

*Haverford College
English Department
Fall 2019 Course Guide*



*Containing descriptions of readings,
approaches and course conduct for all
department offerings.*

Major Requirements:

Admission to the major requires completion of at least two courses, one at the 100 level and 1-2 at the 200 level, by the end of the sophomore year; note: ENGL 150L may be counted as one 200-level course (since its rubrics are in line with 200-level materials).

In the total major requires eleven credits, including a .5 credit tutorial (298j) as part of Junior Seminar. Note 399F and 399B comprise a 1.5 credit course taken over the full senior year.

- Seven courses at the 100, 200 and 300 levels of which
 - At least two must be in literature written before 1800;
 - At least two in literature written after 1800;
 - At least one (and no more than two) must be at the 100 level; a minimum of two, preferably three, must be at the 200 level (WRPR 150 “Approaches to Literary Analysis” counts); and a minimum of two must be at the 300 level.
- ENGL 298 and 299, the two-semester Junior Seminar in English
- ENGL 298J, the .5 credit yearlong Junior Seminar in English
- ENGL 399F (Fall) and 399B (Spring) for a total of 1.5 credit Senior Conference

Note: The department will give major credit for one credit for one semester course in a foreign literature in the original language or for Comparative Literature 200. No more than four major credits will be awarded for work done beyond the Tri-College Consortium, whether abroad or in the U.S. Courses taken in the Bryn Mawr English Department, the Swarthmore English Department, and the U. Penn English Department may also be counted towards the major at Haverford.

Creative Writing Concentration:

Creative Writing courses at Haverford are open to all students. Only a handful of English majors per year, however, are accepted into the Creative Writing Concentration.

The Creative Writing Concentration entails:

- Two courses in creative writing (only one of which is counted toward the major).
- Writing a senior thesis composed of an original creative text (usually poetry, fiction or drama) and a rigorous critical introduction.

Students interested in completing a Creative Writing Concentration apply for acceptance in the spring semester of their junior year by submitting a portfolio of creative work to the department chair, Professor Asali Solomon, **by the Friday before Spring Break of their junior year (no extensions)**. The Departmental Concentration Committee will grant admission to students whose work suggests their readiness to generate a substantial literary project.

English Department Course Offerings Fall 2019

Asali Solomon, Chair

COURSE NUMBER	DIV. DIST. CROSSLIST	COURSE NAME	CLASS HOURS	LTD. ENROLL.	INSTRUCTOR
ENGL 110A	HU	Reading Poetry	M/W 11:15-12:45	20	Devaney
ENGL 120A	HU/CL	The Epic in English	T/TH 11:30-1:00		McInerney
ENGL 209A	HU/VIST/GS	Third World Cinema: Desiring Freedoms, Freeing Desires	T 7:30-10:00 p.m.	25	Rajbanshi
ENGL 216A	HU	In the American Strain: Music in Writing 1855-1975	W 1:30-4:00		Devaney
ENGL 233A	HU/AA	Topics in Caribbean: A New Wave	T/TH 11:30-1:00	25	Solomon
ENGL 238A	HU	Creative Non Fiction Workshop	F 11:00-1:00	15	Kalfus
ENGL 254A	HU/GS	Topics in Victorian Literature: Pre-Raphaelites, Aesthetes and Decadents: Gender and Sexuality in late 19 th Century	T/TH 1-2:30		Sherman
ENGL 258A	HU	The “Rise” of the Novel	M/W 11:15-12:45		Diamond
ENGL 260A	HU	In the American Grain: Traditions in American Literature	T/TH 2:30-4:00		Zwarg
ENGL 291A	HU	Creative Writing Poetry I	F 1:30-4:00	15	Devaney
ENGL 293A	HU	Introduction to Creative Writing: Fiction	W 1:30-4:00	15	Solomon
ENGL 298A	HU	Junior Seminar	T/TH 10:00-11:30		Stadler/Reckson
ENGL 301A	HU/CL/GS	Pre-Modern Women Writers	T/TH 2:30-4:00	15	Watson
ENGL 355A	HU	Literature and Theories of the Postsecular	M 1:30-4:00		Diamond
ENGL 364A	HU/AA	John Brown’s Body: Violence, Natural Fantasy, and Bodies that Matter	W 1:30-4:00	15	Zwarg
ENGL 399A	HU	Senior Conferences: Watson, Zwarg, Stadler, McGrane, Reckson, Solomon			
WRPR150A	HU	Writing Program: Rajbanshi, Watson, Sherman	T/TH 10:00-11:30		

Cross-Listing Key: VIST=Visual Studies, AA=Africana Studies, CL=Comparative Literature, GS=Gender & Sexuality Studies

ENGL 110
M/W 11:15-12:45 p.m.

Thomas Devaney
HU

READING POETRY

From early lyrics and early modern, to the modernist and contemporary poets writing today, the course covers a great range, including what Gwendolyn Brooks indicates about participation and complexity, "It is brave to be involved. To be not fearful to be unresolved." Class meetings are largely devoted to close examinations of individual poems, sometimes word-by-word. We will employ a number of analytical and interpretive modes, reflective of current understandings of reading as a diverse, open-ended, and guided by an interplay of our own readings of the texts. We will also attend to the sensual aspects of sound and musical (tones and rhythms) of the voice, as well as investigate the poem as a visual artifact on the page.

Introduction to the most common types of poetry in English: narrative, dramatic, lyric. The working approach is that of close reading, often word by word, in order to investigate the poetic uses of rhythm and pattern; of sound and music; of appeals to the senses; of allusion to history, art, other literature; of connotation and denotation; and of metaphor.

Our primary text is the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*, Sixth Edition. The anthology will be supplemented by PDFs (on Moodle) and other supportive materials (theory and criticism). Active class engagement is a central aspect of the course. There will be short weekly analytical, interpretive/responsive, or creative exercises; a longer essay is due at the end of term. Students at every level are welcome, but most especially first and second year students at the College.

TEXTS

- *Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 6th Edition

The Epic in English

Through close readings of texts ranging from the classical to the modern, this course will investigate the poetic and narrative strategies of epic poetry. While the English tradition can, in one sense, be said to begin with *Beowulf*, the Anglo-Saxon epic left almost no mark upon the subsequent history of the genre. The heroic impulse in the English tradition is instead much more powerfully influenced and complicated by the antithetical models of Homer, Ovid, and, later, by that of Dante. We will explore the tensions and contradictions between insular narratives and traditions and the continuing power of classical and continental models. Working through the concepts of context and intertextuality, we will pay particular attention to the backwaters and cross-currents of the tradition in English, and to the tendency of epic energy to move in unexpected directions: into theology with Milton, toward satire or impossibility in the Romantic period, into various cinematic and pop-culture modes in the 21st century. Why, for instance, do otherwise intelligent people feel that it is appropriate to refer to the James Bond films as “epic”?

Be forewarned: the reading load for this class is heavy. But then you already know that epics are long, right?

Requirements:

- ❖ 2 short (3-5 page) essays based in close reading of specific texts
- ❖ 1 3-5 page essay investigating a pop-culture revision of an epic narrative and investigating the ideological implications of such revision
- ❖ 1 6-8 page essay developing an intertextual reading of a poem (due at the end of the semester.
- ❖ Regular and engaged participation

Readings

Homer, *Odyssey*
Anonymous, *Beowulf*
Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (selections)
Dante, *Inferno*
Milton, *Paradise Lost* (selections)
Keats, *Fall of Hyperion*
Byron, *Don Juan* (selections)
Derek Walcott, *Omeros*

ENGLH 209
Third World Cinema:
Desiring Freedoms/Freeing Desires
Eng/Comp Lit/Vis Arts

Reema Rajbanshi
Fall 2019
T 730-10 pm

This course introduces students to Third and Fourth World films and their generative contexts from the mid-20th c. onwards, with a focus on Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. We consider questions of sovereignty and desire in the following units: post-colonial nation-building, feminist and queer visions of these, and continuous dilemmas under late capitalism. The final unit closes with Fourth World filmic articulations of sovereignty and desire, as in *Roma*, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, *Charlie's Country*, and *Aranyer Din Ratri*. Course readings include Shohat and Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentricism: Multiculturalism and the Media* and cultural theory articles to support discussion of specific filmic move/ments. Course structure follows two films weekly, a biweekly blog entry, one writing response for each of four units, student presentations after the break, and a final exam. Class discussion runs Tuesday evenings and screenings Sunday evenings. Cross-listed for English, Comparative Literature, and Visual Arts. Limited enrollment 25 students.

THE STRAIN: MUSIC IN AMERICAN WRITING (1855–2014)
THOMAS DEVANEY | FALL 2019
ENGL 216
W 1:30-4:00 P.M.

This seminar is an investigation of music in American literature through close study of significant texts and recordings. Walt Whitman was immersed in opera; Emily Dickinson was steeped in the hymnbook; Zora Neale Hurston in folksong; Amiri Baraka in the blues and bebop; John Cage in silence. We will explore how poetic music and *music* diverge, but also look at the ways in which songs and poetry have fed and inspired each other.

What does Whitman mean when he says he hears “America singing”? What are the implications of, “Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else”? We will explore the roots of the lyric and the tradition of the single expressive speaker, as well as look at how measure and musical effects are deployed and felt in poetry and prose.

The class will listen to and study versions of the Navaho Night Chant and read translations of songs from the Chippewa (Ojibwe). Some questions include: How do sonic technologies shape and/or distort the imagining of Native American peoples? What might we gain by thinking across the boundaries of text, sound, and image as we approach these questions?

This course is an exploration of what Alice Notely calls, “musical closework.” The class will chart the rich borderlands between music and speech, and pay close attention to how the breath and ear are used in the structuring of a poem, as well as explore how the breath-unit helps us experience the event of the text. Considering music and prosody we will investigate ideas around the variable foot and projective verse as each seeks to find its own measure or sound, poem-by-poem. Further questions include: What is the relation of the body and the text? How do personal experiences of music inform how we listen/hear/interpret? In open-field poetry how does the articulation of phraselike shapes help the reader to speak the poem? W.C. Williams provides one guide: “...the best of what the best of us write comes to us by way of the ear, is there a valid reason why it should not be studied and understood?”

English 233

Topics in Caribbean Literature: A New Wave

Asali Solomon

T/Th 11:30-1

Since the mid-20th century, the literature of the Caribbean (principally its emigres) has often thematized a sense of racial, economic, cultural, linguistic and geographical marginalization. At the dawn of the 21st century, writers of Caribbean origin inhabit the center of contemporary writing in English: selling scads of books, winning the most prestigious prizes and becoming household names. These include but are not limited to Marlon James, Claudia Rankine, Junot Díaz, Edwidge Danticat, Jamaica Kincaid, and Lin-Manuel Miranda. Students in this course will read contemporary and earlier influential texts. In addition to a selection of book-length works, we will be reading a selection of poems by Derek Wolcott and Aimé Césaire, stories by Junot Díaz, Edwidge Danticat and by the Caribbean-Canadian speculative fiction writer Nalo Hopkinson, and essays by Frantz Fanon, Audre Lorde and Édouard Glissant. We will end by listening to the appallingly addictive soundtrack to “Hamilton,” and considering how a Scottish-descended American Founding Father has found fame as a New York-based rapper.

Requirements for the course will include a series of response papers, two shorter essays (5-7pp) and a longer research essay (8-10pp).

The Lonely Londoners, Samuel Selvon

Zami: A New Spelling of My Name, Audre Lorde

A Small Place, Jamaica Kincaid

Soldier, June Jordan

Soledad, Angie Cruz

Don't Let Me Be Lonely, Claudia Rankine

The Book of Night Women, Marlon James

Hamilton, Lin-Manuel Miranda

Creative Nonfiction Workshop
English 238
Ken Kalfus
F 11:00-1:30

Fact-based writing can be imaginative, lyrical, analytical, personal, opinionated and funny. The only demand is that it's based on objective reality, a much contested concept that is nevertheless objectively real. In this class we'll read some of the most accomplished advocates for the real and the true, including George Orwell, Wesley Yang, Rebecca Solnit, Virginia Woolf and Colson Whitehead. We'll study and discuss the mechanics behind the several forms of non-fiction represented by our readings. Students will write and revise their own essays before workshopping them and then they will revise them again. The class will emphasize language, voice and careful observation.

Attendance in this class is limited and dependent on the submission of a piece of creative writing to the instructor, Ken Kalfus (kkalfus@haverford.edu) by August 1. It can be either non-fiction or fiction.

**Topics in Victorian Literature: Pre-Raphaelites, Aesthetes and Decadents:
Gender and Sexuality in the late 19th Century**

Late in *The Cantos*, Ezra Pound recalls the impression Henry James would make in mixed company:

Which being the case, her holding dear H. J.
(Mr. James, Henry) literally by the button-hole. . . .
in those so consecrated surroundings
(a garden in the Temple, no less)
and saying, *for once*, the right thing
namely: "Cher maître"
to his checqued waistcoat. . . .(79/488)

So, too, did James Joyce call upon "Henry *dernier cri* James" (*Ulysses*, 10:1216). Clearly, both advert here to James as aesthete, and to his stature for that transitional moment between the literatures of the late Edwardian and early modern period. And it is worth recalling that the formative influence upon the great modernists--Yeats, Pound, Joyce-- or the world in which they first found themselves was exactly those last impulses of the 19th century towards the aesthetic in literature and art. But what was contained in that ambiguous and complicated figure of James? And what might remain of what Pound clearly saw as a failed project in "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (1919):

Don't kick against the pricks,
Accept opinion. The "Nineties" tried your game
And died, there's nothing in it."

More importantly, what might survive such failure? What might have been elided--educated but effaced--in that turn towards the aesthetic? Or what might have value for us, so removed from that particular moment in a cultural history no longer our own, as Pound discovered in his own displacement, "born in a half-savage country, out of date. . . .

This course will look at those movements in the late 19th century which were deliberately subversive of what might seem transparent Victorian cultural practice in the matter of women and men. In refuting a *bourgeois* politics, these also expose the more complicated and enmeshed practice of both a poetic and erotic economy of desire in which the aesthetic recalibrates issues of gender and sexuality. In other words, aesthetic *dicta* become a lens through which structures of desire are interrogated, subverted, denied and reinvented; identity is open to play in this nexus of contested meaning, an "underground" or reservoir of illicit and contravened desire with the potential to break, rupture and spill; and such emergent terms as the "New Man" (effeminate, "aesthetic" and clearly homosexual), curiously complimented by a "New Woman" (masculinized, dominant, and heterosexual), subvert restrictive categories of identity and desire in both sociopolitical, moral, religious, and passional or affective discourse.

We will begin with the several instancings of an Aesthetic Movement in Britain in the latter part of the century: Pre-Raphaelite painting and poetry, most especially the work of William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones; then turning to the formative and definitive aestheticism introduced in the work of Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley, using as a supplement to our study *The Yellow Book* (the original edition of which forms part of the Rare Book collection in the Magill Library). This is not, however, to suggest that our attention to the aesthetic will be exclusively British: we will also look at the “nervous”, eccentric and sexualized line of *Art Nouveau* design, both graphic and architectural, in the work of Victor Horta, Hector Guimard, Josef Hoffmann, and Joseph Olbrich, as well as the putative “origin” of the aesthetic and decadent in Huysman’s *À Rebours*. We will also read several novels as a literature which pursues the sensational, the erotic, and the “uncanny”--Wilkie Collins’ *Woman in White*; Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*; Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* --and one novel, Henry James’ *The Ambassadors*, which, though it might seem assiduously unlike these, is subtly engaged in just such revisions of sexual and gendered identity, particularly and especially in the ambiguous and charged declaration to “Live, live all you can!”

Texts

Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*

Ed. Collins and Rundle, *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Oscar Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray*

Henry James, *The Ambassadors*

ENGL 258
M/W 11:15-12:45 p.m.

David Diamond
Fall 2019

The “Rise” of the Novel

Thanks in large part to Ian Watt’s Foundational study, the eighteenth century has become synonymous with the “rise” of the novel as a literary form. This course introduces both the early history of the novel and the tradition of criticism that seeks to explain it. What is a novel, exactly, and what are the cultural conditions that give it definition? What are the stakes of the idea, posited by Watt and then reformulated in several ways over the second half of the twentieth century, that the novel originates in eighteenth-century Britain? Reading fiction by Eliza Haywood, Henry Fielding, and Frances Burney in tandem with modern scholarship, we evaluate the persuasiveness of Watt’s account and of those that build on or respond to it. We also investigate the assumptions underlying the persistent characterization of the eighteenth century as a period of rising action, marked by the emergence of new forms and forms of thought.

English 260A
Professor Zwarg

Tuesday-Thursday 2:30-4:00

In the American Grain: Traditions in American Literature
(Satisfies pre-1800 requirement)

This course will conceptualize American literature as a comparative literature whose traditions emerge from certain inalienable forces released as English becomes the dominant political language of North America. Thus Shakespeare's late drama The Tempest and Aphra Behn's "novel" Oroonoko will frame our discussion of the significant cultural specters haunting the English language as it adapts to and seizes political control of the continent. When ships begin circling the Atlantic, pulling radically different world views into contact, their route shapes a cultural exchange far more various and complex than competing empires of Europe can understand and control: the creative productions and exchanges of that route engrave an emerging and flawed democratic republic with hidden levels of meaning, a heterogeneous blend of memory and experience that will make itself manifest in a variety of forms.

Powerful transformative energies emerge from the curious mix of privilege, dislocation and calamity on this American scene, whether in the terror and strange delight found in the pages of Columbus' journal, Cabeza de Vaca's account of the Southwest, Rowlandson's captivity narrative about her time with the Wampanoag Indians, in the Salem witch hunt so oddly reported by Cotton Mather, or in the circum-Atlantic revelations of print culture and urbanity as depicted by Olaudah Equiano, and Ben Franklin. The circuits traveled so differently by these writers reveal something of what can happen to a trickster tale as it moves from oral to written form, with wavering patterns of self promotion and self-irony.

By the close of the eighteenth century, the tension between the marvelous and the scientific always at play in the renaissance deepens into the psychological peregrinations of Brown's Wieland. At the same time, the epistolary form so constituent of the novel becomes the vehicle for sending a message about the seductive and captivating reversals at play in this nation's constitutional moment, as we will find in Foster's The Coquette. And there are ghosts haunting truths held to be self-evident in revolutions past, passing, and to come. If Poe purloins the letter to find them, Turner's "confessions" reveal the confused translations of liberty and violence at the core of our "freedoms."

With the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, people escaping from slavery become subjects of a captivity narrative stranger than anything Rowlandson might have imagined, and by 1851 Melville's Moby-Dick reprises the Tempest. Students should be able to ask a number of important questions by the end of the course. Does the great WHITE whale rise from the lower depths of Prospero's mind? Will the Raven (Caliban?) ever stop his mournful refrain? Perhaps Ahab, like Nat Turner, is the only one capable of saying "no" in thunder; or perhaps Ahab's determination is a delusional desire pitching toward its final wrack.

Do not take this course if you are afraid of the dark!

Jacques Derrida, from Monolingualism of the Other: Or the Prosthesis of Origin

Creative Writing Poetry I | Fall 2019 | Haverford College
ENGLH291A01 | Friday 1:30-4 pm

English 291A01 is a creative writing workshop on poetry. Student work is the focus along with the analysis of a wide variety of poems and poets. Weekly writing prompts will encourage students to widen their scope and develop their craft. Poetry is a language inquiry. Each week students will write poems that respond to other poems and some of the principal genres of poetry. Students will be asked to respond to the works of classmates. From Ross Gay to Pindar, we will explore the lyric form the Ode – all that has been sung, and all that has yet to be sung, and all that has gone unsung. We will write poems in praise of the praise poem, for its spontaneity, its expansiveness, and its openness to a wide range of emotions. “That Time, We All Heard It.” As Gwendolyn Brooks writes of Paul Robeson: “Warning, in music-words / devout and large, / that we are each other’s / harvest: / we are each other’s / business: / we are each other’s / magnitude and bond.”

A final portfolio of revised poems (10 to 12 pages) is required.

TEXTS:

- *Sleeping on the Wing*, edited by Kenneth Koch and Kate Farrell
- *Voices in the Air*, by Naomi Shihab Nye
- *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*, by Ross Gay

English 293: Creative Writing: Introduction to Fiction
Asali Solomon
W 1:30-4

This course will explore the glorious art and stringent discipline of writing short fiction, through a focus on the fundamental elements of stories: character, plot and language. The centerpiece of class meetings will be a workshop where students discuss their peers' work and offer useful and inspiring feedback. We will also read and discuss a wide range published short fiction, learning to respond to this work as *fiction writers*. The success of this course depends on each student's frequent and thoughtful participation; **those who expect to miss more than one meeting due to previously scheduled events should consider another course.** We will read a mix of contemporary and canonical writers. The syllabus will include such writers as Octavia Butler, Flannery O'Connor, Gish Jen, Edwidge Danticat, Sherman Alexie, Adam Johnson, Jenny Zhang, Lydia Davis, Carmen Maria Machado and George Saunders. Students in this course will write two complete stories for workshop (6-10pp), revise a final project and turn in a wide variety of writing exercises.

This course has a limited enrollment of 15 students. You must submit a writing sample for consideration. Please submit a HARD COPY of no more than 10 pp, preferably but not crucially prose fiction, labeled with your name, year and major to the English Department office, Woodside 100, by the end of the pre-registration period.

You will hear about your status in the course at the beginning of Fall 2019.

English Junior Seminar 298, 299, 298j

T/TH 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

298, Junior Seminar I Junior seminar comprises a two part sequence that, through class readings, discussion, and writing tutorials, engages students in a study of (1) texts and genres representing the historical range and geographic diversity of literatures written in English, (2) critical theory, cultural representation, and the emergence of textual traditions, and (3) the practice of scholarship within the discipline. Prerequisite(s): Only open to English majors Enrollment Limit: 17

298J, Junior Seminar I An intensive series of tutorials focused on theory, writing, and revision. Students register only in the fall semester but the .5 credit tutorial accompanies the full two-semester course, 298 and 299.

299, Junior Seminar II Part II of the Junior Seminar sequence. Junior seminar comprises a two part sequence that, through class readings, discussion, and writing tutorials, engages students in a study of (1) texts and genres representing the historical range and geographic diversity of literatures written in English, (2) critical theory, cultural representation, and the emergence of textual traditions, and (3) the practice of scholarship within the discipline. Prerequisite(s): ENGL 298 Enrollment Limit: 17



Course Description:

In 1928, Virginia Woolf urged women writers to draw inspiration from literary “foremothers” such as Jane Austen. But who were the women who paved the way *before* Austen? This course examines medieval and renaissance women writers active between 1100 and 1700. We will read the romances of Marie de France, the mystical visions of Hildegard von Bingen and Margery Kempe, the proto-feminist works of Christine de Pizan, and the bawdy poetry of Gwerful Mechain. We will study the political speeches of Elizabeth I, the poetry of Isabella Whitney and Aemilia Lanyer, the science fiction writing of Margaret Cavendish, and the early novel of Aphra Behn. While the heart of the course will cover women authors in England and Western Europe, we will also consider women writers such as Anna Komnene, a Byzantine princess and historian, and ‘A’ishah al-Ba’uniyyah, an Arabic scholar and poet. Although we will read all foreign-language texts in translation, students with knowledge of Latin, Arabic, French, German, or Italian will be encouraged to engage with the primary texts in their original languages.

Throughout the course, we will consider the social and cultural circumstances that have challenged women writers across time. How, we will ask, have women overcome restricted access to education or harmonized the art of writing with the ever present duties of wifhood and motherhood? How have women carved out a space for their writing in a male-dominated profession? What methods do women use to authorize their voices? Secondary texts by historians and literary scholars will guide our inquiry, offering critical frameworks for the investigation of gender, writing, and authority.

Assignments will include in-class presentations, two short papers, and a final project. The final project may take the form of a research paper or a creative project.

Tentative Reading List:

Hildegard von Bingen, “The Cosmic Egg” and “A Vision of Love” (c.1160)

Marie de France, *Lays and Fables* (c.1170)

Trota of Salerno, *The Trotula, A Compendium of Women’s Medicine* (c.1200)

Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405)

Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (c.1430)

Gwerful Mechain, “Cywydd y cedor (The Female Genitals)” (c.1490)

Isabella Whitney, *A Sweet Nosegay* (1573)

Elizabeth I, “The Golden Speech” (1601)

Aemilia Lanyer, “Eve’s Apology in Defense of Women” (1611)

Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World* (1666)

Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History* (2000)

David Wallace, *Strong Women: Life, Text, and Territory 1347-1645* (2011)

Elaine V. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (1987)

ENGL 355
M 1:30-4:00

David Diamond
Fall 2019

Literature & Theories of the Postsecular

For most of the twentieth century, the study of religion and literature was dominated by the “secularization thesis”, the argument that faith began to disappear from public life after the seventeenth century and that its disappearance is what made us modern. More recently, the secularization thesis has come under intense scrutiny. Scholars in literary studies and related disciplines are debating what it would mean to be *postsecular*. If we conclude that the secularization thesis is not historically accurate, that culture has not simply been liberated from the tyranny of superstition, then how should we talk about the religious expression or critique? For some, practicing postsecularism means showing the importance of religion in texts that are usually described as secular, i.e. lacking or opposed to religion. For others, it means revealing the entanglements of secularism, empire, and race. Still others challenge the religious-secular binary itself, seeking new vocabularies of devotional experience. This course examines such theories of the postsecular in writings by Talal Asad, Tomoko Masuzawa, and Jared Hickman, among others, as well as in literary touchstones like Herman Melville’s *Benito Cereno*.

Christina Zwarg

Wednesday 1:30-4:00

Hall 203

English 364A: Topics in American Literature

John Brown's Body: Violence, National Fantasy, and Bodies that Matter

Martyr, fanatic, hero, revolutionary, terrorist, sage? Who was John Brown and what did he come to represent for our culture? When Harriet Jacobs informed Lydia Maria Child that she wished to close her slave narrative with a discussion of John Brown's famous raid on Harper's Ferry, Child strongly advised her against it. Fearful that he would be accused of assisting Brown, Frederick Douglass fled to Canada. So did the husband of Julia Ward Howe, Sam Gridley Howe, one of the "secret six" who backed Brown's cause. Despite their previous belief in the efficacy of civil disobedience, Emerson and Thoreau both gave lectures on Brown's behalf, and upon hearing of his execution, Victor Hugo wrote a long tribute to Brown as a martyr to the cause of freedom.

Douglass, William Wells Brown and Martin Delany praised Brown when the occasion allowed, sometimes connecting and comparing his actions to Nat Turner's slave rebellion. For others, the association with Turner and the violent course adopted by Brown elicited fears of anarchy and social disorder. And indeed, the path to a violent Civil War seemed to get shorter with each new expression of sympathy for a man some took to be a dangerous fanatic.

This course will use the spectacular life and death of John Brown to examine a common set of interests in a diverse set of texts produced across two centuries. These interests include terrorism and the place of violence in the cause of liberty, the relationship of aesthetic value to changing social and political claims, the role of race and gender in the construction of emancipatory rhetoric, the role of that same rhetoric in the creation (or conservation) of a cultural and national sense of history, including the primary forgotten history of Haiti, as well as the terrorizing activity of lynching. We will look at the transformation of this story through a number of forms, including the essay, the short story, the novel, the public letter or lecture, the poem, and the song.

Required Reading available in the Bookstore: (Others on Moodle)

Michel-Rolph Trouillot	<i>Silencing the Past</i>
W.E.B. Du Bois	<i>John Brown</i>
Henry David Thoreau	<i>Civil Disobedience and Other Essays</i>
William Faulkner	<i>Light in August</i>
Herman Melville	<i>Bartleby and Benito Cereno</i>
Jean Baudrillard	<i>The Spirit of Terrorism</i>
Don DeLillo	<i>Mao II</i>