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## ENGLISH SPECIAL TOPIC COURSE DESCRIPTIONS SPRING 2021

### **ENG 109-01: The Divine Comedy**

Travel with Dante through hell, purgatory, and the celestial sphere—and also deep into the world of Medieval Italy. Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia* (in English, *The Divine Comedy*), is an epic poem written by a man in crisis. Depressed and driven from his homeland, Dante dedicated a decade of his life to this work, seeking to find meaning in heartbreak, exile, and tragic loss. What is the narrator looking for? Himself. His first love. Home. Revenge. Salvation. God. Each of these answers is correct, yet none is sufficient. Along the way, the poem is unsparing, as it exposes the corruption of politicians, popes, priests, and commoners alike. On this literary journey, we will read about the people, places, beliefs, and questions that moved the spiritual seekers of the Middle Ages, and line them up against the questions that plague our own age. Past students in this course have been surprised and pleased by how Dante's search for moral and ethical clarity—and his boldness in speaking truth to power—has inspired them on their own journeys.

**Prerequisite:** None

**Instructor:** Lamberton

**Credit:** 1

**Delivery Mode:** F2F

### **ENG 180-01: Comics & Graphic Novels**

Dismissed once as kids' fare or shrugged off as sub-literate—"in the hierarchy of applied arts," Art Spiegelman once wrote, comic books surpass only "tattoo art and sign painting"—comics today are enjoying their Renaissance. In 2015, comics and graphic novel sales topped \$1 billion, a 20-year high. Award-winning writers now moonlight for Marvel (Roxanne Gay, Ta-Nehisi Coates) or pen essays on *Peanuts* (Jonathan Franzen). Superheroes dominate the big screen. In this class, we'll explore this deceptively simple medium as it develops its special abilities. We'll use Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, a critical text that is *itself* a comic, to become smart readers of sequential art. Hillary Chute's new book *Why Comics?* will help us to frame comics's enduring subject matters: sex, the suburbs, disasters, and superheroes. Readings might include Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, selection from the Hernandez Brothers' *Love and Rockets*, Spiegelman's *Maus*, Lynda Barry's *One! Hundred! Demons!*, and works by Daniel Clowes, Harvey Pekar, R. Crumb, Ebony Flowers, Aline Kominsky-Crumb, and others. The course is open to all students; underclassmen are encouraged to enroll. There will be capes and tights.

**Prerequisite:** None

**Instructor:** Mong

**Credit:** 1

**Delivery Mode:** Hybrid

**ENG 180-02: Detective Agency of Wabash**

Before every class meeting one character will die. Whodunit? It's up to you, gumshoe. This class will explore the genres of mystery and detective fiction, as well as true crimes recorded in Lilly Library's Special Collections. Students will interact with diverse media, such as poetry, fiction, graphic novels, and film. Combining literary analysis, creative writing, and criminology, each student will develop the critical thinking skills necessary to identify culprits, or construct their own ingenious crime—just don't violate the Gentlemen's Rule!

**Prerequisite:** None

**Instructor:** Pavlinich

**Credit:** 1

**Delivery Mode:** Hybrid

**ENG 211-01 Creative Non-Fiction: The Memoir**

A memoir essay is a true story that uses some of the tools of fiction. It tells a personal story in pursuit of factual and emotional truths while asking broader questions about memory, human interactions, and more. Our own experiences will be the springboard for developing a well-crafted narrative that will help us generate insightful questions and uncover surprising connections. This course in creative nonfiction will have a strong workshopping component and focus on learning to read as writers. Each week we will read memoir essays by James Baldwin, Edwidge Danticat, Zadie Smith, David Sedaris, Alexandar Hemon, and Esmé WeiJun Wang. Besides writing personal narratives and reading a variety of texts, students will also be responsible for peer evaluation and critique.

**Prerequisite:** None

**Instructor:** Szczeszak-Brewer

**Credit:** 1

**Delivery Mode:** Hybrid

**BLS 200=ENG 260-02 Black Lives Matter: Murder in America**

This course will introduce students to the contemporary movement for social justice and racial equality and policing reform. In the wake of recent murders of unarmed Black Americans at the hands of law enforcement agents, this course will provide context to the global movement for the recognition and dismantling of structural and systemic racism that denies justice to Black victims of state sanctioned violence. The course will draw upon novels, essays, news articles, social media, political theory and theological texts. These materials will ground class discussions and help to unpack the many ways that race continues to matter. Students will come away with a deeper awareness of how historical racial practices and assumptions continue to impact the life chances of Black people.

**Prerequisite:** None

**Instructor:** T. Lake

**Credit:** 1

**Delivery Mode:** F2F

**FRE 277-01/ENG 270-01 The Fight for *Fraternité*: The Spectacle of Social Justice in Modern France**

Inspired by the American Revolution and the founding of an independent American republic, French revolutionaries built their model of a new state upon the principals of freedom (*la liberté*), equality (*l'égalité*), and fraternity (*la fraternité*). But, as in the United States, these enshrined ideals have been far from the realities of common experience. Through political treatises, essays, works of literature, and film, this course will trace the paradoxes and contradictions that emerge as the ideal of *fraternité* clashes with oppressive regimes, economic disparity, misogyny, colonialism, xenophobia, homophobia, and racism. A guiding question in this course will be how works of literature centered on questions of social justice lend themselves so well to the screen and stage, and we will end with a look at the prevalence of social justice themes in contemporary film. We will also consider the ways in which American and French ideals of fraternity harmonize or clash with each other. A sampling of authors and film directors include Voltaire, George Sand, Victor Hugo, Emile Zola, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Aimé Césaire, Louis Malle, and Agnès Varda.

This course will be taught in English, and we will use English translations of French texts. Those taking the course for credit towards the French major or minor will be expected to do the readings and written assignments in French.

**Prerequisites:** none

**Instructor:** Quandt

**Credit:** 1

**Delivery mode:** F2F

### **ENG 310-01=GEN 301-01=BLS 300-01 Southern Gothic Literature**

This class is about the ghosts that haunt the literature of the American South. After the Civil War, when the ideal of the pastoral plantation crumbled, Southern writers sought to contend with the brutal historic realities that had always lurked behind the white-pillared façade: poverty, violence, slavery, racism, patriarchy. Southern Gothic literature—which emerged in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and continues strong today—is marked by dark humor, transgressive desires, grotesque violence, folk spiritualism, hereditary sins, emotional and environmental isolation, supernatural forces, and punishing madness. In this class, we will listen to the stories that the ghosts of the American South have told, and still tell today. We'll read the work of authors such as William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Carson McCullers, Tennessee Williams, Richard Wright, Dorothy Allison, Zora Neal Hurston, Toni Morrison, Kristen Arnett, Karen Russell, Gillian Flynn, and Jesmyn Ward.

**Prerequisites:** none

**Instructor:** Benedicks

**Credit:** 1

**Delivery mode:** Hybrid

### **ENG 370-01=BLS 300-02 Law & Literature**

What can literature teach us about the relationship between race and law? How can legal texts about race be read as a form of literature? In this course, we will address how literature (both fiction and non-fiction) exposes the way the law negotiates and reinforces systems of race and racism. We will think about the ways in which many literary texts depict the law at work alongside how literature can challenge us to be better interpreters of the law. This course will engage literary texts and legal texts from different time periods with a central focus on how the law highlights and subverts the pursuit of racial justice. Assigned works will include Byran Stevenson *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. We will also read several legal texts such as *Somerset v. Stewart* (1772), *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) and look at *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

Assignments will include literary and legal analysis papers, an in-class oral presentation, regular quizzes, and a final research paper.

**Prerequisites:** none

**Instructor:** Whitney

**Credit:** 1

**Delivery mode:** Hybrid