Summer and Fall 2024 English Course Descriptions

Summer English Course Information:

PUBLIC VOICES - ENG 037, Instructor Nikki Orth

This foundational course focuses on oral performance as a vital cultural practice for sharing thoughts and words, positions and perspectives. Grounded in rhetorical theories of genre, situation, and invention, the class gives students opportunities to prepare and present for live audiences. Thematic focus and assignments will vary, with instruction aimed at developing different types of deliberative, creative, or dramatic skills, and will prepare students to evaluate distinct standards of an oral genre suited to specific audiences, occasions, and contexts. In addition to developing skills needed for classroom and capstone presentations, Public Voices addresses issues of equity and ethics when accessing the powers of speech to participate in communal and civic life.

INTRO TO WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES - ENG 075, Instructor Sandra Patton-imani

This course is designed to familiarize students with women's experiences, as well as with the ways in which society shapes notions of gender. The course also provides ways to identify and analyze how a society's notions of gender shape the ways in which a society sees and organizes itself. Class members examine the construction of women's societal roles and their personal experiences, discussing points of congruence and dissonance. As an interdisciplinary course, reading and discussion material are drawn from fields such as religion, sociology, psychology, political science and literature, among others, so students can examine the view, status and contributions of women. Class sessions consist of a mixture of lectures, guest speakers, films and discussion. Crosslisted with WGS 001

TOPICS IN WRITING - ENG 080, Instructor Dylan Rollo

This lower-level topics course considers questions about the relationship between writing and the future, including how writing can change the future, what writing might look like in the future, and what role future-oriented writing has in our society. We will consider written scholarly and creative works that are scientifically rational, science-fictional, and supernatural in perspective. Through these works we will explore a range of topics, from AI, divination, algorithms, prophecy, coding, and quantum futurity to invention, prediction, proposal, aspiration, and speculation as written processes. Short writing assignments will blend creative and research-based writing. Novice and experienced writers alike are welcome.

AESTHETICS OF EVERYDAY LIVE – ENG 105, Instructor Faber McAlister

Analysis of how the material environment of architecture, clothes, furniture, music, signage, tools, toys, and other objects operates as a field of persuasive appeals and how it influences and constrains the formation of identity and community.

Fall English Course Information:

PUBLIC VOICES – ENG 037 (THREE SECTIONS), Instructor TBD

This foundational course focuses on oral performance as a vital cultural practice for sharing thoughts and words, positions and perspectives. Grounded in rhetorical theories of genre, situation, and invention, the class gives students opportunities to prepare and present for live audiences. Thematic focus and assignments will vary, with instruction aimed at developing different types of deliberative, creative, or dramatic skills, and will prepare students to evaluate distinct standards of an oral genre suited to specific audiences, occasions, and contexts. In addition to developing skills needed for classroom and capstone presentations, Public Voices addresses issues of equity and ethics when accessing the powers of speech to participate in communal and civic life.

LITERARY STUDY – ENG 038 (TWO SECTIONS), Instructors Dina Smith and Lisa West

This course introduces students to the theories and processes of literary study--that is, to the problems, questions and issues that constitute literary study as a critical activity and as a profession. Students examine such areas of inquiry as literature's definition, function, and value; the authority of authors, readers, critics and texts; the ""nature"" of texts; and the problem of situating both the text and the reader in history, society and culture. Required for English and Writing majors and minors, this course is open to all students with a serious interest in literary study. Frequent writing and revision.

WRITING SEMINAR – ENG 039, Instructor Amy Letter

A writing intensive course applying a range of theoretical perspectives to public discourses including both texts and images. Special attention is paid to the ways in which audiences respond to and are constructed in various forms of appeal and interpretation.

THE CLASSIC THEN AND NOW – ENG 056, Instructor Gabriel Ford

In this section of The Classic Then and Now, we will consider selected books and passages from the Bible as literary texts. By attending closely to these narratives, we will consider the long and profound influence of these texts on later literature. In particular, the course will emphasize the narratives of the Exodus and captivities of the ancient Israelite people from the Hebrew Bible and narratives of Gospel and apocalypse from the Christian New Testament. Readings will explore how these texts continue to shape narratives of suffering and redemption—for example, in American emancipation narratives, Christological characters in contemporary novels, and in other poems, stories, and novels responding to social and political contexts.

READING SHAKESPEARE – ENG 058, Instructor Jeanette Tran

Who and what is “Shakespeare” and why should we continue to read him today? In this course, students will read Shakespeare’s poems and plays within the social and political context of Elizabethan and Jacobean England, and consider the ways that “Shakespeare” subsequently has been translated across a variety of time periods and cultures, ranging from 18th century England, to 19th and 20th century America, to the post-colonial Caribbean, and to a prison in La Grange, Kentucky. The class will look at Shakespeare’s play texts, corresponding film productions, adaptations, and documentaries, and literary criticism pertaining to Shakespeare’s relationship to high and pop culture in order to explore the question of why “Shakespeare” still matters.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN LIT BEFORE 1920 – ENG 064, Instructor Jeff Karnicky

This course focuses on the constitutive role that African-American literature plays in American literature. Students will learn the history of African-American literature from narratives of enslavement and other abolitionist writings, through Reconstruction and up to the Harlem Renaissance. The course will consider the ways that historical and social forces have shaped, and continue to shape, African-American literature.

RHETORIC AND POLITICS – ENG 069, Instructor Faber McAlister

Rhetoric and Politics examines the role of rhetoric in public discourses, policies, and practices shaping political life in contemporary U.S. culture. Students analyze the strategies and evaluate the consequences of particular positions taken by politicians, citizens, and activists in relation to popular controversies and national campaigns. Students will study the rhetorical dimensions of electoral politics and protests while also considering how particular texts participate in broader struggles to define political practice, citizenship, and “American” national identity.

INTRO TO WOMENS AND GENDER STUDIES – ENG 075, Instructor Beth Younger

Crosslisted with WGS 075 and SCSS 075. Introduction to women's and gender studies is a course designed to explore how questions of gender, ethnicity, race, class, culture, and sexuality impact access to opportunity, power, and resources. We will approach these analyses through an interdisciplinary lens, utilizing various feminist theoretical frameworks. We will also analyze the way culture has constructed femininity, masculinity, sexualities, and identity under patriarchy. With a wide-ranging intersectional approach, we will read critical essays, personal essays, popular culture, and some fiction. We will examine television, advertising, magazines, literature, theoretical essays and other cultural productions (including our own daily lives and experiences) in order to explore representations of gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality. Course requirements include extensive weekly reading, frequent writing, class participation, essays, a midterm and a final examination.

INTRO TO WOMENS AND GENDER STUDIES – ENG 075, Instructor Melisa Klimaszewski

This class explores gender and sexuality as categories that affect one’s experience of the world. How does gender operate as a category that organizes our world? How do we define feminism and simultaneously decenter whiteness? In what ways can feminist discourses empower societies? How do discourses of race, class, and religion coexist with, influence, or push against discourses of gender and sexuality? How do discourses of gender and sexuality shape institutional power? How does gender operate in popular culture? As we investigate these questions with an interdisciplinary approach, we will learn with an emphasis on collaboration and discussion. We aim to analyze discourses and representations of gender and sexuality with robust critical thinking skills and to communicate our analyses in clear speech and clear writing. Films and readings include Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s We Should All Be Feminists and the films Moonlight and Portrait of a Lady on Fire.

READING GENDER – ENG 077, Instructor Yasmina Madden

This course will focus on classic and contemporary fiction by women. We will read and discuss works by writers like Zora Neale Hurston, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Susan Glaspell, writers who created female protagonists who struggle for independence, and we will ask to what degree, and how, these characters achieve what they desire. Paired with these “classic” texts will be a contemporary texts that examine similar issues in a more modern context by such writers as Jia Qing Wilson-Yang, Carmen Machado, Kristen Roupenian, Venita Blackburn, Margaret Atwood and more. We will examine and discuss the roles and representations of these authors’ female-identifying protagonists, as well as the other characters in their lives, and the real-life issues women writers faced and currently face. We will also discuss, among other topics, how race, class, sexuality, gender identity, motherhood, partnerships, and violence are depicted in these novels and stories. Though the emphasis will be on close readings of and thoughtful engagement with the primary works, we will also read several critical essays meant to open up our discussions of the readings.

TOPICS IN WRITING – ENG 080, Instructor Zachary Wiser

This course will introduce students to a question or closely related set of questions germane to the study of the processes and production of writing and/or to a particular genre of writing not represented by courses numbered 81-99. Frequent writing and revision.

INTRO TO ENGLISH LINGUISTICS – ENG 081, Instructor Gabriel Ford

An introduction to the systematic study of language. The course will cover the major subfields of linguistics: orthography, phonology, lexis, morphology, and syntax. In plain language, we will examine how words are written, pronounced, categorized, formed, and combined with other words. The course will also consider the relationship between language and power. We will examine how language functions within cultures and contexts, giving special emphasis to American English dialects and accents as well as to the ways that global networks of communication and digital technologies shape and are shaped by language use. The course presumes no prior knowledge of linguistics. All that a student needs to bring is curiosity about the way languages work in their enormous and fascinating variety.

READING AND WRITING SHORT STORIES – ENG 092, Instructor Carol Spaulding-Kruse

An introduction to reading and writing short fiction. The course explores the traditions, theories and practices that have shaped short stories, with emphasis on the fiction of the later 20th century. Writing assignments include both critical papers and original stories. Frequent writing and revision.

READING AND WRITING NON-FICTION – ENG 093, Instructor Carol Spaulding- Kruse

An introduction to reading and writing non-fiction. Different sections may focus on essay writing, life writing, literary journalism, travel writing, scientific writing, and so on. Emphasis is on the student's own production of texts, as well as on traditions and practices of the particular genre. Activities will include frequent writing and discussion of papers. May be repeated once for credit when the topic varies. Frequent writing and revision

ADAPTIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS – ENG 117, Instructor Amy Letter

This course examines the theory and practice of adapting narratives into new mediums and/or for new audiences and asks essential questions about what defines a ""story"" in the face of radical transformations, how those transformations can reflect changes in culture and interpretation, and why certain elements of a text may be stable or unstable over time. Forms may include (but are not limited to): folk tales, literary fiction, staged performances, television, film, and video games. Students can expect to analyze the adaptations and transformations of others as well as create original adaptations themselves. Frequent writing and revision.

COMMUNITY WRITING – ENG 119, Instructor Carol Spaulding-Kruse

The goal of Community Writing is to provide students with an engaged learning experience that utilizes their interest in writing and society. Students will consider service and writing as a form of engaged rhetorical practice, learn about the social concerns addressed by the community partner through readings and activities, reflect on the differences between writing in classroom and professional settings, and build critical competence and self/communal esteem through literacy practices that support both personal and public discovery. This fall (2024) in partnership with the Drake Legal Clinic we will explore the subject of wrongful conviction in the state of Iowa. Students will learn directly from legal justice professionals and their clients as they design written outputs that raise awareness on behalf of affected individuals and their families.

IMAGINING REALITIES – ENG 123, Instructor Melisa Klimaszewski

Books – and the stories they tell – influence human perception in powerful ways that can sometimes be as damaging as they are empowering. Indeed, books are perceived as being so threatening that governments and social organizations sometimes ban them or incarcerate people for reading or writing them. Reading can be empowering, liberating, exhilarating, and dangerous. In this class, we will think deeply about the power of storytelling and about the potential for the written word to shape our perceptions of the world. We will continuously interrogate where the line lies between fiction and reality, between imagination and actuality, and between perception and deception.

FILM & TV HISTORY AND CRITICISM – ENG 126, Instructor Dina Smith

In this course we will move beyond our traditional conceptions of cinema to explore the 130 years of movie making that spans nations and continents, taking as our particular focus narrative cinema. The most important culture industry in the world, the cinema developed as a new technology with a variety of initial purposes: assisting medicine and science, documenting real life, and eventually providing narrative fantasies. How the medium developed, its key films, genres and movements will be the subject of this course. Given that there are hundreds of national cinemas, with unique trajectories, the class will obviously have its limits: we cannot do everything in one semester. Instead, we will focus on the unique idiom of early silent cinema and its influence, eventually moving to Classic Hollywood, which became the most influential and powerful mode of filmmaking in the world, to the postwar New Wave cinemas and how they influenced contemporary film practices. The goal of this course will be to contextualize our notion of film as a medium through a critical and historical engagement with differing interpretations of the form. This course counts as an Historical AOI.

GAMER MEDIEVALISMS – ENG 127, Instructor Gabriel Ford

Why do gaming worlds and fantasy settings return us again and again to the Middle Ages? In Gamer Medievalisms, we take contemporary fantasy gaming (both video games and tabletop RPGs) as objects of analysis and methods of inquiry. We consider the meanings and mechanics of fantasy worlds, characters, plots, and tropes at the intersection of history, fandom, and critical theory. Coursework will involve frequent live play during class sessions. As we play, we will engage in critical examination of fantasy tropes and worlds using a robust set of theoretical framing for analyzing fantasy gaming. No previous experience with gaming or with English courses required or expected.

ADOLESCENT LITERATURE – ENG 135, Instructor Beth Younger

Adolescent Literature, also known as Young Adult Literature, is an upper division literature course where we read a wide variety of significant novels alongside critical, interpretive, and academic writing about YAL. Our goals in the class will be to explore, analyze, and critique these works as well as to examine how they participate in the way our culture defines adolescence itself. Weekly writing, lots of reading, and lively discussion. Texts include Pet (Akwaeke Emezi), Eleanor and Park (Rainbow Rowell), The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian (Sherman Alexie) and I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter (Erika Sanchez).

SALEM WITCHCRAFT TRIALS – ENG 151, Instructor Lisa West

This course will focus on the Salem Witch Trials (1692) as an entry point into thinking about the role of writing in the American "colonial" experience. We will read 17th century documents, including legal documents from the trials, sermons, poetry, and personal writing; explanations of the events from a variety of fields and eras (including legal history, trauma studies, and race studies); and literature that seeks to extend the legacy of the trials through fiction, drama, and film. This course is less focused on understanding exactly what happened and more focused on how the meaning of the 1692 trials has been constructed, contested, extended, willfully misunderstood, and amended. Crosslisted with Honors.

CAPSTONE IN ENGLISH, RHETORIC, & WRITING – ENG 195, Instructor Melisa Klimaszewski

This seminar fulfills the capstone requirement for Writing, Rhetoric and Media Studies, & English majors. The specific topic of the seminar will be determined by the instructor, but all capstone seminars are summative, providing students with an opportunity to reflect on their development and direction at the end of their undergraduate experience. Toward that end, students will undertake a semester-long project, tied to the seminar topic, but providing opportunities for students to reflect critical on the text they are producing and to participate in conversations that extend the project beyond the classroom. This course may be taken to fulfill other upper-division requirements and electives, with advisor approval, instead of as a capstone seminar.  
**Section information text:**  
Books – and the stories they tell – influence human perception in powerful ways that can sometimes be as damaging as they are empowering. Indeed, books are perceived as being so threatening that governments and social organizations sometimes ban them or incarcerate people for reading or writing them. Reading can be empowering, liberating, exhilarating, and dangerous. In this class, we will think deeply about the power of storytelling and about the potential for the written word to shape our perceptions of the world. We will continuously interrogate where the line lies between fiction and reality, between imagination and actuality, and between perception and deception.