises, imaginaries, and material demands—into conversation with the evolving category of the contemporary, to illuminate how artists register and respond to environmental transformations.

Through readings in literature, visual culture, and interdisciplinary theory, we will explore how globalization, ecological crisis, mediation, and emergent forms of world relation compel a rethinking of both the artwork and the category of the “new.” Theoretical touchstones include Raymond Williams, Giorgio Agamben, Susan Stanford Friedman, Jean Luc Nancy, Terry Smith, Nicolás Campisi, Lionel Ruffel, Kathryn Yusoff, Elizabeth Povinelli, Rosi Braidotti, and Heather Davis, whose writings collectively shape current debates on contemporaneity, ecological planetarity, environmental crisis, multispecies entanglement, and planetary scale cultural imaginaries. These frameworks will help us examine how the contemporary is defined, experienced, and questioned in relation to climate precarity, ecological interdependence, and shifting cultural imaginaries of the Earth.

Students will engage literary and artistic practices that grapple with global aesthetics, temporal rupture, ecological vulnerability, and new configurations of relationality that exceed national, regional, or historical frames. Case studies from 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century literature and contemporary art will illuminate how creative practices negotiate tensions between novelty and repetition, immediacy and historicity, locality and totality. Ultimately, the course seeks to develop a clear and discerning understanding of how the planetary—ecological as well as cultural—is figured, theorized, and sensed within the evolving rubric of the contemporary.

### Evaluation Method

6000-word paper, annotated bibliographies, class presentations, weekly self-evaluation, and peer critiques.

### Texts (may change)

*The Whale Rider* (1987) - Witi Ihimaera. Harcourt paperback (2003), ISBN 9780152050160

*The Hungry Tide* (2004) - Amitav Ghosh. Mariner Books paperback (2006), ISBN 9780618711666

*Parable of the Sower* (1993) - Octavia Butler. Grand Central Publishing paperback (2019), ISBN 9781538732182

*The Stone Gods* (2007) - Jeanette Winterson. Mariner Books paperback (2009), ISBN 9780156035729

*The Old Drift* (2019) - Namwali Serpell. Hogarth paperback (2020), ISBN 9781101907153

*The Fifth Season* (2015) - N. K. Jemisin. Orbit paperback (2015), ISBN 9780316229296

### English 471

#### Studies American Literature

*American Modernist Novel, Black & White*  
Julia Stern

In this seminar, we will closely read two great American novels, William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and Ann Petry’s *The Narrows* (1954). You will be expected to read Faulkner’s epic at least twice. But we will begin with Zora Neale Hurston’s *Barracoon*, the chronicle of her sociological engagement with America’s last-living former enslaved person, Oluale Kossola.

Hurston’s non-fictional 1929 account, unpublished until 2018, features exclusively Black voices that tell the story of Africatown, Alabama’s all-black community formed in the aftermath of the state’s final foray into the illegal international trade in enslaved peoples, in 1861. We will juxtapose this ethnographic material with Faulkner’s “historically” inflected fictional envisioning of a poor white boy’s rise, through canny strategy, rugged charisma, and unspeakable ruthlessness, to the top of the slavocracy in pre-Civil War Mississippi. The novel then recounts Thomas Sutpen’s inexorable self-destruction and the ruin of his dynasty in pursuit of a pure, white, family line soon after General Robert E. Lee’s surrender.

Faulkner’s story is, arguably, the greatest and most difficult American novel of the first half of the 20th-century, featuring multiple narrators working across three generations and two regions, and influencing, among other luminous writers, Toni Morrison, who wrote her master’s thesis on his work. Morrison has widely discussed how Faulkner influenced both her creative endeavors and her criticism. We will end the quarter with Ann Petry’s magisterial *The Narrows*, which employs a very different modernist style from Hurston or Faulkner, reviving the Naturalism that marked American literature in the fin de siècle, but with a raced and gendered texture all its own. The plot features black male and white female star-crossed lovers, whose intellectual affinities and education make up for the racial divide from which each comes. Petry’s use of free indirect discourse unfolds in a kaleidoscopic patterning and a characterological breadth that recalls Dickens as much as Faulkner. Her male protagonist, scholars say, is loosely based on Paul Robeson. Petry has largely been lost to classrooms, but our work this quarter seeks to remedy that. We will read additional assorted critical essays across the quarter, available in the Norton Critical Edition of *Absalom, Absalom!* and on Canvas.

### Mode of Evaluation

Bluebook close reading Journal, in which you select a passage from the primary material not discussed in class and collected in week 4 and week 8

Final Installation Project focusing on a material artifact described by either Faulkner or Petry, to be traced through a work of literature, and an historical archive, and a cinematic or televisual text, and in the popular culture of either 1833-1910 or the 1950s. For example: Charles Bon’s New Orleans; Judith Sutpen’s “wedding dress”; Link Williams’ cigarette case; Camilla Treadway Sheffield’s red convertible.

### English 481, sec 20

#### Studies in Literary Theory & Criticism

*Reading Form*

Lauren Jackson

This course introduces theories and central questions about form alongside relevant literary and visual texts, focusing on classic and modern accretions of formalism as a method of literary inter-

pretation, as inflected—and debated—by contemporary critics such as Ellen Rooney, Caroline Levine, Colleen Lye, Eugenie Brinkema, and Anahid Nersessian, among others. While the U.S. predominates assigned primary texts (novels, poetry, film, visual art), scenes therein require attention to the global embedded within that national project, as well as race, gender, and class as historical formations subject to revision at the site of reading.

**English 481, sec 21**

**Studies in Literary Theory & Criticism**

*Theorizing Black Genders & Sexualities*

Marquis Bey

Introduces students to cultural, social, historical, artistic, and theoretical approaches to developing a global analytics of Blackness. Surveys Blackness as a category of critical analysis for both historical and contemporary social formations in the African Diaspora. Considers how gender, class, sexuality, and nationality shape the territory of Blackness.