

Spring 2027 English Course Descriptions

ENG 231-001/10400/Global Literature Survey/TR 09:30 am-10:45 am/HUMHAL 308/Wurzbacher A

ENG 231-002/10401/Global Literature Survey/TR 02:00 pm-03:15 pm/HUMHAL 308/Wurzbacher A

Animals in Literature

This introductory literature course will focus on the burgeoning field of literary animal studies, using texts that feature non-human animals as voices, characters, symbols, or inspiration to explore our personal, cultural, and ethical relationships with animals and their worlds. Questions to be considered include: What does it mean to attempt to represent animals' lives and voices in our literature? How have such representations changed over time and across cultures, and what do they reveal about our shifting attitudes and practices toward animals in society? What kinds of emotions, ethics, and consciousnesses do animals have, and what are the implications of this information for human literature and behavior? What might our imaginings of non-human animal lives teach us about the human condition—about our values, fears, capabilities, limitations, and cruelties? What distinguishes “wild” from “tame” or “human” from “animal,” and what are the potential consequences of these groupings? Please note that the use of generative AI is prohibited on all assignments for this course.

ENG 231-003/12191/Global Literature Survey/TR 11:00 am-12:15 pm/HUMHAL 208/Murphy J

GHOST IN THE MACHINE: RISE OF THE MODERN SELF

"Ghost in the Machine" is a metaphoric description that refers to the tensions between inner life and outer structures—the mind within the body, the self within society, the voice within language, the soul within steel. This course explores how certain writers since the 19th Century have grappled with those tensions as they redefined identity in times of increasing uncertainty, fragmentation, and change. Approaching these themes through poetry, the most ancient and arguably most intensely humanizing literary form, we will examine how the modern self is imagined, inherited, fractured and reclaimed across different historical and cultural contexts.

ENG 231-004/15124/Global Literature Survey/MW 12:30 pm-01:45 pm/HUMHAL 309/Rickel J

The Western Individual and Its Others

What does it mean to be a ‘civilized’ individual in the West? How are such individuals valued as members of social and political economies, and how has identity developed in relation to a capitalist system? Through what class, race, and gender-based exclusions has this Western individual been defined from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries? What role has literature played in the construction of Western identity over the last three hundred years?

The reading in this global literature survey reflects economic, political, and aesthetic ideals about the individual and his or her relation to society. We will study narrative techniques used to establish individual identity; projects of individual resistance to civil government and capitalist structures; modernism as a reaction to the alienation of the individual; and postmodernism as a way of rethinking normative structures that discipline the individual. All the while we will consider how representations of and by women and people of color relate to gendered and racialized norms in the development of the Western individual.

ENG 231-301/13777/Global Literature Survey/TBA TBA/NONE NONE/Atwood E

ENG 231-302/15088/Global Literature Survey/TBA TBA/NONE NONE/Atwood E

Myth, Monster, Mermaid: Making the Human

In this section of Global Literature, we will tackle a variety of texts from the ancient world to contemporary film, asking questions about how humanity has defined itself through the fictional monsters that it creates. By examining foundational texts from Western literature (such as *The Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, *The Tempest*, and *Frankenstein*), we will begin to develop a theory of monster-making that responds to cultural pressures including multiculturalism, colonialism, scientific development, and religious upheaval. By exploring these canonical exemplars alongside more recent works such as the

Afrofuturist mermaid utopia *The Deep* (Solomon) and art-horror films, we will explore the role that monsters and the imagination play in our own lives.

ENG 232-001/10440/Global Literature Topics/TR 02:00 pm-03:15 pm/HUMHAL 208/Johnson V

“Robin Hood”

This course will explore a unique literary genre that cuts across time, space, and literary kinds: the stories of Robin Hood. We will explore how genre and medium create nuance in Robin Hood stories by studying and contrasting medieval ballads with modern popular novels, including *The Outlaws of Sherwood* by Robin McKinley, *The Forest Queen* by Betsy Cornwell, *The Traitor of Sherwood Forest* by Amy Kaufman, and *Lady of the Forest* by Jennifer Roberson. The course will explore how the tradition itself responds to new genres of literature and artistry, as well as new authorial voices in the modern era.

ENG 232 satisfies the humanities general education requirement for 3 hours in literature or 3 hours in humanities.

Prerequisite(s): ENG 102 (or 104)

ENG 232-002/14814/Global Literature Topics/MW 02:00 pm-03:15 pm/HUMHAL 208/Rozelle H

Future Worlds: Speculative Spaces in Global Literature

This section of English 232 probes the fate of global landscapes in Nigerian, Japanese, Canadian, British, Argentinian, and American literature. Combining fantasy and science fiction, the novels and media explored in this course delve into dystopian, apocalyptic, and phantasmagorical future shock. Required Texts include *Who Fears Death* by Nnedi Okorafor, *The Ghost in the Shell* by Shirow Masamune, *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood, *Tender is the Flesh* by Augustina Bazterrica, *Blade Runner* by Philip K. Dick, and *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia E. Butler.

ENG 232-301/13324/Global Literature Topics/Online Asynchronous/Martin C

"Games in Novels"

For this specific section of Global Literature that explores "Games in Novels," I have selected three novels that revolve around different types of games: an escape room, a reality tv game show, and video games. You will also encounter other types of play, such as puzzles in various forms, competition games, and game design. While there are many links between games and literature, our focus will be on characters and the connections that games can provide. Please note that there is no active game play in this course, but there will be reading and analysis of full-length novels, which is itself a type of play.

ENG 234-01H/10448/Honors Global Lit Topics/TR 11:00 am-12:15 pm/HUMHAL 206/Beringer A

ENG 234-02H/15398/Honors Global Lit Topics/TR 02:00 pm-03:15 pm/HUMHAL 206/Beringer A

Introduction to Comics and Graphic Narratives

Graphic Narrative is a general term for comic strips, graphic novels, bandes dessinées, manga, sequential prints, and webcomics. In recent years, cultural and literary critics have recognized that graphic narratives are more than just simple pictures or hollow amusements; they are a sophisticated medium with their own elaborate language and conventions.

We will explore the history and theory of this exciting artistic and literary medium from the 18th century to the present across multiple global cultures. Course readings will feature important historical works like William Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* and Rodolphe Töpffer's *Monsieur Vieux Bois*, classic newspaper comics like Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland* and George Herriman's *Krazy Kat*, Bandes Dessinées like Herge's *Tintin au Tibet* and Penelope Bagieu's *Cadavre Exquis* (Exquisite Corpse), manga like Osamu Tezuka's *Astroboy* and Rioko Ikeda's *Rose of Versailles*, superhero comics from the golden age to the present including Jack Kirby and Stan Lee's *Fantastic Four* and Tom King's *Supergirl: The Woman of Tomorrow*, graphic novels like Filipe Melo's *Ballad for Sophie*, and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, as well as recent webcomics by Dan Schkade, Kate Beaton, and others.

Note: The honors section of this course places increased emphasis on collaborative and experiential teaching and learning methods. For Spring 2027, students will collaborate on creating an interactive exhibit and installation about webcomics.

ENG 261-001/12194/Intro to Creative Writing/TR 09:30 am-10:45 am/HUMHAL 302/Murphy J

English 261 is a reading and writing-intensive course designed to introduce you to the genres of fiction and poetry and is the first of a three-part sequence available in creative writing. You will write in each genre and will also learn to “read as a writer,” analyzing the use of various craft elements by published writers, your classmates, and eventually, yourself. This course demands active participation, a willingness to share work in a supportive creative community, and a commitment to regular and extensive reading and writing. Through regular in-class workshops, you will learn to develop constructive responses to others’ creative work, and to receive and consider the feedback you receive from your fellow writers. English 261 now counts for Gen Ed credit in the "Personal Development" category. "The use of ChatGPT or other generative AI tools is not permitted on any assignment or activity for this class."

ENG 300-001/10450/Intro to Literary Studies/TR 11:00 am-12:15 pm/HUMHAL 306/Morgan M

ENG 300 is specifically designed for English students to gain and hone skills in undergraduate writing and research that will prepare them to enter the fields of English and literary studies. This course will introduce students to current disciplinary trends, including but not limited to critical approaches, research methods, and vocabulary and skills necessary for success in the major and the field. Through discussion, writing, workshops, and the completion of analytical research and literary projects, students will begin to shape their unique engagements in and contributions to a community of writers and scholars concerned with the use and role of language and literature in shaping meaning and in consuming, creating, and disseminating knowledge. English majors and minors are strongly encouraged to take ENG 300 during the World Literature sequence (ENG 231/233 or 232/234). Prerequisite(s): ENG 102 (or 104).

Students must receive a minimum grade of “C” in ENG 300 to progress through the remaining required courses for the English degree.

ENG 302-001/15171/ST: Black Popular Culture/TR 09:30 am-10:45 am/HUMHAL 206/Morgan M
Cross-listed with AAS 302-001

Black Popular Culture

This course will focus on the production of Black popular or “pop” culture in the United States with special emphasis on the linkages between “mainstream” pop culture and pop culture originating in and from African Diasporic experiences. Students will engage Black performance theory and other sociological, historical, and theoretical perspectives to understand and critically exam topics related to Black pop culture; these include but are not limited to Black performance and representation in television, film, and drama; Black music/musical contributions ((blues, jazz, soul, neo-soul, R&B, rap, Hip hop, etc.) and dance; and Black artwork, media, and fashion. Through discussions, screenings, and analyses, we will engage these topics and their correlations to African oral traditions, folklore, and minstrelsy as well as Black protest traditions and methods of resistance. By the end of the semester, students will have surveyed an array of Black creative and aesthetic expressions that—individually and collectively—provide students insights into ways that shared meanings and ways of life have emerged via US traditions in general and the experiences and productions of the African Diaspora in particular.

ENG 306-001/11023/Literature English Survey II/TR 09:30 am-10:45 am/HUMHAL 306/Beringer A

A survey of literature in English from 1700-1900, with emphasis on major trends, influential writers, and the transatlantic dialogue that emerged following the American Revolution. We will explore developments as writers responded to the exigencies of living in a world transformed by war, slavery, migration, industrialization, and the emergence of the United States and Britain as imperial powers. Our discussions will take us through major formal developments such as romantic poetry, realism, and the rise of the novel. We will also explore the ever-expanding array of ethnic and subaltern literature of this period. Three recurring motifs will help us organize our study: Conceptions of citizenship, depictions of the natural environment, and transatlantic circuits of intellectual exchange.

(Note: English 306 is only offered in the Spring semester; English majors should plan accordingly)

ENG 310-051/10453/Literature for Children/M 05:00 pm-07:45 pm/HUMHAL 208/Beringer A

This course provides theoretical knowledge for exploring children's literature as a distinctive art form and practical experience for planning curriculum for elementary and middle grades. Students will examine the history of children's literature, survey various critical approaches, acquire practical methods for using children's literature as a foundation for literacy, and explore children's literature as a means of initiating conversations on culture, identity, empathy, and justice. Students will learn how to select high quality children's literature; navigate questions of censorship and freedom of speech; integrate technology into classroom discussions; and cultivate a sense of "play" in their approaches to teaching and discussing children's literature. Course texts will include a variety of classic and contemporary children's books, graphic novels, and visual media.

ENG 361-001/13807/Intermediate Creative Writing/TR 11:00 am-12:15 pm/HUMHAL 307/Wurzbacher A

Intermediate Creative Writing: Fiction

This course is an intermediate-level, workshop-based seminar on the short story. We will read and analyze stories from a writer's perspective, concentrating on how various craft elements (characterization, plot structure, point of view, voice, and more) function and combine to create compelling narratives. We will pay particular attention to the relationship between a story's content and its form. How can the form of a story relate to its subject matter or enhance its theme? How can we, as writers, use craft to shape meaning? Readings will consist of original student work, published short stories, and essays on the craft of fiction.

ENG 365-051/14815/CW Forms: Magical Realism/W 05:00 pm-07:50 pm/HUMHAL 307/Wurzbacher A

ENG 365-05H/15571/Hnrs CW Forms: Magical Realism/W 05:00 pm-07:50 pm/HUMHAL 307/Wurzbacher A

Creative Writing Forms: Magical Realism

In this course, which will combine fiction writing and literary analysis, we will examine magical realism from a craft perspective. Magical realism makes use of the usual devices of realist literary fiction but treats the supernatural or otherworldly as an ordinary matter that is accepted and unchallenged by the story's characters. We will read fiction from different cultural and historical contexts in order to compare the workings of magical realism in North and South America over time, beginning with Gabriel García Márquez's magical realist masterpiece *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and culminating in the recent rise of "black magical realism" in contemporary Latin American (especially Argentine) short fiction. This course includes a workshop component; students will submit original creative writing for critique in addition to composing critical essays. The creative work should be inspired and guided by course readings by authors including Gabriel García Márquez, Juan Rulfo, Mariana Enriquez, Karen Russell, and others. **We will discuss *One Hundred Years of Solitude* near the beginning of the semester; students are strongly encouraged to obtain and begin reading the novel over winter break.**

Humanities 400: Professional Internship

English majors may perform a paid or unpaid internship at an approved business or organization for up to 3 credits towards their upper-level English elective requirements.

Internships help students form connections with potential employers and are a way for prospective job candidates to demonstrate their proficiency outside of the classroom. Research has consistently shown that internships are among the most influential factors for securing a job in a desired field after graduation. For example, a 2021 survey by the American Association of Colleges and Universities found that 9 out of 10 employers were more likely to hire a candidate who had had an internship.

For assistance with exploring and pursuing internship opportunities, contact Prof. Beringer at aberinger@montevallo.edu.

ENG 405-001/13105/Studies in One or Two Authors/TR 12:30 pm-01:45 pm/HUMHAL 206/Johnson V
ENG 505-001/13106/Studies in One or Two Authors/TR 12:30 pm-01:45 pm/HUMHAL 206/Johnson V

“Gower and Chaucer”

John Gower (c. 1330-1408) and Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343-1400) are contemporaries, influential poets who pushed genre boundaries, and linguistic innovators. Their major works are vital cornerstones to the development of English literature and languages. Both authors embodied the ideal of the liberal arts: both read broadly in literature, history, and philosophy; both were fluent speakers and writers in multiple languages; and both navigated multiple careers. Their textual legacies are equally rich, touching upon translation, poetry, philosophy, and natural sciences. This course will survey the major works of John Gower and Geoffrey Chaucer through the lens of the liberal arts, and seek to connect the poets’ varied perspectives to the history of English literature.

English Major Distribution:

Studies in One or Two Authors (ENG 405); Literature before 1800; British Literature

Prerequisites:

ENG 300 (grade of C or higher)

ENG 419-001/15399/Special Topics in Genre/MWF 12:00 pm-12:50 pm/HUMHAL 206/Rozelle H
ENG 519-001/15400/Special Topics in Genre/MWF 12:00 pm-12:50 pm/HUMHAL 206/Rozelle H

Speculative Fiction: Cyberpunk, Afrofuturism, Biopunk

In the 1980s, cyberpunk greatly changed the trajectory of speculative fiction by combining high-tech marvels and apocalyptic dread. Afrofuturists and Biopunks built upon the work of such luminaries as William Gibson and Philip K. Dick to explore issues ranging from human migration and cannibalism to singularity and plague. This class asks: What is punk? Why do most science fiction genres now end with the word “punk”? What are the theoretical underpinnings of speculative fiction? What is the relationship between technological advance and democratic values? What cultural fears and desires do the works studied in this class reveal?

Required Texts: *Who Fears Death* by Nnedi Okorafor, *The Ghost in the Shell* by Shirow Masamune, *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood, *Tender is the Flesh* by Augustina Bazterrica, *Blade Runner* by Philip K. Dick, and *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia E. Butler.

ENG 424-051/15401/Early Modern Literature/W 05:00 pm-07:30 pm/HUMHAL 306/Atwood E
ENG 524-051/15402/Early Modern Literature/W 05:00 pm-07:30 pm/HUMHAL 306/Atwood E

This course covers a variety of genres in early modern literature, ranging from the court of Henry VIII to the English Civil Wars. We will examine more traditional forms like sonnet sequences, plays, and epics as well as diaries, letters, speeches, recipe books, and other modes of expression. While this course will constitute a comprehensive survey of the period, it will be loosely themed around the concept of “making space” as we examine the way literature and the arts are influenced and inflected by architectural, dramaturgical, and social spaces. This theoretical lens will help give shape to the way we read a wide variety of texts and authors throughout the semester.

ENG 455-001/15403/Style & Editing Environmen Pub/MWF 01:00 pm-01:50 pm/HUMHAL 306/Mwenja C
ENG 555-001/15404/Style & Editing Environmen Pub/MWF 01:00 pm-01:50 pm/HUMHAL 306/Mwenja C

Style and Editing for Environmental Publications (TXLW)

Pre-requisites: ENG 102 (104)

Students in this class apply editing strategies to real-world texts, learning in the process how to think about writing with an editor’s eye. Through reading the course text and participating in class discussions, students will develop a common language for textual analysis and learn nuts and bolts editing strategies. Students then use those strategies to analyze and

revise writing taken from environmental media. Students will complete the class with the tools needed to skillfully edit texts for a variety of popular publishing outlets; such tools include the ability to assess generic expectations for specific writing contexts and to engage in a recursive writing process which moves multiple times through revision, editing, and proofreading.

Students who successfully complete this course will

- Develop professional editing skills for every part of the writing process
- Assess how effective texts are for the intended audience and purpose
- Strengthen their own writing abilities

ENG 461-001/14823/Advanced Creative Writing/TR 12:30 pm-01:45 pm/HUMHAL 302/Murphy J

ENG 561-001/15176/Advanced Creative Writing/TR 12:30 pm-01:45 pm/HUMHAL 302/Murphy J

Poetry

This course is the third and final installment in a three-part sequence available in creative writing at UM, and is an essential part of the Creative Writing Minor. As is appropriate for an advanced workshop, poets in the class will focus on the development and refinement of their individual voice. Beyond our own original poems, we will make a close study of the work of Jane Hirshfield, a contemporary American master, and read a variety of contemporary poets working in the field today. By its end, all students should have created a folio of work that approaches publishable quality. Whether they plan on submitting this work to venues for publication, for graduate school applications, or to keep it purely for their own enjoyment, students should emerge with a good sense of where their work fits in a larger landscape of contemporary poetry. NOTE: ENG 461 May be repeated as its topic changes.

ENG 473-001/15406/Postcolonial Literature/MW 02:00 pm-03:15 pm/HUMHAL 306/Rickel J

ENG 573-001/15407/Postcolonial Literature/MW 02:00 pm-03:15 pm/HUMHAL 306/Rickel J

Postcolonial Literature

Postcolonial literature arises from colonialism and the dissolution of European empires. This literature critiques the cultural narratives that allowed for colonial domination and illustrates the postcolonial condition. In this course we will read post-1945 literature of Africa, the Caribbean, and India and discuss how each of the selected works challenges the Western cultural imagination and revises the literary canon to include postcolonial literature. Taking into account postcolonial criticism from theorists including Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, we will consider how literature by such writers as Jean Rhys, Salman Rushdie, and Tsitsi Dangarembga rethinks narrative form. By analyzing the way that the selected texts play with voice, perspective, and imagery, among other narrative elements, we will explore the techniques through which postcolonial literature reconceptualizes storytelling and challenges historical narratives. We will also discuss how this literature contributes to political debates about the state of the postcolony in contemporary socioeconomic and cultural contexts. From our analysis of the project of writing back, to our study of the postcolonial bildungsroman, to our discussions about the impact of globalization on the postcolony, we will consider how redefining the relationship between aesthetics and politics might impact the function of all literature.

ENG 485-001/10478/Senior Sem: Capstone Course/TR 11:00 am-12:15 pm/HUMHAL 204/Cote T

Senior Seminar is the capstone of the English major. In this section, the capstone takes the history of the book as its subject and the professions of the book as its horizon. Students study how texts have been made, published, circulated, read, and regulated; work hands-on with a letterpress and with the University of Montevallo's special collections; and write the biography of one particular physical book, tracing where it came from and who made, owned, read, and kept it. At the end of the term, the class binds its essays into a volume by hand. The course also treats the student's own history as a reader and thinker as the starting point for professional preparation: every student visits the career center, completes a job shadow or informational interview, and leaves with an industry resume, a cover letter, and a portfolio of writing samples.

Kurt Vonnegut's Fiction, Nonfiction, and the Craft of Humanist Satire

This course explores the fictional and nonfictional writings of Kurt Vonnegut, one of the twentieth century's most distinctive literary voices. Through selected novels, short stories, essays, speeches, and autobiographical works, students will examine how Vonnegut employs satire, humor, science fiction, and personal reflection to confront the complexities of modern life. Although his prose is deceptively simple and accessible, Vonnegut's writing often presents deeply challenging questions about war, technology, free will, morality, and the search for meaning in an increasingly fragmented world.

Particular attention will be given to Vonnegut's unconventional narrative techniques, including nonlinear chronology, metafiction, repetition, authorial intrusion, and the blending of fact and fiction. Students will analyze how these stylistic strategies reinforce his humanist vision and his criticism of social, political, and cultural institutions. By studying both his imaginative works and his nonfiction reflections on writing, ethics, and civic responsibility, students will gain insight into Vonnegut's enduring purpose: to use storytelling as a means of fostering compassion, exposing absurdity, and encouraging individuals to recognize their shared humanity.

Through close reading, discussion, and critical writing, students will investigate how Vonnegut's unique literary voice challenges traditional assumptions about genre, narrative authority, and the role of the writer in society. Ultimately, the course invites students to consider not only what Vonnegut communicates about the human condition, but also how his innovative methods of storytelling shape the meaning and impact of his work.

Spring 2027 African American Studies Course Descriptions

AAS 200: Introduction to African American Studies / MWF 10:00-10:50 / HUM 302 / Mahaffey / Spring 2027 / 3 credit hours

This course provides an interdisciplinary introduction to the history, cultures, intellectual traditions, and social experiences of African Americans. Grounded in historical inquiry and cultural analysis, the course examines the formation of African American communities, the development of Black cultural expression, and the continuing struggle for freedom, citizenship, and democratic participation in the United States. Students will explore key historical moments in African American lives while also engaging with African American contributions to literature, music, religion, art, political thought, and popular culture.

Through the perspectives of history, the humanities, and the social sciences, students will investigate how race, power, identity, and inequality have shaped American society and how African Americans have responded through cultural creativity, intellectual production, community building, and political activism. Particular attention will be given to the ways Black experiences illuminate broader questions about democracy, justice, citizenship, and national identity.

In a period marked by intense public debate over history, race, education, and the meaning of democracy, African American Studies provides students with essential tools for understanding the historical foundations of contemporary social and political issues. Rather than advancing a particular political viewpoint, the course encourages critical inquiry, evidence-based analysis, and informed dialogue about the role of race and racism in American life. By examining the experiences, perspectives, and contributions of African Americans, students gain a deeper understanding of the United States and the continuing challenges and possibilities of a diverse democratic society.

Black Popular Culture

This course will focus on the production of Black popular or “pop” culture in the United States with special emphasis on the linkages between “mainstream” pop culture and pop culture originating in and from African Diasporic experiences. Students will engage Black performance theory and other sociological, historical, and theoretical perspectives to understand and critically examine topics related to Black pop culture; these include but are not limited to Black performance and representation in television, film, and drama; Black music/musical contributions ((blues, jazz, soul, neo-soul, R&B, rap, Hip hop, etc.) and dance; and Black artwork, media, and fashion. Through discussions, screenings, and analyses, we will engage these topics and their correlations to African oral traditions, folklore, and minstrelsy as well as Black protest traditions and methods of resistance. By the end of the semester, students will have surveyed an array of Black creative and aesthetic expressions that—individually and collectively—provide students insights into ways that shared meanings and ways of life have emerged via US traditions in general and the experiences and productions of the African Diaspora in particular.

Summer 2027 English Course Descriptions

May

ENG 231-301/50006/ Global Literature Survey/Online Asynchronous/ Murphy J

MODERN CROSSROADS

This course will explore the work of poets and prose writers in the United States and Britain active in the last hundred and fifty years. Though from vastly different cultural backgrounds, these writers share a conception of bringing “modernity” into their works, and each one sought to update, dust off, and revolutionize the genre(s) of writing they practiced. Often met with resistance in their own times, these writers have achieved iconic, even heroic status in subsequent years, as they re-examined and re-framed discussions of gender, sexuality, race, and basic human identity that are still relevant and essential to our development today.

Summer I

ENG 590-301/50009/Graduate Seminar/ Online Asynchronous /Cote T

If you’ve ever had a parent or grandparent tell you about their walk to school, uphill both ways, in the snow, you’ll recognize the commonplace that our living conditions, our opportunities, our society, is better than what came before. This story of continuous improvement is ubiquitous and, in some ways, true: there’s no doubt that advances in technology, in human and civil rights, in medicine, and in other areas have bent the “arc of history” in good ways. But what does this story tell us about our beliefs about ourselves? What does it hide, and who does it leave behind?

This graduate seminar explores the myths and narratives of “progress” in British literature from the Enlightenment to the present, tracing how ideas of social, political, and cultural advancement have been imagined, challenged, and redefined across centuries. Beginning with Eliza Haywood’s *Fantomina* and early debates on gender and women’s rights, we move through Victorian Literature’s confrontation with industrialization, labor, and class struggle in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*, before considering twentieth- and twenty-first-century reckonings with race, migration, and identity in Sam Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners* and other texts. Supplemented by philosophical writings, abolitionist narratives, poetry, and film, the course examines how British writers both reflect and resist dominant myths of progress, asking students to interrogate how these myths continue to shape cultural and political discourse today.

Summer II

ENG 232-301 /50012 /Global Literature Topics/ Online Asynchronous/Mahaffey P

Perspectives Within a Period or Location / Kurt Vonnegut and the Art of the Short Story

This course examines the short fiction of Kurt Vonnegut, one of the most distinctive and influential voices in twentieth-century American literature. Through a close reading of selections from Vonnegut's collections, this class will explore his signature blend of satire, science fiction, black humor, moral inquiry, and social criticism. Particular attention will be given to the author's deceptively simple prose style, his use of absurdity and irony, and his ability to address profound ethical and philosophical questions through concise, accessible narratives.

The short story is especially well suited to Vonnegut's literary vision. His fiction thrives on compression, surprise, and the rapid juxtaposition of the ordinary with the fantastical. The genre's brevity allows Vonnegut to deliver sharp satirical critiques of war, technology, consumer culture, bureaucracy, and human folly without sacrificing narrative momentum or emotional impact. The class will analyze how his economical language, episodic structures, recurring archetypes, and darkly comic endings make the short story an ideal vehicle for his exploration of modern life. By situating Vonnegut's stories within the broader traditions of American short fiction, postwar literature, science fiction, and satire, the course will encourage students to consider the relationship between literary form and thematic content.

Writing assignments will focus on close textual analysis, historical context, genre conventions, and the enduring relevance of Vonnegut's humanistic concerns. Completion of the course will initiate a deeper understanding of both the craft of short fiction and the unique literary achievement of Kurt Vonnegut, whose stories continue to challenge, entertain, and provoke readers in the twenty-first century.

Required texts:

Welcome to the Monkey House

Bagombo Snuff Box

Look at the Birdie

Canvas readings

ENG 419-301/ 50013/ Special Topics in Genre/ Online Asynchronous /Mahaffey P

ENG 519-301/ 50014/ Special Topics in Genre/ Online Asynchronous /Mahaffey P

The New Orleans Short Story: Culture, Place, and Form

This course examines the rich tradition of New Orleans short fiction, exploring how writers use the condensed narrative form to illuminate the city's complex cultural, and historical textures. The New Orleans short story is marked by an emphasis on atmosphere and setting as active forces; depictions of cultural convergence and conflict; explorations of identity shaped by Creole, African, Caribbean, and European influences; and a recurring fascination with the uncanny, the decadent, and the performative.

Attention is also given to other characteristics of the New Orleans short story such as the interplay of cosmopolitan and vernacular voices; a narrative focus on liminality (between land and water, Carnival and ordinary time, the sacred and the profane); and stylistic experimentation shaped by oral storytelling traditions. The brevity and intensity of the form allow writers to isolate charged social moments—encounters across race, class, sexuality, and gender—without the narrative closure often expected of longer fiction. As such, the short story has proven especially useful in New Orleans literature for staging “cultural contact zones”, documenting microhistories, and foregrounding ephemeral urban cultural experience, or as New Orleanian writer C. W. Cannon defines it, “the public habitation of the public space.”

The ultimate goals for this analysis of New Orleans short stories are to textually identify defining characteristics of the New Orleans short story, determine how authors use setting, voice, language, and structure to construct representations of New Orleans, definitively situate New Orleans short stories within historical, cultural, and literary contexts, and finally, compare regional, national, and transnational interpretations of New Orleans.

Reading List

New Orleans Noir (Julie Smith, ed.)

Perpetual Care: Stories (James Nolan)

Posted Canvas Readings