COMPARATIVE LITERATURE (Div I)
Chair: Professor Sarah Allen

- Sarah Allen, Comparative Literature
- Gene Bell-Villada, Romance Languages
- Christopher Bolton, Comparative Literature
- Rashida K. Braggs, Africana Studies
- Julie Cassiday, German and Russian
- Edan Dekel, Classics; Religion
- Brahim El Guabli, Arabic Studies
- Amal Eqeiq, Arabic Studies
- Soledad Fox, Romance Languages
- Man He, Asian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
- Amy S. Holzapfel, Theatre
- Sinko Kagaya, Asian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
- Olga Kim, German and Russian
- Christophe A. Koné, German and Russian
- Brian Martin, Romance Languages
- Lama Nassif, Arabic Studies
- Gail Newman, German and Russian
- Christopher Nugent, Asian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
- Jason Josephson Storm, Religion
- Katarzyna Pieprzak, Romance Languages
- Leyla Rouhi, Romance Languages
- Christian Thorne, English
- Janneke van de Stadt, German and Russian
- Ricardo A. Wilson, English

Students motivated by a desire to study literary art in the broadest sense of the term will find an intellectual home in the Program in Comparative Literature. The Program in Comparative Literature gives students the opportunity to develop their critical faculties through the analysis of literature across cultures, and through the exploration of literary and critical theory. By crossing national, linguistic, historical, and disciplinary boundaries, students of Comparative Literature learn to read texts for the ways they make meaning, the assumptions that underlie that meaning, and the aesthetic elements evinced in the making. Students of Comparative Literature are encouraged to examine the widest possible range of literary communication, including the metamorphosis of media, genres, forms, and themes.

Whereas specific literature programs allow the student to trace the development of one literature in a particular culture over a period of time, Comparative Literature juxtaposes the writings of different cultures and epochs in a variety of ways. Because interpretive methods from other disciplines play a crucial role in investigating literature’s larger context, the Program offers courses intended for students in all divisions of the college and of all interests. These include courses that introduce students to the comparative study of world literature and courses designed to enhance any foreign language major in the Williams curriculum. In addition, the Program offers courses in literary theory that illuminate the study of texts of all sorts.

Note: the English Department allows students to count one course with a COMP prefix as an elective within the English major.
MAJOR

The Comparative Literature major consists of nine courses in literature (broadly conceived) or relevant theoretical approaches, and a Senior Portfolio (COMP 490; thesis-writers substitute COMP 494). All Comparative Literature majors take COMP 111: Nature of Narrative. Students considering the major are strongly encouraged to take COMP 111 in their first or second year. In exceptional circumstances, a student may substitute an upper-level course with the approval of the Comparative Literature Advisory Committee. Five (or more) of the remaining courses must include, as at least half of their content, material originally written in a language other than English (non-English texts may be read in the original language or in translation) OR be heavily focused on comparison across different media. Note that courses not carrying the COMP prefix may also be eligible for major credit. Two of the courses taken for the major must be designated as Writing Skills courses and two must be at the 300-level or above.

Senior Portfolio

The Senior Portfolio is an assembly of the student’s work that explores their intellectual development through the course of their study of Comparative Literature. The student will select three pieces of work from previous courses taken for the major and tie them together through an eight-to-ten-page unifying essay or other creative project. There are a range of possibilities for this aspect of the portfolio, including more traditional analytic essays and other forms of creative artistic expression (fiction, poetry, visual arts, etc.). For thesis writers, the thesis replaces the Senior Portfolio. Majors will present their Senior Portfolios during a symposium soon after spring break in their final spring semester. Students should select a Senior Portfolio advisor and submit an initial proposal to the advisor and to the chair in the semester preceding (fall semester of senior year for students graduating in June, and fall semester of junior year for students graduating in December), and must enroll in COMP 490 in their final spring semester.

THE DEGREE WITH HONORS IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Prerequisites

Honors candidates in Comparative Literature are required to have maintained a GPA of 3.5 in the major to qualify for submitting a thesis proposal. In addition, candidates must demonstrate a strong interest in a specific topic for which an appropriate faculty advisor will be available in the senior year.

Timing

Students wishing to pursue a thesis in Comparative Literature are strongly urged to secure an advisor by the end of the week after Spring Break in their junior year. By May 15th of their junior year, candidates must submit to the Program Advisory Committee a one- to two-page proposal and a preliminary bibliography. The Advisory Committee will inform candidates by June 1 whether they may proceed with the thesis and advise them about any changes that should be made in the focus or scope of the project. The summer before the senior year will be spent compiling a more detailed bibliography and preparing for the process of writing the thesis.

In their senior year, candidates will devote two semesters and the winter study period to their theses (493-31-494). By the end of the Fall semester, students will normally have undertaken substantial research and produced the draft of at least the first half of the project. At this point students should also have a clear sense of the work remaining for completion of the thesis. In the course of the Fall semester, students will also have chosen and met with a second reader for the project, who will provide additional guidance and read the final thesis. By the end of Winter Study, students should have completed a draft of the entire project. At that time, the Comparative Literature Advisory Committee, together with the advisor, will determine whether the project may continue as an Honors Thesis, or whether its first portions (COMP 493-COMP 31) will be graded as Independent Studies.

The second semester of independent thesis work will be spent revising as necessary. The completed thesis in its final form will be due one week before the last day of classes. The student will make a public presentation of the thesis as part of the Senior Portfolio Symposium soon after spring break.

Characteristics of the Thesis, Evaluation, and Major Credit

The topic of the thesis must be comparative and/or theoretical. It is also possible to write a thesis that consists of an original translation of a significant text or texts; in this case, a theoretical apparatus must accompany the translation. The complete thesis must be at least 50 and at most 75 pages in length, excluding the bibliography.

The advisor will assign the grades for the thesis courses (COMP 493-31-494); the Advisory Committee will determine whether a candidate will receive Honors, Highest Honors, or no honors.

For students who pursue an honors thesis, the total number of courses required for the major—including the thesis course (COMP 493-31-494)—is 10, i.e., one of the thesis courses may substitute for one course and the Senior Portfolio.

STUDY ABROAD

The Program in Comparative Literature strongly urges its majors to study abroad. Up to four courses on literature taken abroad can be counted towards the major, provided they satisfy the program’s requirements.
FAQ

Students MUST contact departments/programs BEFORE assuming study away credit will be granted toward the major or concentration.

Can your department or program typically pre-approve courses for major/concentration credit?

Yes, in many cases, though students should be sure to contact the department. Some courses can be approved definitively, others provisionally. Approval for core credit may require more information.

What criteria will typically be used/required to determine whether a student may receive major/concentration credit for a course taken while on study away?

Course title and description, and complete syllabus, including readings/assignments. Sometimes we can tell from the title, sometimes a description is needed. We often need to know the readings assigned.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the number of major/concentration credits that a student might earn through study away?

Yes, four.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the types of courses that can be awarded credit towards your major?

No.

Are there specific major requirements that cannot be fulfilled while on study away?

Yes. No substitutions are allowed for COMP 111 (Nature of Narrative).

Are there specific major requirements in your department/program that students should be particularly aware of when weighing study away options? (Some examples might include a required course that is always taught in one semester, laboratory requirements.)

Yes. No study abroad spring semester senior year because of the senior portfolio. We also strongly recommended that students take COMP 111 Nature of Narrative before studying abroad (but they aren’t required to do so).

Give examples in which students thought or assumed that courses taken away would count toward the major or concentration and then learned they wouldn’t:

Not a common problem, but it has happened. The department typically doesn’t count Div II-type culture courses.

COMP 101 (F) Greek Literature: Performance, Conflict, Desire

Cross-listings: THEA 104 / CLAS 101 / DANC 101

Secondary Cross-listing

In the Iliad, Paris’ desire for the famously beautiful Helen leads to the Trojan War, the devastating conflict between the Trojans and the Greeks retold and reimagined time and again in ancient Greek literature. The stories of Troy and its aftermath were performed not only as epic poems (as in the Iliad and the Odyssey), but also re-enacted by singing and dancing choruses, dramatized on the tragic stage, and recounted in oratory. Beginning with the Homeric epics, this course explores the recurring and ever-shifting debates, longings, hostilities, and aspirations that drive Greek literature and shape its reception, with a particular focus on questions of performance context and audience. Our attention to sound, movement, and staging will be enriched by consideration of select examples from the rich reception history of Greek myth in modern theater and dance. The nexus of performance, conflict, and desire will also give us a distinct perspective on many important topics within the study of Greek culture, including the embodiment of personal and collective identities, the workings of Athenian democracy, and the development of literary genres. This course will include readings from, e.g., Homer, Sappho, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Thucydides, and Plato, as well as viewings of relevant performance works. All readings are in translation.

Requirements/Evaluation: midterm and final exam; brief (one or two pages) written assignments; participation in class.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: Classics majors, first years, sophomores

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 101(D1) THEA 104(D1) CLAS 101(D1) DANC 101(D1)

Fall 2024
LEC Section: 01 TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am Sarah E. Olsen

COMP 104 (F) Telling Tales in Ancient Greece (WS)
Cross-listings: CLAS 105
Secondary Cross-listing
One-eyed monsters, magical spells, and trips to the moon: Greek literature is replete with tales of fantastic creatures and wild adventures. These ancient stories give us valuable opportunities to explore early understandings of "fiction," the development of narrative, and the construction of the storyteller in both poetry and prose. In this course, we will read texts from Homer's Odyssey (8th cent. BCE) to Heliodorus' Aethiopica (4th cent. CE), alongside a range of scholarly approaches to them. We will pay particular attention to the prose fiction of the Roman imperial era, including both the texts traditionally called the "ancient novel" as well as the various forms of biography, ethnography, and mythography adjacent to them. Throughout, we will explore narratives and representations of gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, class, and cultural identity, reflecting on how our primary sources engage with their complex social and political contexts. All readings will be in English.

Requirements/Evaluation: regular tutorial papers and response, discussion in tutorial meetings
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: first years, sophomores
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (WS)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 104(D1) CLAS 105(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will receive regular feedback on their writing (structure, style, argumentation) from the professor as well as their tutorial partners, which should be taken into account as they move forward in the course and compose subsequent papers and responses.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 106 (F) Temptation (WS)
Cross-listings: ENGL 107
Secondary Cross-listing
We want most those things we can’t—or shouldn’t—have. Or, to put it another way, it is when limitations are placed on our actions by law, religion, or the facts of our own biology that we experience desire most acutely. In this course, we will examine fictional narratives, lyric poems, and philosophical meditations in which people are tempted to act against their better judgement. Free will, ambition, temperance, suspense, despair, and repression will be our conceptual preoccupations. We will get to know such writers and artists as Homer, Euripides, Ovid, Augustine, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Laclos, Mozart, Freud, Frost, and Scorsese.

Requirements/Evaluation: Four five-page papers, in-class presentation, thoughtful participation in discussions
Prerequisites: None
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: First-year students who have not taken or placed out of a 100-level ENGL course
Expected Class Size: 19
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (WS)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ENGL 107(D1) COMP 106(D1)
Writing Skills Notes: Students will write four five-page papers, each of which will receive timely and extensive written feedback from the instructor. Students will be invited to discuss their papers with the instructor at the draft stage.

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01   TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am   Emily Vasiliauskas
SEM Section: 02   TR 11:20 am - 12:35 pm   Emily Vasiliauskas

**COMP 107 (S) Advanced French: Danger and Desire in French Film and Fiction** (DPE)

**Cross-listings:** RLFR 106

Secondary Cross-listing

This is an advanced course in French language designed to help you improve your speaking, comprehension, reading, and writing, through the dynamic study of short literary texts and films focusing on danger and desire in nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first-century France and the Francophone World. Through active discussion and debate, textual and cinematic analysis, grammatical review, and careful writing and revision, you will improve your command of spoken and written French, strengthen your ability to express complex ideas, expand your vocabulary, and deepen your understanding of French and Francophone fiction, film, and cultures. This is an ideal course to prepare for study abroad or for more advanced coursework in French and Francophone literature and cinema. As a focus for improving your French, we will examine a broad range of texts and films on danger and desire in France, Québec, and Algeria from 1820 to 2025, with an emphasis on passion and ambition, infatuation and seduction, betrayal and vengeance, courage and cruelty, warfare and resistance. Works to include nineteenth-century texts by Chateaubriand, Duras, Balzac, Mérimée, Flaubert, Maupassant, Zola; twentieth-century texts by Colette, Camus, Sartre, Beauvoir, Duras, Ernaux, Guibert, Quint, Lindon, Vilrouge; and twenty-first-century films by Caron, Ozon, Ducastel, Martineau, Dercourt, and Becker. Conducted in French.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Active class participation, grammar exercises, midterm exam, and two papers.  
**Prerequisites:** Exceptional performance in RLFR 104; successful performance in RLFR 105; or by placement test; or permission of the instructor.  
**Enrollment Limit:** 16  
**Enrollment Preferences:** All are welcome, but if over-enrolled, preference will be given to French Majors and French Certificate students.  
**Expected Class Size:** 16  
**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option  
**Distributions:** (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:  
COMP 107(D1) RLFR 106(D1)

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** This course centers on a critical examination of difference, power, and equity in French film and fiction. The content examines the effects of class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality on social inequalities among rich and poor, soldiers and civilians, nations and colonies, men and women. The course employs critical tools to teach students how to articulate and interrogate social injustice, through reading, viewing, discussion, writing, and revision.

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01   TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am   Brian Martin

**COMP 108 (S) Roman Literature: Gender, Virtue, Empire**

**Cross-listings:** CLAS 102

Secondary Cross-listing

In the first book of Vergil's *Aeneid*, the god Jupiter prophesies the foundation and the greatness of Rome: "I place no limits on their fortunes and no time; I grant them empire without end." Yet elsewhere in this epic account of Rome's origins, this promise of unlimited power for the descendants of Romulus seems to be seriously abridged. Some readers have seen, not only in the *Aeneid* but throughout classical Roman literature, a persistent tendency to inscribe the decay and disintegration of Roman power into the very works that proclaim and celebrate Roman preeminence. This course explores the ancient Romans' own interpretations of their past, their present, and their destiny: the humble beginnings of their city, its rise to supreme world power, and premonitions of its decline. Related topics for our consideration will include Roman constructions of gender, the location and expression of virtue in the public and private spheres, the connections and conflicts between moral probity and political success, the exercise of
individual power versus action on behalf of the commonwealth, the absorption of foreign customs and peoples into Rome, the management of literal and imaginary frontiers, and other anxieties of empire. We will read selections and complete works by a wide variety of Roman authors, including Cicero, Catullus, Caesar, Vergil, Sallust, Horace, Ovid, Seneca, and Tacitus. All readings will be in translation.

Class Format: discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: short written assignments, midterm and final exams with essays, and contributions to class discussion
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: first-year students and sophomores and majors in Classics and Comparative Literature
Expected Class Size: 15
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 108(D1) CLAS 102(D1)
Not offered current academic year

COMP 111  (F)(S) The Nature of Narrative  (WS)
Cross-listings: ENGL 120

Primary Cross-listing
Narrative--storytelling--is a fundamental human activity. Narratives provide us with maps of how the world does or should or might work, and we make sense of our own experiences through these maps. This course examines the nature and functions of narrative using texts from a wide range of literary traditions, media, and genres. Readings may span classics (e.g. Homerian epic, The Tale of Genji, and/or the Popol Vuh), fiction ranging from nineteenth-century realism to postmodern experimentation (possibly including Kafka, Tolstoy, Toni Morrison, and/or Emile Habibi), and visual literature from film and drama to graphic memoir (possibly including Mizoguchi Kenji, Art Spiegelman, Alison Bechdel, and/or Joe Sacco). We may also read some short works of literary theory from around the world to help us broaden our idea of what literature can be and do. All readings in English.

Class Format: The second half of the course may incorporate a modified tutorial format, where small groups meet with the instructor once a week, with students' papers and responses forming the basis of the discussion.
Requirements/Evaluation: Regular attendance and participation in class; short and mid-length writing assignments spaced throughout the semester; revision of selected assignments after receiving instructor feedback.
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 18
Enrollment Preferences: Comparative Literature majors, students considering a major in Comparative Literature, first-years, sophomores.
Expected Class Size: 18
Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (WS)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 111(D1) ENGL 120(D1)
Writing Skills Notes: Multiple writing assignments that build upon each other, including drafts and revisions, with substantial individualized feedback on writing from the instructor.
Attributes: FMST Related Courses

Fall 2024
SEM Section: 01 TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am Sarah M. Allen

Spring 2025
SEM Section: 01 TR 8:30 am - 9:45 am Sarah M. Allen
COMP 117 (F) Introduction to Cultural Theory (WS)

Cross-listings: ENGL 117

Secondary Cross-listing

This course has a clear purpose. If you had signed up for a course in biology, you would know that you were about to embark on the systematic study of living organisms. If you were registered for a course on the American Civil War, you would know that there had been an armed conflict between the northerm and southern states in the 1860s. But if you decide you want to study "culture," what exactly is it that you are studying? The aim of this course is not to come up with handy and reassuring definitions for this word, but to show you why it is so hard to come up with such definitions. People fight about what the word "culture" means, and our main business will be to get an overview of that conceptual brawl. We will pay special attention to the conflict between those thinkers who see culture as a realm of freedom or equality or independence or critical thought and those thinkers who see culture as a special form of bondage, a prison without walls. The course will be organized around short theoretical readings by authors ranging from Matthew Arnold to Laura Mulvey, but we will also, in order to put our new ideas to the test, watch several films (mostly of the class's choosing) and listen to a lot of rock and roll. Why do you think culture matters? Once you stop to pose that question, there's no turning back.

Class Format: discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: four formal writing assignments totaling 20 pages (three full essays + one lead-in assignment), informal writing twice weekly, class attendance and participation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: first-year students who have not taken or placed out of a 100-level ENGL course

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 117(D1) ENGL 117(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write three five- to seven-page papers, on which I will provide extensive feedback. Before writing their first papers, students will submit theses and introductions, which I will help them refine. We will hold three extra writing sessions, to discuss how best to organize arguments. Students will write informally before every class.

Attributes: AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01 TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm Christian Thorne

SEM Section: 02 TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm Christian Thorne

COMP 129 (S) James Baldwin's Song

Cross-listings: MUS 179 / AFR 128

Secondary Cross-listing

"It is only in his music [. . .] that the Negro in America has been able to tell his story. It is a story which otherwise has yet to be told and which no American is prepared to hear," wrote James Baldwin in Notes of a Native Son in 1955. In this course, we strive to listen more closely to racialized experience through James Baldwin's musical literature. Through analysis and creation of music, we hope to better understand cultural difference and collective humanity. In this course, we closely analyze James Baldwin's use of song names, creation of musician characters, and replication of musical elements in his writing. Baldwin's musical word play crosses historical and genre boundaries. So we will explore texts from his early to late career, such as the gospel music of his youth in the semi-autobiographical novel Go Tell It on the Mountain, the metaphor of the blues in the play written during the civil-rights movement Blues for Mr. Charlie, the jazz musician protagonist in "Sonny's Blues" written after World War II in Paris, and his only musical recording in A Lover's Question set down near the end of his life. In addition to closely analyzing James Baldwin's attention to music throughout his literature, students will learn basic music writing and production skills. The tutorial will draw on a range of musical resources, including playlists, music workshops, guest lectures and performances. All of these resources will guide students to a more attuned hearing not only of music but also of the African American experience it reflects. By the end of the course, students will have written several short 1-2 page close analysis essays and song lyrics. For their final project, students will produce an original song based on key insights from the course. No musical experience is required, though an openness to learn and practice songwriting is expected.
**COMP 130 Writing for the Humanities (WS)**

Compelling academic prose is a rare beast. In this course we will investigate what makes for good academic writing and how we can produce it ourselves. We will begin with words, then progress to sentences, paragraphs, and essays. Our reading will be close, our writing closer. Topics include the following: Are adverbs incredibly important? When is less more, and when isn’t it? Is your garden English, or is it Chinese? What is the "uneven U" and why does it work? How does your audience affect how you write? In addition to reading writing about writing by Orwell, Fish, Tufte, Hayot, and (inevitably) Strunk and White, we will look closely at academic prose out in the wild, both good and bad. This course is for anyone who is interested in exploring in more depth the craft of writing, whether you have always considered yourself a "good writer" or struggle to fill a single page (or both). Our focus will be on academic writing for the humanities, but the skills we will develop are relevant to many other contexts as well.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Regular attendance and active participation in class; writing assignments ranging in length from sentences to essays of varying length (500 words to 5-7 pages).

**Prerequisites:** None

**Enrollment Limit:** 12

**Enrollment Preferences:** First- and second-year students

**Expected Class Size:** 12

**Grading:**

**Distributions:** (D1) (WS)

**Writing Skills Notes:** The course will center on explicit, in-depth discussion of writing. We will read and discuss both writing on writing, and examples of prose. Students will complete weekly writing assignments of varying lengths and degrees of formality on which they will receive feedback from the instructor with particular attention to the craft of writing; some assignments will also be shared with the rest of the class.

*Not offered current academic year*

**COMP 151 (F) The Art of Playing: An Introduction to Theatre and Performance**

**Cross-listings:** THEA 101 / GBST 116

**Secondary Cross-listing**

This is an introduction to the global art and practice of making theatre. Students will learn about the history, aesthetics, and approaches to the performer's labor associated with select performance forms from around the world. Emphasis will be on the analysis of embodied practices and the relationship between the stage and everyday life. Through readings, audiovisual materials, performance exercises, and discussions we will engage with theatre as a constantly evolving art form, sharpening our analytical skills through theoretical approaches from performance studies. Central to our exploration will be excavating the Eurocentric assumptions that conventionally shape the practice and study of theater in the United States. We will seek ways to decolonize our perspectives and ask critical questions about performance's potential to enact strategies of anti-racism and anti-imperialism. This course, open to all students, is a gateway to the major in Theatre, and is a prerequisite for THEA 201, THEA 204, THEA 301,
and THEA 401.

Requirements/Evaluation: two 5-page critical essays, journal reflections, studio exercises, and active participation in all activities

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 14

Enrollment Preferences: prospective Theatre majors or Theatre majors or Comparative Literature majors

Expected Class Size: 14

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

THEA 101(D1) COMP 151(D1) GBST 116(D2)

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01 MW 11:00 am - 12:15 pm Shanti Pillai

SEM Section: 02 M 7:00 pm - 9:40 pm Shanti Pillai

COMP 153 (F) Japanese Film

Cross-listings: ASIA 153

Primary Cross-listing

From the swashbuckling samurai films of Kurosawa and delicate family dramas of Ozu to edgy cinematic experiments and a breathtaking range of animation, Japan has one of the most varied and exciting film traditions in the world. This course will introduce you to major periods, genres, and directors in that tradition. We will read film criticism that represents a range of approaches, but we'll focus particularly on learning and practicing the kind of close visual analysis that will allow you to build your own original descriptions of how a given scene "works." Throughout the course we will consider the relationship between classic cinema and popular genres like sword flicks, melodramas, psychological thrillers, and anime, focusing particularly on directors whose work seems to borrow equally from genre film and the artistic avant-garde. All texts are translated or subtitled. All levels welcome.

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance & participation, a few short response assignments, two 5-page papers, in-class test

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 40

Enrollment Preferences: comparative literature majors

Expected Class Size: 25

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 153(D1) ASIA 153(D1)

Attributes: FMST Core Courses

Not offered current academic year

COMP 161 (F) Metafiction (WS)

Cross-listings: ENGL 161

Secondary Cross-listing

This course will examine ways in which literary works reflect on their status as written texts. We'll look at the formal pleasures and puzzles generated by techniques including frame narratives, recursion, and self-reference, in novels, films, and stories by Vladimir Nabokov, Jorge Luis Borges, Kelly Link, Paul Park, and others. Ultimately, we will use our study of metafiction to focus inquiry into the socializing force of self-consciousness in human development. Note that students will be required to use, as well as interpret, metafictional techniques in their assigned writing, and will write one or two essays in collaboration with a Chat AI.

Requirements/Evaluation: Several short exercises; four or five papers of increasingly complexity, totaling 22 pages; consistent attendance and
participation; a love of reading, and a willingness to reread.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: first-year students who have not taken or placed out of a 100-level ENGL course; sophomores

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 161(D1) ENGL 161(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students write five essays with considerable feedback from the instructor.

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01   TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm   Shawn J. Rosenheim

COMP 166  (F) Being Muslim, Being American: American Muslim Literature in the 21st century  (DPE)

Cross-listings: AMST 166 / ENGL 268 / REL 166

Secondary Cross-listing

Islam and Muslims in the United States are the subject of extensive public scrutiny and media coverage in broader public discourses. It is less common, however, to hear Muslims’ own voices speak about their lives, experiences, beliefs, and commitments. This course will take a literary approach to exploring American Muslims’ own narratives about themselves, which will serve as an introduction to religion in contemporary U.S. culture. We will address questions such as: How do American Muslims attempt to fashion their identity in the wake of 9/11? What are the pressures and demands of American national belonging and cultural citizenship that Muslims must navigate? How are race, gender, ethnic heritage, and immigration definitive of Muslim experiences and self-understandings? How are Muslims approaching the tensions between communal belonging and individuality? What are the competing claims and contestations about authentic expressions of Islam? We will be engaging such themes through an analysis of popular memoirs, autobiographies, novels, short stories, poetry, films, and comedy.

Requirements/Evaluation: regular reading responses, short midterm essays, and final paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: First-year students and sophomores

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

AMST 166(D2) COMP 166(D1) ENGL 268(D1) REL 166(D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course will explore the intersections of power in American Muslim life, such as: Muslims as a religious minority in the context of the War on Terror; racial and ethnic differences in Muslim communities; immigration and national belonging; competing claims to religious authenticity and authority; and conflicting gendered norms. Students will learn to identify these multiple layers and configurations in the texts, and how to analyze their workings in nuanced multidimensional ways.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 201  (F) The Hebrew Bible

Cross-listings: JWST 201 / REL 201

Secondary Cross-listing

The Hebrew Bible is perhaps the single most influential work in the history of Western philosophy, literature, and art. But the overwhelming presence of the text in nearly every aspect of modern culture often obscures the sheer brilliance of its narrative technique as well as the complex interplay between law, history, prophecy, and poetry. This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the literary, historical, and theological aspects of the
Hebrew Bible with an eye towards developing a sophisticated understanding of the text in its ancient context. Through the close reading of substantial portions of the Hebrew Scripture in translation and the application of various modern critical approaches to culture and literature, students will explore fundamental questions about the social, ritual, and philosophical history of ancient Israel, as well as the fundamental power of storytelling that has resonated across two millennia.

Requirements/Evaluation: Class participation, short written assignments, midterm and final exams.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 40

Enrollment Preferences: If the course is overenrolled, preference will be given to Jewish Studies concentrators and Religion and Comparative Literature majors.

Expected Class Size: 40

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

JWST 201(D2) COMP 201(D1) REL 201(D2)

Attributes: JWST Gateway Courses

Fall 2024

LEC Section: 01    TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am     Edan Dekel

COMP 202 (S) Modern Drama

Cross-listings: THEA 229 / ENGL 202

Secondary Cross-listing


Requirements/Evaluation: Two 6-page papers; regular Glow posts; and active participation in class discussions.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 18

Enrollment Preferences: Theatre, English, and Comparative Literature majors

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Unit Notes: This course is strongly recommended for any students majoring in Theatre.

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 202(D1) THEA 229(D1) ENGL 202(D1)

Attributes: ENGL Literary Histories C

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01    MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm     James L. Pethica

COMP 203 (F) Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature in Translation

Cross-listings: RUSS 203

Secondary Cross-listing

Description: Nineteenth Century Russian literature is well known for its exploration of extreme states of consciousness. Because of this, it also
contains some of the most compelling diagnoses of the illnesses and malaise of the modern condition: alienation, loss of meaning, suffering in face of the abuse of power, and the destructiveness of hyperrationality. Covering Russian literature's first modern treatments of madness up to the Silver Age, we will take this theme as a path to explore 19th century Russian literature as a whole. We will read works by Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and others in order to better understand the Russian response to modernity and cast our glance along with them into the depths of the human soul.

Requirements/Evaluation: Daily reading and participation 20%; 1 paper illustrating the practice of close reading 1-2 pp. 10%; paper 2: paper comparing two readings 3-4 pp. 15%; paper 3, comparing two readings or a creative assignment "re-writing" a Russian classic 4-5 pp. 20%; Final paper + presentation (essay on a critical work or story that we did not read or an independent creative assignment): 5-6 pp. 25%; Course Test or final essay: 10%.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: RUSS or COMP

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 203(D1) RUSS 203(D1)

Attributes: GBST Russian + Eurasian Studies

Not offered current academic year

COMP 204 (S) To See the Past: Russian and Soviet Cinema on History

Cross-listings: RUSS 204 / GBST 204

Secondary Cross-listing

This course surveys Soviet and Russian cultural history of the 20th- and 21st-centuries through the history of the cinematic medium. We will watch and analyze key films of this period--films by Eisenstein, Vertov, Tarkovsky, Muratova, Balabanov, Zviagintsev, and Fedorchenko among others--from a double perspective. On the one hand, we will study the cultural and historical contexts of the Soviet Union and Russia; on the other hand, we will learn the formal and stylistic aspects of the cinematic medium as it developed historically (from silent, to sound, to color, to digital etc.). From this double perspective, we will try to answer a larger question that underlies this course: What kind of historical thinking can we learn through cinema as a medium? In other words, we will take cinema neither simply as a direct reflection of state ideology nor as pure aesthetic form or entertainment for the masses. Rather, we will approach the films of this period as audio-visual texts that are rich in historical content and require our informed and attentive interpretation.

Requirements/Evaluation: For each class you'll watch 1 or 2 film(s) and read typically 1 article under 20 pages. You will submit short viewing response before each class. Additionally, there will be short viewing or creative assignments to familiarize students with formal aspects of film. Evaluation will be based on participation, one presentation, short sequence analysis, and final paper or video essay

Prerequisites: none, open to all students

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: declared or prospective Russian or Comparative Literature majors, Russian Certificate seekers, Global Studies concentrators

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RUSS 204(D1) COMP 204(D1) GBST 204(D2)

Attributes: GBST Russian + Eurasian Studies

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01    MR 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm     Olga Kim
COMP 205 (S) Magical Realists, Fantasists, Experimentalists: The Latin-American Novel in Translation (DPE)

Cross-listings: RLSP 205

Secondary Cross-listing

A course specifically designed to enable students who have no knowledge of Spanish to read and discover those Latin-American authors who, in the twentieth century and after, have attracted world-wide attention. Among the texts to be discussed: Borges, Labyrinths; Cortázar, Blow-up and Hopscotch; Lispector, the Hour of the Star; lesser works by Fuentes and Puig; and by Nobel Prize-winner Gabriel García Márquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude. Conducted in English

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, two brief papers, a midterm, and a final exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 22

Enrollment Preferences: Latina/o Studies concentrators, Comp Lit majors

Expected Class Size: 22

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Unit Notes: does not carry credit for the Spanish major or the certificate

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 205(D1) RLSP 205(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course offers students an opportunity to read some major works of fiction that have challenged the canon of European and American literature. Through the readings, class members will understand that great literature comes not only from London or Paris, from the U.S. or Russia. Several of these novels, moreover, directly challenge European and Western cultural hegemony and make an implicit claim for the legitimacy of Latin American cultural concerns.

Attributes: GBST Latin American Studies

Spring 2025

LEC Section: 01 MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm Gene H. Bell-Villada

COMP 206 (S) The Book of Job and Joban Literature

Cross-listings: REL 206 / JWST 206

Secondary Cross-listing

The Book of Job has often been described as the most philosophical book of the Hebrew Bible. The story of one man's struggle to understand the cause of his suffering and his relationship to God represents the finest flowering of the Near Eastern wisdom literature tradition. Through its exploration of fundamental issues concerning human suffering, fate and divinity, and the nature of philosophical self-examination, Job has served as a touchstone for the entire history of existential literature. At the same time, the sheer poetic force of the story has inspired some of the greatest artistic and literary meditations in the Western tradition. This course will engage in a close reading of the Book of Job in its full cultural, religious, and historical context with special attention to its literary, philosophical, and psychological dimensions. We will then proceed to investigate key modern works in several genres that involve Joban motifs, themes, and text both explicitly and implicitly. These texts will include Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, Archibald MacLeish's *J.B.*, Robert Frost's "Masque of Reason," Carl Jung's *Answer to Job*, and William Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job*. All readings are in translation.

Requirements/Evaluation: Evaluation will be based on class participation, short written assignments, and midterm and final exams.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 18

Enrollment Preferences: If the course is overenrolled, preference will be given to students who have already taken a course in biblical literature.

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 206(D1) REL 206(D2) JWST 206(D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Spring 2025
SEM Section: 01    TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am     Edan Dekel

COMP 208 (S) Through the Looking Glass: Comparative Children's Literature

Oh, the reads we will read, if you follow my lead!
We will amble at first and then soon pick up speed,
And we'll bury our noses in books thick and thin.
This I vow by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin.
There'll be picture books, fairy tales, primers, and verse,
Tales of joy, fun, and laughter; and, alas, the reverse.
Some were written in English, but most of them not.
Though we'll read in translation: sign on up, polyglot!
For example, there's Lindgren, Yumoto, and Grimm,
Tonatiuh, and Sendak. Surely, you've heard of him?
We'll critique illustrations, we'll wonder, we'll ponder,
And by turns we'll divine what defines this grand genre.
Is it mere fun and games, pixie dust, sweet as pie?
Does it ask to be read with a serious eye?
Books appeal to our puzzler--our minds--after all,
And a child is a thinker, no matter how small.
You'll reflect, cogitate, then you'll write, write, write, WRITE!
And your thoughts will become this instructor's delight.

Class Format: This course runs in seminar format, but in terms of content and approach, it also functions as a survey course. We will generally move through material quickly, but occasionally pause and dig more deeply. Please note: this course will sometimes meet during the scheduled Friday slot.

Requirements/Evaluation: regular reading and/or viewing, leading class discussion, 4-5 short writing assignments (2 pages), one longer writing assignment (4-5 pages), and a final project

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Comparative Literature majors, then language majors, then students in teaching program

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

Not offered current academic year

COMP 209 (S) The Outsider in French & Francophone Film Adaptations of Literary Texts  (DPE)

Cross-listings: RLF2 206

Secondary Cross-listing

In this course students will examine the figure of the outsider (queer, black, woman, intruder, loner) in several French and Francophone literary texts and their film adaptations and will explore questions such as: how are such outsiders translated onto the screen? To what extent does outsider status help maintain, challenge, or reveal hegemonic discourse? In what ways do non-Western and Western filmmakers (re)cast power and privilege through the figure of the outsider in their film adaptations (of Western canonical texts)? Students will read original French and Francophone literary texts and
apply theories of film adaptation to their analyses.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Three response papers, one short essay on film adaptation, one video essay with a student partner

**Prerequisites:** Students should have taken RLFR 105 or above, or placement test, or by permission of instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 16

**Enrollment Preferences:** Comparative Literature majors, Africana Studies concentrators, French majors and certificates

**Expected Class Size:** 12

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RLFR 206(D1) COMP 209(D1)

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** This course fulfills the DPE requirement because it focuses via the figure of the outsider on power dynamics (based on sexual identity, race, class, gender) between cultural producers in literary texts and their film adaptations.

**Attributes:** FMST Core Courses

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01    TR 11:20 am - 12:35 pm     Sophie F. Saint-Just

**COMP 210 (S) Latinx Language Politics: Hybrid Voices**

**Cross-listings:** LATS 240 / AMST 240

**Secondary Cross-listing**

In this interdisciplinary course we focus on questions of language and identity in the contemporary cultural production and lived experience of various Latinx communities. We consider the following questions and more: In what ways does Spanish shift as it crosses over to the US from Latin America and the Caribbean? How does Latinx identity challenge traditional notions of the relationship between language, culture, and nation? How does careful attention to language elucidate the dynamics of gender and sexuality in the Latinx community? How are cultural values and material conditions expressed through Latinx linguistic practices? In what ways might Latinx literary and linguistic practices serve as tools for social change? Departing from an overview of common linguistic ideologies, we will examine code-switching or Spanglish, bilingual education, linguistic public policy, the English Only movement, and Latinx linguistic attitudes and creative responses to linguistic colonialism. In addition to a consideration of language and identity grounded in sociolinguistics, anthropopolitical linguistics, Latinx studies, and cultural studies, we will survey a variety of literary genres including memoir, novel, and poetry. Both directly and/or indirectly, these texts address Latinx language politics, as well as the broader themes of power, difference, and hybridity.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** participation, two essays, final written reflection

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 12

**Enrollment Preferences:** Latina/o Studies concentrators, then American Studies majors and Comparative Literature majors by seniority

**Expected Class Size:** 12

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

LATS 240(D2) AMST 240(D2) COMP 210(D1)

**Attributes:** AMST Arts in Context Electives  AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora  LATS Core Electives

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01    TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm     Maria Elena Cepeda

**COMP 211 (S) The Literature of Early China (WS)**

**Cross-listings:** CHIN 217 / ASIA 209
Secondary Cross-listing

From poems on forbidden trysts and tales of bloody battles to aphorisms about filial piety and essays on moral governance, the literature of early China spans a wide range of topics and genres. In this course we will read, discuss, and write about literary works from the period stretching from approximately 600 BCE to the end of the Han empire in the third century CE, including poems, narratives, and philosophical works. All readings will be in English.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Evaluation is based on writing assignments (1 paragraph, 3-4 pages, 5-6 pages, and 8-10 pages) and participation in class discussions.

**Prerequisites:** None

**Enrollment Limit:** 19

**Enrollment Preferences:** Current or prospective majors in the Department of Asian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; current or prospective majors in Comparative Literature; and current or prospective concentrators in Asian Studies.

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Unit Notes:** Counts as a core elective for majors in Asian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures.

**Distributions:** (D1) (WS)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**
CHIN 217(D1) ASIA 209(D1) COMP 211(D1)

**Writing Skills Notes:** Students will write a series of progressively longer papers, each involving drafting, commenting, and revising.

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01 MWF 11:00 am - 11:50 am Christopher M. B. Nugent

COMP 215 (F) Cults of Personality (WS)

**Cross-listings:** RUSS 219

**Secondary Cross-listing**

First uttered by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in 1956, the phrase "cult of personality" was formulated to discredit the hero-worship that accompanied Joseph Stalin's iron-fisted rule of the Soviet Union. Since then, the phrase has gained currency as a condemnation of a variety of seemingly all-powerful leaders in oppressive political regimes, including China's Mao Zedong, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, and the ruling Kim family in North Korea. In this course, we will examine the phenomenon of the cult of personality from a variety of perspectives, beginning with the cult surrounding Stalin and ending with that of Vladimir Putin. Our course material will encompass scholarship from multiple disciplines, including history, sociology, political science, cultural and media studies, as well as artistic expression typically labeled propaganda in literature, the visual arts, and film. Although our course will begin in the Soviet Union and end in contemporary Russia, we will explore how the cult of personality has been adapted and updated for different cultural and political purposes in fascist Germany and Spain, China, Iran, North Korea, and Cuba. All readings will be in English, and all films will have English subtitles.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** completion of weekly reading and writing assignments, as well as active engagement during tutorial sessions

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** first-year students

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1) (WS)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**
COMP 215(D1) RUSS 219(D1)

**Writing Skills Notes:** Students will be writing papers (5-6 pages) every other week and receiving detailed feedback on their writing with the expectation that they will identify areas in need of improvement and work on these throughout the semester. The course will also require that students write one paper together with their tutorial partner and that they rewrite two different papers, one at midterm and the other at the end of the term.
COMP 216 (S) Folk and Fairy Tales in Literature and Beyond (WS)

From cannibalistic crones in sugary cottages to frogs who can be transformed with a kiss, the English term "folktale" covers a broad range of stories that have been beloved and belittled, transmitted and transformed for hundreds of years. This course will look broadly at folktales from different traditions, ranging from medieval China to early modern Europe and contemporary America. We will approach the folktale from a number of perspectives, including typologies; moral lessons embedded in tales; nationalism and the origins of folktale studies; modern transformations of old tales in new media such as film; and the often porous borders between the natural and the supernatural, the animal and the human, and the living and the dead. We will explore the way normative gender and ethnic roles are portrayed and sometimes undermined. We will also consider the complex literary histories of folktales, looking at sources, the interplay of oral and written traditions, folktales as alternative histories, notions of authorship, and the ways stories transform over time.

Requirements/Evaluation: Regular attendance and participation in class; multiple written assignments of varying lengths building towards a final paper of 10-12 pages.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Comparative Literature majors

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will complete multiple writing assignments over the course of the semester that prepare them to produce a polished paper (10-12 pages) by the end of the semester. The final paper will be drafted in stages, and students will receive substantial feedback on these drafts as well as on other written assignments.

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01   TR 11:20 am - 12:35 pm   Sarah M. Allen

COMP 218 (S) Nordic Nights: Scandinavia and the Second World War (DPE)

In April 1940, the Nazis invaded Denmark and Norway. In the lands of the Aurora Borealis and the Midnight Sun, the Nordic lights gave way to what seemed like one endless night of Nazi brutality. As the Danish and Norwegian peoples began five long years of occupation, Sweden remained neutral, walking the dangerous line between its role as a safe haven for Allied operatives and refugees (including Norwegian Resisters and Danish Jews) and its concessions to Nazi demands (for natural resources and troop movement across its borders). At the same time, Finland fought for its survival, first against the Soviet Union and then against the Nazis, in the boreal forests of its eastern border and the winter snows of its arctic north. In the Atlantic, the Danish colonial territories of Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands remained insulated from Nazi control in faraway Denmark, but struggled to maintain their autonomy, amid the occupation of their islands by Allied forces. While some Danes and Norwegians (like the writer Knut Hamsun and traitor Vidkun Quisling) collaborated with the Nazis, others risked their lives in the Resistance to carry out sabotage, espionage, and rescue others. Even as hundreds of Norwegian Jews were deported and murdered in Auschwitz, thousands of Danish Jews escaped to neutral Sweden with the help of their neighbors. Some Scandinavians continued this struggle beyond Nordic borders, like the Swedish diplomats Raoul Wallenberg (who saved thousands of European Jews in Budapest) and Raoul Nordling (whose careful diplomacy saved the city of Paris from total destruction). In this course, we will examine some of the most powerful literature and film on Scandinavia and World War II, and their representation of soldiers and civilians, invasion and occupation, collaboration and resistance, atrocities and genocide, cruelty and courage, survival and sacrifice. All readings and discussions in English.

Requirements/Evaluation: Active participation, two shorter papers, a midterm, and a longer final paper.

Prerequisites: None

Enrollment Limit: 16

Enrollment Preferences: Comparative Literature Majors, and those with compelling justification for admission.

Expected Class Size: 16

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)
Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course centers on a critical examination of difference, power, and equity in Scandinavian war literature and film. Through the study of war (as invasion and occupation, collaboration and resistance, atrocity and genocide), the course employs critical tools to teach students how to examine the effects of class, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in narratives on human violence and cruelty, sacrifice and solidarity.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 219 (S) Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité ? Race, Gender, and Political Power in Eighteenth-Century France (DPE)

Cross-listings: RLFR 232

Secondary Cross-listing

The French Revolution of 1789 was, to a large extent, inspired by Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot who promoted ideas on individual liberty, scientific progress, religious freedom, and secularism. The Revolution brought with it promises of a society freed from the abuses of an absolute monarchy. Yet as feminist thinker Olympe de Gouges would note, when France redefined its notion of citizenship after 1789, it did not include women and people of color. This course examines Enlightenment ideas that led to the French Revolution, while analyzing how those ideas failed to bring true equality. Voltaire, Buffon, and Montesquieu all advocated for the abolition of slavery, but they also held racist and sexist views, justified by pseudoscientific discourse. By further juxtaposing these thinkers with feminist and abolitionist authors such as Olympe de Gouges and Claire de Duras, we will examine how eighteenth-century female authors advocated for the rights of women. Finally, we will analyze artworks such as Marie-Guillemine Benoist’s Portrait d’une nègresse (1800) and discuss how France is using such works today to reckon with its history of discrimination.

Requirements/Evaluation: active class participation, one presentation (8-10 minutes), three to four papers (3-5 pages), and a longer final paper

Prerequisites: excellent performance in RLFR 105; successful performance in RLFR 106; other RLFR 200-level courses; or by French placement exam; or by permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: French majors and certificate students; Comparative Literature majors; and those with compelling justification for admission

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RLFR 232(D1) COMP 219(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: In its focus on Race, Gender, and Political Power, this course centers on a critical examination of difference, power, and equity in eighteenth-century France. Through the study of enlightenment and feminist thinkers and leaders, the course asks students to analyze the social, political, and discursive effects of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in narratives on revolution, and to re-examine both past and present definitions of “liberty, equality, fraternity.”

Not offered current academic year

COMP 220 (S) Greek Tragedy (DPE)

Cross-listings: THEA 220 / CLAS 202

Secondary Cross-listing

Ancient Greek tragedy was a cultural phenomenon deeply embedded in its 5th-century Athenian context, yet it is also a dramatic form that resonates powerfully with 21st-century artists and audiences. This course examines tragedy on both levels. We will read such plays as Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, Sophocles’ Electra, and Euripides’ Medea in English translation, considering their literary and dramatic features as well as their relationship to civic, social, and ritual contexts. We will discuss such topics as the construction of gender and identity on the dramatic stage, the engagement between tragedy and other literary genres, and the distinctive styles of the three major Athenian playwrights. We will also survey a set of recent productions and adaptations of these plays, with a particular focus on how modern playwrights and producers use Greek tragedy to explore justice, power, race, gender, status, and sexuality. We will consider how a dramatic form largely produced by and for Athenian citizen men became a creative resource for a remarkably diverse range of 21st-century artists, and explore how modern productions offer fresh perspectives on ancient material. All readings will be in English.

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, several essays, brief oral presentations

Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: Classics, Comp Lit, and Theater majors; first-years; sophomores
Expected Class Size: 25
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (DPE)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
THEA 220(D1) CLAS 202(D1) COMP 220(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course considers the questions of justice and power central to the performance of tragedy in the ancient Greek world, as well as the manifold ways in which 21st-century artists have used Greek drama to explore the modern construction of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Students will also examine how theater can operate both as a form of institutional power and as a space for exposing, critiquing, and reimagining dominant cultural narratives.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 221 (S) Dante and the Medieval World
This course explores Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* vis-à-vis the medieval world. Through a close reading of this epic poem, students will consider Dante’s use of language, allegory, and cultural knowledge to depict the afterlife and assess medieval society's social, political, and religious systems. The course will also examine the poem's relationship with global literature, art, and culture. We will read the *Divine Comedy* (with a focus on the *Inferno*) along with selections from the *Aeneid*, the *Apocalypse of Saint Paul*, the *Voyage of Saint Brendan the Abbot*, the *Kitab al-Miraj*, *Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness*, and other texts that will help us depict a better idea of the global Middle Ages and the exchange of ideas. By the end of the course, students will have a deep understanding of Dante's contributions to global cultural and literary traditions and how his work continues to inspire contemporary artists and thinkers. Students will develop critical analysis and research skills through class discussions and writing assignments.

Requirements/Evaluation: No prior knowledge of Italian or the Middle Ages is necessary. Students will be evaluated on their participation through in-class and online discussions, three short mid-term papers, and a final project.

Prerequisites: None.

Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: Comparative Literature majors, English majors.
Expected Class Size: 20
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1)

Not offered current academic year

COMP 223 (S) Japanese Food Culture in a Global Context (DPE)
Cross-listings: JAPN 223
Secondary Cross-listing
The bourgeoning popularity of Japanese food on a global scale has resulted in a surge of new research, literature, and films. Conversely, the effects of globalization have transformed the dining experience within Japan to be ever more multiethnic. This interdisciplinary course explores the complex relationship between food and culture in Japan, and the emergence of Japanese cuisine as a global phenomenon, referring to a variety of materials and practices. Topics to be addressed include modernization, nation-building, militarization, globalization, the environment, and popular culture.

Requirements/Evaluation: active class participation, three response papers, two small written report (including class presentations), and one research paper and presentation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: current or prospective majors in the Department of Asian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
Expected Class Size: 12
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (DPE)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
JAPN 223(D1) COMP 223(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course explores the complex relationship between food and culture in and out of Japan, in relation to a variety of topics such as modernization, nation-building, militarization, globalization, environmentally sustainable development, and popular culture. Students will have the opportunity to critically analyze how various social/cultural, historical, and political contexts shaped and unveiled (in)difference, (dis)power, and (in)equity in food production and consumption.
Not offered current academic year

COMP 224 (F) Remembering the Great War: The First World War in Literature and Film (DPE)
Cross-listings: RLFR 225
Primary Cross-listing

From 1914 to 1918, the First World War ravaged Europe and slaughtered millions of soldiers and civilians from across the globe. Known as the "war to end (all) war(s)," World War I set the stage for an entire century of military conflict and carnage. New technologies led to unprecedented violence in the trenches, killing and wounding as many as 41 million soldiers and civilians. Beyond the slaughter at the front, the Great War also led to the global influenza pandemic that claimed up to 50 million lives, and the Armenian genocide that presaged the later atrocities of the Holocaust. The war also led to massive political transformation, from the Irish Rebellion and Russian Revolution, to the collapse of the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires, and the redrawing of national borders across Europe and the Middle East. Even the end of the war with the Treaty of Versailles lay the groundwork for new animosities that would lead to the Second World War just two decades later. However, the First World War also inspired great social change, from the emergence of the United States as a global leader and the founding of the League of Nations, to growing discontent with colonial rule in Asia and Africa, and greater power for women whose wartime labor influenced the post-war passage of their right to vote in countries across Europe and North America. In our study of the Great War, we will examine texts and films that bear witness to the suffering and courage of soldiers and civilians, and consider the legacy of the war in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. Readings to include memoirs and novels by Barbusse, Barker, Brittain, Cocteau, Graves, Hemingway, Jünger, Remarque, Wharton, Woolf; poetry by Apollinaire, Brooke, Mackintosh, McCrae, Owen, Sassoon; films by Attenborough, Boyd, Carion, Chaplin, Jeunet, Ozon, Renoir, Trumbo, Walsh, Weir; and archival materials on the roles of Williams students and faculty during the First World War. Readings and Discussions in English.

Requirements/Evaluation: Active class participation, two shorter papers (4-5 pages), a midterm, and a longer final paper (5-7 pages).
Prerequisites: None.
Enrollment Limit: 16
Enrollment Preferences: All are welcome, but if the course is overenrolled, preference will be given to Comparative Literature majors and French majors and certificate students; if the course is over-enrolled, students will submit a form online.
Expected Class Size: 16
Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 224(D1) RLFR 225(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: As the course description explains, this course centers on a critical examination of difference, power, and equity during WWI. The content examines the effects of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality on social inequalities among soldiers & civilians, nations & colonies, men & women. The course also employs critical tools to teach students how to articulate and interrogate the social injustices of the Great War, from reading & discussion, to analytical essays & archival investigation.
Not offered current academic year

COMP 225 (S) Introduction to Comparative Literature
Cross-listings: ENGL 241
Primary Cross-listing

Comparative literature involves reading and analyzing literature drawn from different times, movements, cultures, and media. In this class, we will study English translations of texts from eras spanning the ancient to the contemporary; literary movements including romanticism, realism, and postmodernism; national traditions arising in Europe, Asia, and the Americas; and media from prose fiction to theater, comics, and film. Throughout the course, we will consider what it means to think about all these different works as literary texts. To help with this, we will also read selections of literary
theory that define literature and its goal in abstract or philosophical terms. Assignments will focus on close, creative reading of relatively short texts by authors like Homer, Sei Shônagon, Kleist, Lermontov, Zola, Borges, Wilde, Bechdel, and others. All readings will be in English.

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance, participation, two 5-page papers, a few short responses, midterm exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: Comparative Literature majors

Expected Class Size: 25

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Unit Notes: This course can be substituted for COMP 111 to satisfy the gateway requirement for Comparative Literature majors.

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 225(D1) ENGL 241(D1)

Not offered current academic year

COMP 227 (F) Outdoor Pools: Where Eros Meets Thanatos (WS)

In an outdoor swimming pool is where Eros meets Thanatos: in both F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel The Great Gatsby (1925) and Billy Wilder's movie Sunset Boulevard (U.S.A., 1950), the protagonists are shot dead in their pool, and in his adaptation of Romeo and Juliet (U.S.A., 1996) Baz Luhrmann transposes the balcony scene to an outdoor pool where romance unfolds. What is it about outdoor swimming pools that they irremediably capture our imagination? This interdisciplinary tutorial explores the function and significance of outdoor swimming pools in French, German, and U.S. culture through literature, painting, photography, and film. Whether we regard them as a symbol of status and wealth, the remnants of Hollywood's Golden Age era, the embodiment of order and discipline, or a major environmental impact factor, they nevertheless fascinate us. Because outdoor swimming pools, whether private or public, are a microcosm of society and a metaphor for human civilization, they have also been at the center of discussions about racial segregation and religious discrimination in Europe as well as in the U.S.A.. Although pools are mostly governed by tacit rules, such as respect for personal space and the desexualization of encounters, visitors have often disregarded and broken these regulations. That explains why outdoor swimming pools have often served as the perfect backdrop for literature and cinema's steamiest and most violent scenes. We will start the course with a brief social history of pools and read a few sociological studies of swimming pools by experts (Jeff Wiltse, Kate Moles, Susie Scott) to lay the theoretical ground for our analysis. In the course of the tutorial, we will explore through novels, photographs, paintings, and films the various functions assigned to outdoor swimming pools depending on the time period. We will also delve into the genre of summer pool side literature (the satirical Summer House with Swimming Pool (2011) by Hermann Koch, the thriller The Swimming Pool (2018) by Clare Mackintosh, and Julie Otsuka's latest novel, The Swimmers (2022)) and try to explain its great popularity. While the outdoor pool functions as a mirror of excess and decadence in the 1920's as evidenced by the lavish pool parties thrown by The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925), it becomes the epitome of white middleclass suburban life in the 60's as John Cheever's short story The Swimmer narrates. During the 1970's, the pool advances as a symbol of sexual liberation as the erotic thriller The Swimming Pool (France, 1969) by Jacques Deray, the sexually charged pool paintings Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool (1966) or Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures) (1972) by David Hockney, or the male nudes by Tom Bianchi in his Fire Island Pines: Polaroids 1975-1983 attest. In the 1980's the outdoor pool becomes once more the mirror of opulence and eroticism, which Helmut Newton's photographs of Hollywood celebrities (Liz Taylor swimming in her jewels) and for Playboy magazine capture as well as Paul Thomas Anderson's film Boogie Nights (U.S.A.,1997) about the booming porn industry during the Reagan-era. Starting in the late 90's, the outdoor swimming pool takes on greater political significance, largely due to the emergence and increasing visibility of female and gay filmmakers. In François Ozon's thriller Swimming Pool (France, 1996), the pool is the setting of female solidarity and feminist revenge. In her character study movie Everyone else (Germany, 2009), Maren Ade carefully examines how gender roles and stereotypes play out and get reinforced during a pool party. At last, in her recent comedy Freibad, (Germany, 2022) Doris Dorrie chooses a women-only public outdoor pool as the backdrop to raise questions of racial segregation and religious discrimination.

Requirements/Evaluation: six 5- to 7-page argumentative papers; six 2- to 3-page response papers; final paper optional

Prerequisites: None

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: Freshmen, sophomores, and juniors

Expected Class Size: 8

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (WS)
Writing Skills Notes: Each student will write five 5- to 7-page papers on which they will receive written feedback regarding grammar, style, and argument. Each student will write five 3-page critiques of their partners' papers. As the final assignment, each student will revise one of their five papers.

Fall 2024
TUT Section: T1  TBA  Christophe A. Koné

COMP 228 (S) Boys Love (DPE)
Cross-listings: WGSS 227

Primary Cross-listing
Originating in Japanese manga of the 1970s, the genre of yaoi, boy love, or BL has expanded into other media and around the globe during the last half century. Created mostly by women for women, BL transposes classic tropes of popular romance into a male homosocial environment, depicting the inevitable love of young, attractive, and typically androgynous men. The growing popularity of BL begs several questions: Why do women create and consume romances that tend to exclude female characters? Why do they enjoy a fictional universe that deliberately downplays homophobia yet ostensibly preserves heteronormativity by showing powerful, protective tops who repeatedly fall for vulnerable, passive bottoms? And how has BL changed global perceptions of and expectations for masculinity? This course explores these and other questions by examining key examples of BL from Japanese manga to Thai television, as well as shipping culture, BL's robust fandom, and adjacent genres such as slash fiction and girl love.

Requirements/Evaluation: completing all assignments, active participation in class discussions, two short papers, creating your own BL, and a final project

Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 40
Enrollment Preferences: COMP and WGSS majors
Expected Class Size: 15
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
WGSS 227(D2) COMP 228(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This class examines difference, power, and equity by examining representations of gender and sexuality, as well as their global flow over the past fifty years. Works of yaoi, boys love, or BL represent a significant genre of popular culture, as well as soft power, that originated in East Asia yet has spread around the globe. The course will address the gendered aspects of BL production, consumption, and fandom, as well the genre's mobilization of homosociality and homosexuality.

Spring 2025
SEM Section: 01  TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm  Julie A. Cassiday

COMP 230 (S) The Renaissance in England and the European Continent: Self and World (DPE) (WS)
Cross-listings: ENGL 228

Secondary Cross-listing
At the same time as the individual human being in possession of a distinctive personality was taking on enormous importance in politics, philosophy, literature, and the visual arts, early modern Europeans were encountering unprecedented levels of cultural diversity. In this interdisciplinary course, we will consider these two developments both separately and together. As Renaissance humanists were acquiring a sophisticated understanding of the distance between the present and various European pasts (the recent medieval past and the remote history of antiquity), they were also coming into contact with non-European cultures in Africa, the Americas, and Asia via trade and economic development, imperial expansion, and religious conversion. Always at stake in these encounters was the question of who counted as an individual; the self was not considered to be intrinsic to human nature but rather the product of historical and cultural developments. Themes will include religious pluralism, the sacred and the secular, vernacularity, exploration and empire, the relationship between mind and body, slavery, trade, wealth, gender, self-fashioning, and style. We will consider such English writers as the Pearl poet, More, Marlowe, Spenser, Shakespeare, Browne, and Milton; such continental intellectuals as Descartes, Erasmus, Las Casas, and Castiglione; and such continental artists as Michelangelo, Velázquez, Bruegel, and Rembrandt.
**Requirements/Evaluation:** Five four-page papers, in-class presentation, thoughtful participation in discussions

**Prerequisites:** A 100-level ENGL course, a score of 5 on the AP English Literature exam, a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam, or permission of the instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 19

**Enrollment Preferences:** First- and second-year students, and English majors who have yet to take a Gateway course

**Expected Class Size:** 19

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1) (DPE) (WS)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

COMP 230(D1) ENGL 228(D1)

**Writing Skills Notes:** The course asks students to write five four-page papers and offers exposure to a range of humanistic modes, from close reading to visual analysis to the exposition of philosophical claims. One paper will involve independent research. The instructor will provide frequent and extensive written feedback on student work. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** This course examines the role of historical and cultural difference within and beyond Europe at the very beginning of globalization. Students will become acquainted with the origins of colonialism and the global traffic in slaves, as well as with the complex role of writers and intellectuals in questioning, defending, and imagining these practices. We will consider the epistemological challenges of accessing the testimony of subordinated persons.

**Attributes:** ENGL 200-level Gateway Courses ENGL Literary Histories A

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01 TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am Emily Vasiliauskas

**COMP 231 (F) Postmodernism (WS)**

**Cross-listings:** ENGL 266

**Primary Cross-listing**

In one definition, postmodernism in art and literature is what you get when you combine modernism's radical experimentation with pop culture's easy appeal. This term has been used to describe works from Andy Warhol's paintings of Campbell's soup cans and Jean Baudrillard's critical essays on Disneyland to Murakami Haruki's euphoric conspiracy novels. Theorists of the postmodern have argued that it represents not only a radical change in aesthetic sensibilities, but a fundamentally new relationship between art, language, and society. In this tutorial, we will read some of the most important theoretical essays defining the postmodern (essays which themselves often embrace this playful and sometimes ironic style), and we will pair them with artistic texts that are said to illustrate the features of postmodernism. The latter will be mainly novels and short stories from around the world, but one feature of this theory is a flattening of the distinction between high and low culture as well as between the written and the visual, so we will also examine examples from architecture, visual art, and/or broader pop culture. Texts will include essays by critics like Jean Baudrillard, Fredric Jameson, Jean-François Lyotard, and Azuma Hiroki; novels and short stories by writers like Don DeLillo, Italo Calvino, and Murakami Haruki; painting and sculpture associated with Pop Art and Superflat; the architecture of Williamstown-area museums; etc. Writing assignments will focus on reading the theoretical texts closely and applying their ideas to the artistic texts in creative and interesting ways. Open to sophomores as well as advanced students.

**Class Format:** After an introductory lecture meeting, students will meet with the instructor in pairs for approximately an hour each week.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** participation plus 4 papers (4-5 pages), 2 short papers (1-2 pages), and 4 peer critiques (1 page)

**Prerequisites:** a previous literature or critical theory course at Williams plus sophomore standing or higher, or permission of instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** Comparative Literature majors, students with a demonstrated interest

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1) (WS)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ENGL 266(D1) COMP 231(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write several regularly spaced papers that build on one another by revisiting, extending, and/or rewriting earlier material. Students will receive detailed written feedback from the instructor on each paper, addressing argument, organization, and style, as well as written peer feedback on the longer papers. (See requirements for details about the number and type of assignments.)

Attributes: ENGL Criticism Courses

Fall 2024
TUT Section: T1 TBA Christopher A. Bolton

COMP 234 (S) Saharan Imaginations  (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: ARAB 209 / ENVI 208

Secondary Cross-listing
Deconstructing reductive Saharanism, which the course conceptualizes as a universalizing discourse about deserts, this course seeks to critically examine the myriad assumptions that are projected upon deserts across times and cultures. In addition to their depiction as dead and empty, deserts have become a canvas for the demonstration of religiosity, resilience, heroism and athleticism. Cultural production, particularly literature and film, do, however, furnish a critical space in which important questions can be raised about deserts' fundamental importance to different cultures and societies. Drawing on novels, films, and secondary scholarship, the course will help students understand how myth, memory, history, coloniality/postcoloniality, and a strong sense of ethics are deeply intertwined in the desert sub-genre of African, Euro-American, and Middle Eastern literatures. Whether grappling with transcontinental issues of climate change, cannibalization of biodiversity or overexploitation of natural resources, desert-focused cultural production invites us to interrogate the politics of space and place as well as mobility and spatial control as they relate to this supposedly dead nature.

Requirements/Evaluation: active participation, short presentation, short weekly responses on GLOW, midterm exam, and final paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 14

Enrollment Preferences: If the course is over-enrolled, students will required to provide a 200-word paragraph in which they explain how the course fits within their plan of study at Williams.

Expected Class Size: 14

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ARAB 209(D1) COMP 234(D1) ENVI 208(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will receive constant and extensive feedback on their written work. Students will write regular weekly responses on Glow, a reflection statement, two 5pp. papers for midterms, and one 10pp. final paper.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: Students will gain critical awareness of the imbrication of power, hegemony, economic injustice, and colonial policies in the disruption of indigenous conceptions of the Saharan space. Students will also be able to question representations of the Sahara as a dead or empty space by engaging with locally produced alternative conceptualizations of place. Finally, students will produce written assignments that address issues of power and environmental discrimination.

Attributes: ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives

Spring 2025
SEM Section: 01 MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm Brahim El Guabli

COMP 236 (S) Narrating Color: Black Women Sing and Write About Complexion

Cross-listings: WGSS 206 / AFR 202

Secondary Cross-listing
Colorism, skin color discrimination where light skin is privileged over dark skin, is not a new phenomenon, but globally entrenched in our society and
one of the many vestiges of white supremacy. For Black Americans of all backgrounds, colorism is a familiar and a living legacy concretized by the institution of slavery in the Americas. Although some believe that we are "post-color," similarly to those that naively believe we are "post-race," one can look to the recent example of misogynoir (misogyny directed at Black women) and skin color politics that Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, has faced at the hands of the British Monarchy, that her light-skinned color, biraciality, and class privileges couldn't protect her from. Alternatively, we can look at the numerous examples of colorism and anti-Black racism that tennis icon Serena Williams is subjected to because of her dark-brown skin complexion and body shape. One cannot fully understand the issue of colorism without understanding that it is an outgrowth or an extension of anti-Black racism firmly rooted in white supremacy, and so insidious that it impacts all aspects of Black life. Examining colorism through literary texts and music, provides a depth of understanding that both compliments and expands these empirical studies. Literature and music provide the narratives and rhythm that paint a vivid picture of the many ways that colorism impacts the lives of Black people. Through the methods of literary and rhetorical criticism we will examine the works of five Black women authors and music artists that take up issues around colorism and passing. We will explore, Toni Morrison's, The Origins of Others (2017), Brit Bennett's, The Vanishing Hall (2020), Tressie McMillian Cottom's, Thick (2019), Marita Golden's, Don't Play in the Sun (2004), Yaba Blay's, One Drop: Shifting the Lens on Race (2021), Nina Simone's, "Four Women" (1966) and "Young, Gifted and Black" (1958), Sara Martin's, "Mean Tight Mama" (1927), India.Arie's, "Brown Skin" (2001), Azealia Banks' "Liquorice" (2012), and Beyoncé's "Creole" (2012), "Formation" (2016) and "Brown Skin Girl" (2020). By examining colorism in both literature and music, it will give first year students a foundational and nuanced understanding of skin tone bias and equip them with the tools to critically engage literary and music texts.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Three, short papers (4-5 pages) discussing aspects of the readings and songs; three response papers to tutorial partner's papers (2 pages long); two, video essays; two, Twitter threads explaining aspects of one of the books and one of the songs; and a curated playlist of songs that would serve as accompaniment to one of the texts from the class.

**Prerequisites:** N/A

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** This class is specifically designed for first year students. Sophomores can register only with advanced permission.

**Expected Class Size:** 8-10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

WGSS 206(D2) AFR 202(D2) COMP 236(D1)

**Attributes:** AFR Core Electives AFR Culture, Performance, and Popular Technologies

Spring 2025

TUT Section: T1 TBA VaNatta S. Ford

**COMP 237 (F) Medieval Worlds (WS)**

While the word “medieval” was first used to designate the period in European history between the fall of Rome and the Renaissance, historians and literary scholars frequently use the term to label periods in other regions and cultures that not only overlap chronologically with the European Middle Ages, but also appear to share similarities in terms of technology, social structures, and religious orientation. In this course we will focus on how medieval literary works from multiple traditions represented past events both public and personal, from conflicts that impacted huge swaths of society to the minutiae of an individual's daily life. Readings will range from European verse epics such as the Anglo-Saxon poem Beowulf and a Chinese civil servant's poem on the destruction wrought by war to the memoirs of a Japanese court lady and a set of narratives about influential women of the past by the first professional female writer in Europe. We will explore the stories these works tell about historical (or purportedly historical) events and their claims to historicity or truthfulness, asking questions such as: In an age where information traveled very differently from how it does today, how did people form an understanding of recent and historical events? How did people create, experience, and transmit literary texts in different medieval cultures? What roles did religion play in texts that are not explicitly religious? What does it mean to think of the medieval as a category across different cultures?

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Requirements/Evaluation: Regular attendance and participation in class; multiple written assignments of varying lengths building towards a final paper of 10-12 pages.

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 18

**Enrollment Preferences:** Comparative Literature majors

**Expected Class Size:** 10
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Writing skills justification: Multiple writing assignments over the course of the semester that prepare students to produce a polished essay of 10-12 pages by the end of the semester. The final paper will be drafted in stages, and students will receive substantial feedback on these drafts as well as on other written assignments.

Fall 2024
SEM Section: 01 TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm Sarah M. Allen

COMP 238 (F) Europe and the Black Diaspora (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: AFR 236 / GERM 234

Secondary Cross-listing

This course provides an overview of the relationships and interactions between the Black diaspora and the European continent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Drawing from biographies, autobiographies, reports, literature, creative arts and academic articles, we will consider the different relationships that have evolved between Black people and Europe over the course of time. Focusing on Central Europe, we will discuss the relationships established between Europe and the Black diaspora, such as Africans, African-Americans, Afro-Latinx and Afro-Caribbeans. Some of the themes we will address include the influence of cultural contact on intellectuals, writers, artists, soldiers, politicians and asylum seekers and their works, factors that established and influenced their relationship with Europe, as well the ways in which these selected people did or did not exert influence on European cultures. We will conclude by looking at some of the current discussions that still revolve around the relationship between the Black diaspora and Europe. Reading and Discussion in English.

Requirements/Evaluation: Active class participation, written homework, short papers and final research paper.

Prerequisites: None.

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: If course overenrolls (beyond cap), preference given to first-years, sophomores, and juniors.

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
AFR 236(D2) GERM 234(D1) COMP 238(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write two 3-5-page essays each written in two drafts with instructor comments. They will also write an 8-12-page research paper with required submission of a proposed topic, an annotated bibliography, an outline, and a draft before the final paper itself. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: We will discuss how minorities and minoritized individuals and the identities they hold can be affected by the dominant cultures around them. While we will focus on Europe, we will approach discussions with a comparative view, so as to encourage the students to reflect on how difference, power and equity interact and impact minorities in the context of the United States or wherever they come from.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 241 (S) Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece and Rome

Cross-listings: WGSS 241 / CLAS 241

Secondary Cross-listing

From the household to the marketplace, from sacred spaces to the political arena, sexuality and gender shaped a broad range of attitudes and actions in the ancient Mediterranean world. This course investigates a variety of discourses and practices around sexuality and gender in ancient Greece and Rome with the aim of promoting students' capacity to evaluate claims and dismantle false assumptions about the continuity of the "classical" past with contemporary norms and values. We will carefully analyze, contextualize, and compare a variety of texts, including selections from tragic and comic drama, epic and lyric poetry, handbooks, epitaphs, novels and biography in order to better understand how gender and sexuality were expressed, experienced, and regulated in Greece and Rome. Our emphasis will be on ancient texts, but selections from contemporary criticism and theory will enrich the methodological frameworks through which we approach the primary sources.
Primary Cross-listing

This course will explore some of the many incarnations of American experiences abroad from the end of the 19th century to the present day. Materials will be drawn from novels, short stories, films, and nonfiction about Americans in Europe in times of war, peace, and pandemic. We will compare and contrast the experiences of novelists, soldiers, students, war correspondents, jazz musicians, and adventurers. What has drawn so many Americans to Europe? What is the difference between a tourist, an expat, and an émigré? What are the profound, and often comic, gaps between the traveler’s expectations and the reality of living in, say, Paris or a rural village in Spain? What are the misadventures and unexpected rewards of living, working, writing, or even falling in love in translation? How did recent lockdowns and border closings impact and/or interrupt these complex experiences?

Authors may include: Edith Wharton, Henry James, Langston Hughes, Martha Gellhorn, Ernest Hemingway, Elaine Dundy, Richard Wright, and Ben Lerner. Additional reading will be drawn from historical and critical works. All readings will be in English. This comparative course is designed to highlight the challenges and benefits of cultural immersion abroad. It will focus on the linguistic, emotional, intellectual, and social adaptation skills that are required to understand others, and oneself, in new contexts. Many of the authors and artists we will study chose, or were forced to, leave oppressive situations in the United States where their futures were limited due to factors related to politics, gender, race or class (and combinations thereof). We will study their dislocation, and freedom, and struggles to reshape their (and our) concept of “home” into something that reflects individual identity, and not one imposed by any national culture—American or foreign.

Requirements/Evaluation: Each student will give an in-class presentation and complete 3 writing assignments totaling 20 pages; one of these writing assignments will be a personal travel narrative based on the student's own experiences.

Prerequisites: Any literature course at Williams or permission of instructor.

Enrollment Limit: 18

Enrollment Preferences: Comparative Literature, English or American Studies majors, and/or students who have studied away or plan on doing so, and/or students who are from international and/or bilingual (or multilingual) backgrounds.

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

GBST 242(D2) AMST 242(D2) COMP 242(D1) ENGL 250(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: We will read and analyze primary materials and literature that reflect on Americans who chose, or were forced to, reinvent themselves abroad to escape oppressive situations in the United States related to gender, class, race, or political views. The socio-historical context of each writer will be crucial to understanding their situations. Students will write critical papers, and their own narrative in which they reflect on a situation of personal dislocation, either while traveling, or at home.

Attributes: AMST Arts in Context Electives GBST Borders, Exiles + Diaspora Studies

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01 TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am Soledad Fox
COMP 243  Performance Practices of India  (DPE)
This course explores ancient and contemporary performance practices in India. Our objects of study will include the text and performance of Sanskrit plays, contemporary and experimental theater productions, as well as forms of dance and ritual. We will discuss dramaturgical structure, staging, acting conventions, gender representation, performer training, the experience and role of the audience, as well as mythological and political themes. Thinking historically and ethnographically, we will seek to understand the aesthetics and social purposes of these practices, in addition to the relationship that performance has with everyday life, contested concepts of the nation, and caste. Throughout the semester we will interrogate the ways in which Western categories such as “classical,” “folk,” “religious,” “traditional,” and even the distinction between “dance/theater/music/visual arts” are not indigenous or accurate concepts for organizing thinking about performance in this part of the world.

Requirements/Evaluation:  Evaluation will be based on participation in discussion, reading responses, an oral presentation, and one 10-page paper.
Prerequisites:  none
Enrollment Limit:  12
Enrollment Preferences:  preference for seniors and juniors
Expected Class Size:  12
Grading:  
Distributions:  (D1)  (DPE)
Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:  We will examine British colonial edicts that prohibited performance practices as a form of social control as well as in the name of Christian morality. From here we will explore how upper-caste Independence era artists and leaders sought to reinvent the arts as vessels of “Indian” identity, at the cost of further marginalizing hereditary performance communities. We will also interrogate how the Indian state has promoted narrow visions of “femininity” and how artists contest religious nationalism
Attributes:  GBST South + Southeast Asia Studies
Not offered current academic year

COMP 244  (S)  On Monsters, Demons, and Dragons: The Supernatural in the Middle Ages
Medieval literature overflows with supernatural creatures. They populate travel accounts, religious texts, chivalric quests, and descriptions of dreams and the afterlife. Some of them are unique to certain traditions, while others encompass different areas of the world. This course aims to address the presence of the supernatural in Medieval literature, in texts such as the Legenda Aurea, Saint Brendan’s Voyage, Wonders of the East, Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness, the Divine Comedy, and the Decameron, among others. Students will analyze the supernatural in different kinds of medieval texts (written between 900 and 1500 CE in Europe and Asia) and its intersection with art, history, and science, trying to understand its purpose and literary wealth while exploring the audience’s expectations and its reception in contemporary media.

Requirements/Evaluation:  Students will be evaluated on their participation through in-class and online discussions, short mid-term papers, and a final project.
Prerequisites:  None
Enrollment Limit:  20
Enrollment Preferences:  Comparative Literature majors, English majors
Expected Class Size:  20
Grading:  yes pass/fail option,  yes fifth course option
Distributions:  (D1)
Spring 2025
SEM Section: 01  TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm  Mario Sassi

COMP 247  (F)  Feminist Theatres: A Global Perspective  (DPE)  (WS)
Cross-listings:  THEA 250 / WGSS 250 / ENGL 253
Secondary Cross-listing
What makes a work of theatre “feminist”? How do plays and performances across global networks engage with different models of feminism: liberal, radical, materialist, and intersectional? Why has feminism mattered to theatre-makers of the past? Should it still matter now? If so, what forms might
future feminist theatres take? In this tutorial course, students will work in pairs to examine the social and political relation of feminism to the art and practice of theatre. Taking a global and comparative perspective on the subject, we will focus on the intersectionalities of gender, race, class, ethnicity, nationality, and sexual identity in the production of feminist-driven theatrical practices. Artists, companies, and movements to be considered may include: Spiderwoman Theatre, Adrienne Kennedy, Caryl Churchill, Sphinx Theatre Company, Nozake Shange, Griselda Gambaro, Manjula Padmanabhan, Cherrie Moraga, Lisa Kron, Arethusa Speaks, Maya Krishna Rao, Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, Alexis Scheer, Tori Sampson, Clare Barron, and others. Close analysis of source material will be informed by critical and autobiographical writings by: Audre Lorde, Judith Butler, bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Eve K. Sedgwick, Gayatri Spivak, Jill Dolan, José E. Muñoz, and Donna Haraway. This course will follow a standard tutorial format, with students taking turns presenting or responding to their peer every other week; for their presentations, students will write a 5-page paper or, in up to two cases if they choose, offer their argumentation through more performance-driven methods (such as an oral argument, spoken-word monologue, or activist prompt).

Requirements/Evaluation: students will meet with instructor in pairs for an hour each week; every other week they will be responsible for sharing either a 5-page paper or, if they choose, in up to two cases, a more performance-driven presentation, such as: an oral argument, spoken-word monologue, or activist prompt (five presentations/papers in all). They will comment on / respond to their partner's papers/presentations in alternate weeks; emphasis will be placed on developing skills in reading, interpretation, critical argumentation, and written and oral communication.

Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: THEA majors; WGSS majors; ENGL majors; COMP majors. Students from all majors are welcome and invited to contact Prof. Holzapfel about their interest in the class: ash2@williams.edu
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
THEA 250(D1) WGSS 250(D2) COMP 247(D1) ENGL 253(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: This course fulfills the writing skills requirement by engaging students in the active and creative process of critical writing, based on the notion that "writing is thinking, not thinking written down." Emphasis will be given to crafting and developing an argument, clarifying prose, selecting evidence, gaining authority, and incorporating theoretical ideas into an essay. We will also focus on the performance and presentation of written arguments.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This tutorial examines intersections between gender, race, sexuality, class, nationality, and ethnicity in relation to theatre's ongoing engagement with feminism. We will consider how articulations of difference, power, and equity arise and are, in fact, prioritized in quite different ways within the politics of feminism itself, leading to their variable expressions through art.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 255  (F)  Love and Death in Modern Japanese Literature and Visual Culture

Cross-listings: ASIA 253

Primary Cross-listing

Modern Japanese literature is filled with compelling love stories that are variously passionate and poignant, tragic or uplifting, heartwarming or twisted, and sometimes all of the above. This course offers a survey of modern Japanese fiction and visual culture through the lens of the love story, beginning with tales of doomed lovers that were popular in the eighteenth-century kabuki and puppet theaters, and moving through a range of other relationships, including parental love and sacrifice, sex and the occult, and romance at an advanced age. We will focus on novels and short stories by canonical modern authors like Tanizaki, Kawabata, and Mishima, as well as contemporary popular fiction by writers like Murakami Haruki and Murakami Ryu. We will also give significant attention to popular visual culture, including puppet theater, comics, animation, and film. The class and the readings are in English.

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and participation, 2-4 short response assignments, one test, one or two 5-page papers, and an ungraded creative project

Prerequisites: none; no familiarity with Japanese language or culture is required
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: Students majoring or considering a major in Comparative Literature
Expected Class Size: 15
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 255(D1) ASIA 253(D1)

Attributes: GBST East Asian Studies

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01    TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm     Christopher A. Bolton

COMP 256 (S) Stop Making Sense: Absurd(ist) Theatre in Historical Context (WS)

Cross-listings: THEA 252 / ENGL 256

Secondary Cross-listing

We want to make sense of things. In nearly all of our academic pursuits, the point of analysis is to find meaning, to explain intricate or confusing phenomena, to provide clarity from complexity. What happens when we can't do this, indeed, when the objects of our analytical attention seem willfully designed to thwart the attempt? Such is the challenge of "understanding" the traditions of the absurd. In this tutorial course, we will engage this challenge within the realm of Western theatre and performance from 1900 to the present. Beginning with selected readings from writers who have engaged the absurd in theoretical fashion (Albert Camus, Soren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Esslin), the course will move swiftly to original artworks for contemplation and analysis. Some questions we will grapple with include: How do we, can we, should we respond to art that specifically defies meaning? Can art that seems pointless have a point? Playwrights will range from canonical (Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco) to more obscure but equally engaging (as well as baffling) artists (Peter Handke, Slavomir Mrocek). We will follow standard practice in tutorial pairs, as each week one student will prepare original analysis of the assigned reading, and the other will craft a response to prompt an hour-long discussion. Whether we "make sense," or perhaps discover different ways of appreciating the varied works of art, will depend on the nature of those weekly attempts.

Requirements/Evaluation: Evaluation will be based on weekly tutorial papers/response papers, and active participation in weekly tutorial sessions.
Prerequisites: None
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: Theatre, English, and Comparative Literature majors.
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 256(D1) THEA 252(D1) ENGL 256(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Weekly tutorial papers and response papers, plus regular feedback on writing/argumentation skills. The course will provide consistent and ongoing feedback on students' writing, and will require multiple assignments, each prompting comments which address writing problems and strategies, as appropriate.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 258 (S) Gnosis, Gnostics, Gnosticism (DPE)

Cross-listings: REL 276

Secondary Cross-listing

Reality is not what it seems. Salvation by knowledge, arch-heresy, an eternal source of mystical insights and experiences, secret esoteric teachings available only to a few. All these and more have been claims made about gnosis, Gnostics, and Gnosticism. This course will introduce you to the key ancient texts and ideas associated with Gnostics in modern forms of esotericism and spiritualities. We shall explore how claims about gnosis offer modes of critiquing and seeking to transform unjust social and political systems.

Class Format: lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: weekly GLOW posts, 1 textual analysis paper, 1 historiographical analysis paper, and a final paper that entails a revision and expansion of earlier writing for the course.
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: students with prior coursework in biblical or other ancient literature or history

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 276(D2) COMP 258(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course situates "gnosis" as a practical epistemological orientation used both to disrupt and challenge power arrangements deemed unjust and to empower those who are marginalized within dominant power structures. At the same time, the course interrogates "gnostic" epistemological claims as capable of being used to reinstall hierarchical power structures. Attention to power and equity and how difference is produced is at the center of the course.

Spring 2025

LEC Section: 01    MR 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm     Denise K. Buell

COMP 260  (F) Francophone Graphic Novels  (DPE)

Cross-listings: RLFR 260

Secondary Cross-listing

In this class we will read contemporary graphic novels and bandes dessinées from Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco, Guadeloupe, Lebanon, France, and Québec to analyze how they approach subjects such as colonial history, migration and discrimination, gender and sexuality, and representations of disability and the racialized body. We will pay particular attention to the visual form and the critical theory of the graphic novel to further understand why this hybrid genre has become so popular and widespread, and how it is shaping conversations about difference and power in the Francophone world. Conducted in French.

Requirements/Evaluation: weekly 1-page response papers, midterm 4-5-page paper, presentation and final 7-8-page research paper

Prerequisites: RLFR 105, 106, by placement or by permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: French majors and certificate students, Comparative Literature majors

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 260(D1) RLFR 260(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: The readings in this course focus on French colonial and Francophone postcolonial history, contemporary migration, and structures of discrimination built on race, religion, gender, and ableism in the French-speaking world. We will explore how graphic novels in their hybrid visual/verbal forms propose different ways of shaping the dynamics and the discourse of difference and power.

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01    TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am     Katarzyna M. Pieprzak

COMP 263  (S) Reading Jesus, Writing Gospels: Christian Origins in Context  (WS)

Cross-listings: REL 270 / CLAS 270

Secondary Cross-listing

What were the religious and cultural landscapes in which Christianity emerged? How did inhabitants of the ancient Mediterranean world speak about the concept and significance of religion? How have scholars of early Christianity answered these questions? What are the implications of their reconstructions of early Christian history? The course is divided into four parts. The first part establishes the courses's interpretive approach. The second part of this course explores aspects of the formation of Christianity from its origins as a Jewish movement until its legalization. The third part of
the course focuses on the earliest literature produced to memorialize Jesus. The final part of the course emphasizes modern interpretations of Jesus and the movement of which he was a part; here we shall be examining how scholars make use of ancient materials to frame their arguments and the modern contexts and legacies of making meaning out of biblical and other ancient materials.

Class Format: lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: three 3-page papers (with revisions), one 5- to 7-page paper (that builds on one of the earlier 3 page papers), and a final paper (7-10 pages, that draws on some of the earlier writing in addition to new writing)

Prerequisites: none; open to all

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: sophomores, especially potential majors in Religion, Classics, and Comparative Literature

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 270(D2) CLAS 270(D1) COMP 263(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write a series of short essays, with required revisions, to develop their skills in close reading of ancient texts and interpretive analysis of modern scholarship about Christian origins. In each successive section of the course, writing from the prior unit will inform the subsequent papers.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 265 (S) Theories of Language and Literature (WS)

Cross-listings: ENGL 209

Secondary Cross-listing

This course is made up of questions: What is literature and why would anyone want to study it? What can you figure out by examining language that you can't figure out by studying history or psychology? Do students of literature have distinctive ways of asking questions about the world? Why do we call some language literary? Can any language be literary if it appears in the right kind of book? Is there a difference between verbal forms of art and visual or auditory ones? Can novels do things that plays and poetry cannot? Why do we call some language literary? Can any language be literary if it appears in the right kind of book? Is there a difference between verbal forms of art and visual or auditory ones? Can novels do things that plays and poetry cannot? Why do we call some language literary? Can any language be literary if it appears in the right kind of book? Is there a difference between verbal forms of art and visual or auditory ones? Can novels do things that plays and poetry cannot? Why does anyone read poetry anyway?

Requirements/Evaluation: informal writing every week; three 6-page papers; class attendance and participation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: first- and second-year students, and English majors who have yet to take a Gateway course

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 265(D1) ENGL 209(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Informal writing before every class (about 500 words); three 6-page essays, plus a lead-in assignment on which the professor comments; two special writing sessions; fifteen pages of writing advice. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Attributes: ENGL Criticism Courses  ENGL 200-level Gateway Courses

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01  TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm  Christian Thorne

COMP 266 (S) Confession and Deception in Japanese Literature

Cross-listings: ASIA 266

Primary Cross-listing
Situated at the origins of Japanese literature are the beautiful and revealing diaries of ladies in waiting at the tenth-and eleventh-century court. Yet one of the most famous of these women turned out to be a man. For the next thousand years, Japanese literary tradition would place a premium on confessional writing, but the distortions and concealments of these narrators (and the authors hiding behind them) would always prove at least as interesting as the revelations. This course examines several centuries of Japanese literature to ask whether you can ever put your true self into writing; along the way I will ask you what you reveal, conceal, discover, or reinvent about yourself when you write about literature for a class like this. Texts will range from classical and medieval court literature by Sei Shônagon and Lady Nijô, through autobiographical and confessional novels by Sôseki, Tanizaki, Mishima, and Abe Kôbô, to documentary and subculture films like *The New God* and *Kamikaze Girls*. The class and the readings are in English; no familiarity with Japanese language or culture is required.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** attendance and participation, a few short response assignments, one test, two 5-page papers, and an ungraded creative project  

**Prerequisites:** none; no familiarity with Japanese language or culture is required  

**Enrollment Limit:** 25  

**Enrollment Preferences:** students majoring or considering a major in Comparative Literature  

**Expected Class Size:** 15  

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option  

**Distributions:** (D1)  

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:  

COMP 266(D1) ASIA 266(D1)  

**Attributes:** GBST East Asian Studies  

Not offered current academic year

**COMP 268 (S) The Contemporary African American and Latin American Novella (WS)**  

**Cross-listings:** ENGL 243  

**Secondary Cross-listing**  

This tutorial examines how the novella has been deployed in the African American and Latin American contexts in our present century. Throughout the term, we will grow a vocabulary to understand how, from the perspective of craft, an elongated brevity can often lend itself, perhaps counterintuitively, to such an immersive reading experience. We will also contemplate why so many of the texts appear focused on countering established historical narratives. What unique possibilities does the form of the novella offer in this regard? In these explorations, we will encounter novellas from, among others, César Aira, Yuri Herrera, Jocelyn Nicole Johnson, Gayl Jones, John Keene, Bruna Dantas Lobato, Toni Morrison, and Alejandro Zambra. These readings will be paired with brief critical texts that will frame the essays to be written each week.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** five tutorial essays (4-5 pages); five responses to partners tutorial essays; thoughtful participation in tutorial meetings  

**Prerequisites:** A 100-level ENGL course, or a score of 5 on the AP English Literature exam, or a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam, or permission of the instructor.  

**Enrollment Limit:** 10  

**Enrollment Preferences:** Sophomores, but juniors and seniors are also welcome.  

**Expected Class Size:** 10  

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option  

**Distributions:** (D1) (WS)  

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:  

COMP 268(D1) ENGL 243(D1)  

**Writing Skills Notes:** Beyond the quantity of assigned writing, significant class time will be spent covering strategies for effective and persuasive academic writing. Throughout the semester, students will receive written feedback from the instructor with specific suggestions for revision and improvement.

**Attributes:** AMST Arts in Context Electives ENGL Criticism Courses ENGL Literary Histories C  

Spring 2025
COMP 269 Stop Making Sense: Absurd(ist) Theatre in Historical Context (WS)
In most academic work the point of analysis is to make sense, to find meaning, to explain intricate or confusing phenomena, to provide clarity from complexity. What happens when we can't do this, indeed, when the objects of our analytical attention seem willfully designed to thwart the attempt? Such is the challenge of “understanding” the traditions of the absurd. In this tutorial course, we will engage this challenge within the realm of Western theatre and performance from 1900 to the present. Beginning with selected readings from writers who have engaged the absurd in theoretical fashion (Albert Camus, Soren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Esslin), the course will move swiftly to original artworks for contemplation and analysis. Some questions we will grapple with include: How do we, can we, should we respond to art that specifically defies meaning? Can art that seems pointless have a point? How and when have strategies of nonsense, circular reasoning, linguistic obfuscation, and intentional theatrical absence been employed to disguise, or deflect attention from, specific didactic (even political) agendas? What role specifically does theatre, theatricality, or performativity play in the presentation of art that refuses understanding? Playwrights will range from canonical (Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco) to more obscure but equally engaging (as well as baffling) artists (Peter Handke, Slavomir Mrocek, Richard Foreman). We will follow standard practice in tutorial pairs, as each week one student will prepare original analysis of the assigned reading, and the other will craft a response to prompt an hour-long discussion. Whether we "make sense," or perhaps discover different ways of appreciating the varied works of art, will depend on the nature of those weekly attempts.

Requirements/Evaluation: Standard tutorial requirements; weekly paper or response paper from each member of the tutorial pair. Evaluation based on improvement in written expression and engaged contribution to weekly discussions.
Prerequisites: None
Enrollment Limit: 10
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading:
Distributions: (D1) (WS)
Writing Skills Notes: This tutorial will demand writing from each student each week (either a primary paper or a shorter response paper), and each student will receive regular, extensive feedback including a focus on strategies for successful persuasive argumentation.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 270 (S) Divas and Dervishes: Introduction to Modern Arab Music and Performance (DPE) (WS)
Cross-listings: MUS 214 / ARAB 214
Secondary Cross-listing
From Sufi rituals to revolutionary uprisings, music has long played a central role in the social, political, and religious life of the Arab world. This is especially audible in the modern era, when new technologies and institutions began to record, amplify, and broadcast the region's sounds, preserving centuries-old traditions while also producing new forms of popular music. This course introduces students to Arab musical genres and practices as they developed from the late nineteenth century. We will cover a broad geographical range, exploring the classical Andalusian repertoires of Algeria, ecstatic dervish chants in Egypt, patriotic pop tunes from Lebanon, and other topics. To highlight connections between musical traditions as well as their unique local features, we will ask questions such as: What can music tell us about interactions between sacred and secular life? How is music used to define social groups and negotiate identity, gender, and class? Which musical characteristics are associated with Arab "heritage" and "modernity," and how are these performed? In what ways does music shape everyday life in the Arab world? Class sessions and discussion will be based on academic readings and at-home listening assignments. No previous knowledge of Arabic or Arab music are required.

Requirements/Evaluation: In-class participation, short essays (1 page) every two weeks, midterm presentation, and a final paper (12-14 pages).
Prerequisites: None
Enrollment Limit: 19
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (DPE) (WS)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
**COMP 270 (D1) MUS 214 (D1) ARAB 214 (D1)**

**Writing Skills Notes:** Students will develop their writing skills by submitting one-page unit responses every two weeks and a final paper of 12-14 pages on a topic of their choice. Students will receive feedback on each writing assignment and have opportunities for multiple drafts and peer review during the semester.

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** Through the lens of music, this course critically examines modern Arab society and power dynamics related to politics, gender, race, and class.

*Not offered current academic year*

**COMP 271 (S) Acting Out: Performativity, Production, and Politics in East Asian Theatres (DPE)**

**Cross-listings:** CHIN 275 / THEA 271 / ASIA 275 / AAS 275

**Secondary Cross-listing**

"Asian Theaters," for those in the West, can conjure up a variety of exotic impressions: spectacle and cacophony, mysterious masks and acrobatic bodies, exquisite styles and strangely confusing conventions. Although Asian theaters have been studied systematically in the West for at least a century, the West has never truly left its "othering" look at them. Yet, what is "different" for the West is bedrock for Asian cultures. Theatre, one of the most important and dynamic forms of cultural production and communication, has actively involved all strata of Asian societies for a millennium. How to explain theatre's continued presence and relevance for Asian nations? What do the traditions of Kun, Kabuki, and P’ansori reveal about the cultures and communities in which they were created? This course seeks to understand from the Asian perspective, rather than "exoticize" and "other," musical and dance theatres from China, Japan, and Korea. Examining the evolving presentations of signature dramas dating from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, we will act out Asian theatres in the following ways: (1) by reading the original plays in translation in tandem with their contemporary and intercultural reproductions, we will explore how Asian theatres fare in the era of globalization within and beyond national borders; (2) by revealing the "technologies" of writing, reading, acting, and staging these plays in different cultural milieus, we will consider what kinds of language and rhetoric, forms of music and movement, as well as visual components are deployed to convey evolving messages; (3) by considering key performances held outside of the proscenium stage, we will gain exposure to alternative theatrical spaces in Asian and diasporic communities that reform performing conventions, reconfigure staging environments, and renegotiate cultural values. In this manner, we will together gain an appreciation for the aesthetic devices, thematic concerns, and production politics of East Asian theatres and their global reproductions. Class materials include drama, production videos, and invited zoom sessions with Asian theatre practitioners and directors who live in the U.S. and other diasporic communities. All materials are in English. No language prerequisite. Funded by the Global Initiatives Venture Fund, this course includes an all-expense-paid travel component, a cultural and academic exchange project titled "Redefining Amateurism: Experiential Learning with Student Theatre in Contemporary China," which will bring up to eight Williams students to Nanjing, China during the Spring Break (3/23-4/3/2025). Students will participate in workshops with playwrights and theater-makers in contemporary China and engage in black-box theater productions with students from Nanjing University and Shanghai Theatre Academy. This travel component is OPTIONAL for students taking this course. However, students enrolled in this class will receive priority consideration to be included in the free travel project. Selection criteria include active participation, excellent performance in the course, etc.

**Class Format:** Funded by the Global Initiatives Venture Fund, this course includes an all-expense-paid travel component, which will bring up to eight Williams students to Nanjing, China during the Spring Break (3/23-4/3/2025). This travel component is OPTIONAL for students taking this course. However, students enrolled in this class will receive priority consideration to be included in the free travel project. Selection criteria include active participation, excellent performance in the course, etc.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Evaluation will be based on 1) ACTIVE in-class discussion; 2) three small projects (papers and audio/video essays); 3) a take-home midterm; and 4) Poster presentation based on students' final projects.

**Prerequisites:** None; open to all. No knowledge of Asian languages required, though students with advanced Asian language proficiency are encouraged to work with primary sources if they wish.

**Enrollment Limit:** 20

**Enrollment Preferences:** Current or prospective majors in the Department of Asian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; Theatre majors; Comp Lit majors; Concentrators in Asian Studies or Asian American Studies.

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1) (DPE)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**
Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course examines the power dynamics of spectacle and cacophony and how theatre provided a cultural space that engaged all strata of East Asian societies, thereby masking class and ethnic divisions within these nation-states, while also presenting a distinct image of "China," "Japan," and "Korea" to be consumed in the West. Students will learn ways in which "traditional" theatre productions affirm or subvert Western biases against Asians.

Attributes: AAS Non-Core Electives, GBST East Asian Studies

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01  TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm  Man He

COMP 273 (S) The Humanities: A Literary and Cultural History (DPE)

Cross-listings: GBST 273

Primary Cross-listing

This course will start with a history of the curriculum of Williams College, and will include a research project students will complete through the course catalogues and other materias in the college archives. From that point of departure we will read several novels and articles, see films, listen to music, and study cultural moments in the United States and abroad when the Humanities have peaked (for example, the GI Bill) and others when their value has been questioned, censored or come under threat (from the McCarthy era to AI).

Requirements/Evaluation: A semester-long research project in the Williams College Archives, engaged daily class participation, midterm exam, final paper, two in-class presentations (one in pairs, one individual), discussion leading.

Prerequisites: None

Enrollment Limit: 18

Enrollment Preferences: Open to all students. If overenrolled, instructor will send out a survey to determine enrollment in the course.

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Materials/Lab Fee: None

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 273(D1) GBST 273(D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: One of the goals of this course is to consider the democratizing role the humanities play within a Liberal Arts education, and the role of this type of education in the larger context of the world we live in. Is the pursuit of the study of literature, languages, and the arts in sync with career readiness goals that students are, very reasonably, concerned with? We will explore this and related questions. This course proposes the humanities as a space for all, not a luxury for the privileged few.

Attributes: TEAC Teaching Sequence Courses

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01  TR 11:20 am - 12:35 pm  Soledad Fox

COMP 275 (S) Digital Humanities in Art History and Literary Studies

Cross-listings: ARTH 275

Secondary Cross-listing

This course introduces students to critical topics, techniques, and methods related to digital scholarship in the humanities. Students will learn how to critique the reliability of published case studies that use digital methods, and how to construct basic projects that use digital techniques, including text analysis, digital mapping, 3d modeling & imaging, and data analysis with both quantitative and qualitative data sources. They will also explore different ways of sharing research through digital methods, including virtual storytelling and best practices of data communication. Digital Humanities in Art History and Literary Studies provides a foundation to encourage student exploration of digital projects in a variety of disciplines at Williams, whether students wish to incorporate digital methodologies into a humanities discipline or to understand the ways humanities materials require different approaches to data and digital projects in the sciences. While trying different tools and approaches, we will discuss the larger ramifications of using
digital techniques in humanistic disciplines. What kinds of ethical questions should we consider? What sorts of environmental footprint or sustainability issues do our projects raise? What kinds of power structures do they create, reflect, sustain, or dismantle?

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Students are evaluated based on 1) preparation for and participation in class discussions and exercises, including assigned readings and project reviews; 2) completion of a digital portfolio that includes 6-8 assignments applying methods learned in class, with written analysis and responses to reflection prompts.

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 24

**Enrollment Preferences:** Junior majors in Division I receive preference, followed by juniors in other fields.

**Expected Class Size:** 20

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 275(D1) ARTH 275(D1)

Spring 2025

LEC Section: 01 T 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm Beth Fischer

**COMP 281  Animals in Ancient Literature**

Humans are animals, but we tend to view animals as the ultimate other. They delight and terrify us, providing infinite vehicles for the imagination: ways of being other than human and other than civilized, ways of confronting that which seems inhuman in ourselves. In this class, we will read a selection of ancient texts that approach animals in different ways: as inverted humans, as predators, as prey, as agents of the gods, as laborers, as friends, and as a revelation of the ugly truth about our own "human" nature. Primary source readings will be paired with modern scholarly works from classics, comparative literature, and animal studies. We will think about why ancient authors used images of animals in such diverse ways and about our own relationships with animals in modern life, enriching our study with field trips. This is a seminar and will be conducted through discussion and writing workshops, with little to no lecture.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** weekly reading responses; several short writing assignments; a final paper of 10-15 pages in two drafts; active participation in seminar discussion

**Prerequisites:** None

**Enrollment Limit:** 25

**Enrollment Preferences:** Classics majors, then COMP and ENVI majors; senior majors have priority, followed by juniors, sophomores, and first-year students

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:**

**Distributions:** (D1)

Not offered current academic year

**COMP 284  (S) Athletics and Literature in Ancient Greece  (WS)**

**Cross-listings:** CLAS 214

**Secondary Cross-listing**

The modern Olympic games are one of the most visible traces of ancient Greek influence on contemporary culture. Less well-known, however, are the complex and challenging poems (originally songs) of Pindar and Bacchylides that celebrated the victors of the archaic Greek games. These victory odes are a rich source for the study of Greek culture, from their vivid descriptions of heroic feats to their philosophical claims about human life and divine favor. Athletic competition provides the impetus for these songs and constitutes one of their major themes, yet their significance extends far beyond a single athlete or festival. In this course, we will interrogate the relationship between athletics and literary production in the ancient Greek world. We will use both primary and secondary sources to develop familiarity with major festivals, games, events, and figures, and use that knowledge to contextualize our analysis of Greek literature. Ancient Greek athletic discourse will thus provide an entry point to broader reflections on the literary construction and representation of the body and its movement, as well as the interplay between literature and its cultural contexts.
COMP 285  (S)  The Nature of Work

Cross-listings:  ARTH 245 / CLAS 243

Secondary Cross-listing

Work is something that touches the lived experience and historical realities of almost every human being in every time and place. But how did ancient Mediterranean societies and cultures define and deploy the concepts of "work" and "working," as both an activity and as discourse? This is a question that has received remarkably little attention, in part since modern scholars have all too often followed the lead of elite authors, who obscure the nature of work through their focus on its products: agricultural prosperity, material luxury, urban grandeur, etc. In this course, we will seek to shed light on the world of work in antiquity, to better understand both the experiences of those who worked for a living across an array of spheres and professions, and the value of work as a cultural, aesthetic, and literary concept. Special topics will include: the place of work in conceptions of a "golden age"; the literary topos of work (like the idle shepherd or the virtuous peasant); representations of "heroic work" (most famously, the Labors of Hercules); the elision or erasure of non-elite labor for elite audiences in art and text; the iconography of work in painting, mosaic, and sculpture; and investigations into specific trades, crafts, and other forms of "making" (from midwifery to shoe making). Readings will be a combination of primary and secondary sources. All readings will be in translation.

Requirements/Evaluation:  class participation; several short writing assignments; final paper

Prerequisites:  none

Enrollment Limit:  24

Enrollment Preferences:  Classics majors, Art History majors, Comp Lit majors, and intending majors

Expected Class Size:  20

Grading:  yes pass/fail option,  yes fifth course option

Distributions:  (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ARTH 245(D1)  COMP 285(D1)  CLAS 243(D1)

COMP 291  (F)  Red Chamber Dreams: Reading China's Greatest Novel  (WS)

Cross-listings:  ASIA 291

Primary Cross-listing

Since it first began to circulate in manuscript in the mid-eighteenth century, Cao Xueqin's novel Story of the Stone (Shitou ji), also called Dream of the Red Chamber (Honglou meng), has captured the imaginations of readers young and old with its sprawling story of the coming-of-age of members of a wealthy family on the cusp of ruin. As critically acclaimed as it is beloved, Story of the Stone is widely regarded as China's greatest novel due to the intricacy of its narrative, the complexity of its characters, and the sophistication with which it deals with themes as varied as romance, enlightenment, sexuality and gender identity, and the construction of public and private spaces. The focus of this tutorial will be reading the 120-chapter novel. Students will have the option to read either in Chinese or English (though papers and class discussion will be in English). We will also read scholarly
literature to learn about some of the major critical approaches to the novel, and about its enduring importance in the Chinese literary tradition.

Requirements/Evaluation: Tutorial papers (including revisions); responses to tutorial partners' papers; engagement in in-class discussion.

Prerequisites: None.

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: Comparative literature majors and prospective majors; Asian Studies concentrators.

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 291(D1) ASIA 291(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will draft a 5- to 7-page paper every other week (for a total of five papers), which they will then revise in response to feedback from their tutorial partners and the instructor. On weeks in which they are not writing, they will critique their partner's paper. Papers will receive substantial individualized feedback on both writing and content from the instructor as well as the tutorial partner.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 293 (F) Great Big Books (WS)

Cross-listings: ENGL 233

Secondary Cross-listing

Some of the greatest novels are really, really long--so long that they are too seldom read and taught. This course takes time to enjoy the special pleasures of novels of epic scope: the opportunity to immerse oneself in a wide and teeming fictional world; to focus sustained attention on the changeable fortunes of characters and societies over a long span of time; to appreciate the detailed grounding of lives in their social environment and historical moment; to experience the leisurely and urgent rhythms, with their elaborate patterning of build-ups and climaxes, that are possible in such works. We will read but two novels, both preoccupied with the disruption and evolution of lives and loves at moments of historic upheaval: *War and Peace* (1869), Leo Tolstoy's epic of the Napoleonic Wars, and *Parade's End* (1924-28), Ford Madox Ford's modernist masterpiece about World War I and its traumatic impact on English social life. Set a century apart, the novels are distinguished by vivid and scrupulous representation of their respective wars, by their shrewd accounts of political and social pressures informing the crises, and by their insight into the struggles of those whose lives are engulfed in global crisis. Tolstoy's and Ford's approaches to fictional representation, however, provide intriguing contrasts: one favors the lucidity of classic realism, the other the challenges of modernist innovation; one deploys a single multiplot novel, the other a tetralogy of shorter novels developing a single plot. We will discuss the differing strategies and effects of these two approaches, as well as the more general difficulties of reading and interpreting long fiction.

Requirements/Evaluation: regular class participation and four 5-page papers, two of them submitted in both a draft and a revision

Prerequisites: a 100-level English course, or a score of 5 on the Advanced Placement examination in English Literature or a 6 or 7 on the International Baccalaureate

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: first- and second-year students, and English majors who have yet to take a Gateway course

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ENGL 233(D1) COMP 293(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Four 5-page papers, two of them submitted in both a draft and a revision; two mandatory paper conferences to discuss the drafts; occasional in-class discussion of issues of writing and argumentation.

Attributes: ENGL 200-level Gateway Courses ENGL Literary Histories B ENGL Literary Histories C

Not offered current academic year

COMP 295 (S) Utopia and the Idea of America(s) (WS)

Cross-listings: ENGL 264
What value does the utopian/dystopian text hold in the development of alternative thought? This course, primarily grounded in science fiction and the African American and Latin American contexts, will address this question via the thoughtful examination of a range of theoretical, fictional, and cinematic texts from, among others, Thomas More, John Akomfrah, Samuel Delany, Octavia Butler, Jorge Luis Borges, Alfonso Cuárón, José Vasconcelos, Eduardo Urzaiz, and Fredric Jameson.

Requirements/Evaluation: weekly reading responses, active class participation, two close readings (500 words each), annotated bibliography, class presentation, final paper (8-10 pages)

Prerequisites: a 100-level ENGL course, or a score of 5 on the AP English Literature exam, or a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: first- and second-year students, and English majors who have yet to take a Gateway course

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 295(D1) ENGL 264(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Attributes: ENGL 200-level Gateway Courses ENGL Literary Histories C

Not offered current academic year

COMP 296 (F) Chinese Film and Its Significant Others (DPE)

Cross-listings: CHIN 226 / ASIA 226

Secondary Cross-listing

From the first "wows" that the short films invoked at a Shanghai teahouse in 1896, Chinese films have made successive wonders that straddle reality and fantasy, technological modernity and shadow-making craft, aesthetic experiments and monetary yearnings, global investments and local interest. This seminar will explore the evolving relationships between Chinese films and five "significant others" that are central to film and film-making. Roughly following a chronological order, this course will examine 1) the effect of new technological developments (such as photography, sound, color, special FX) on film; 2) the tension between film and traditional modes of public entertainment (such as operas and shadow plays); 3) film's social role to affirm and contest gender, national, and class identities; 4) the need to garner differing sources of financial support (state funding, cultural entrepreneurs, and transnational capital); and 5) the circulation of Chinese films in the global market. Class materials include various genre films (melodrama, horror, martial arts, comedy, etc.), directors' notes, contemporary reviews, and scholarship in China and media studies. All materials and discussions are in English.

Requirements/Evaluation: Evaluation will be based on 1) ACTIVE in-class discussion; 2) Pre-class discussion posts based on reading (Graded as Complete or Incomplete); 3) Three short papers (3 pages); and 4) the final group project (including a presentation, and a paper or other form of project. Students will be graded both individually and as a group).

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: current or prospective majors in Department of Asian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; Comp Lit majors; those with Asian Studies Concentration.

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

CHIN 226(D1) ASIA 226(D1) COMP 296(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course provides students with the opportunity to analyze the clashes and negotiations between Western media technological modernities and Chinese indigenous understanding of shadows, visuality, and sound. By discussing various films produced from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other diaspora areas from 1920 to now, this course asks students to explore how cinema invokes (and
erases) differences, and consolidates (and challenges) hegemonic notions of nation, gender, and class.

Attributes: FMST Core Courses

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01    TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm     Man  He

COMP 297  (S) Present Pasts: The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Chinese Literatures and Films  (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: ASIA 228 / CHIN 428

Secondary Cross-listing

What happens when memories, already slippery, are further massaged by literary and cinematic narrative strategies? How is the historical "pasts" remembered, forgotten, and subverted in a literary "presence"? This tutorial explores the politics of memory in contemporary literatures and films from the People's Republic of China (post-socialist era, 1978), Taiwan (post-martial law, 1987), and Hong Kong (postcolonial era, 1997). We will look at how literary and cinematic works in each of these "post" societies represent state-sponsored narratives of remembrance, dissidents' collective amnesia, and at the popular level, a playful yet cynical flirtation with politics. With close- and distant- readings of textualized and visualized memories, we will examine themes of nation and locality, public and private, mesology and mythology, amnesia and nostalgia, and diaspora and settlement in the PRC, Taiwan, and Hong Kong from the late 1980s until to today. Course readings include "root-seeking", "new realist", "avant-garde" and "hooligan" novels, examples from the Taiwanese small theater movement, and the transnational cinemas made by the fifth, sixth, and second new wave filmmakers from these three "post" societies. This tutorial is conducted in either Chinese or English. Students wishing to take the course in English should register under ASST or COMP and language learners wishing to take the course in Chinese should register under CHIN.

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and participation, five 5-page papers, five peer-review and critique papers, revisions on selected papers.

Prerequisites: None for students taking the course under ASST and COMP 297;  CHIN 402 or permission of the instructor for students taking CHIN 428

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: current or prospective majors in the Department of Asian Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; COMP majors; Asian Studies Concentration

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)  (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ASIA 228(D1) CHIN 428(D1) COMP 297(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write a 5-page paper every other week for a total of five papers. On weeks when they are not writing papers, they are expected to critique their tutorial partner's paper as peer reviewers. Detailed writing prompts will be provided to students to generate and organize ideas for each essay. Students are also required to revise key paragraphs, sections, and papers throughout the semester.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course provides students with the opportunity to analyze and critique the following entangled modernist dualisms: present and pasts; memory and representations; diaspora and settlement; transnationalism and localism. By discussing texts produced from the PRC, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other diaspora areas in these "post" societies, this course asks students to explore how literary and cinematic narratives invoke (and erase) differences, and challenge (and consolidate) borders.

Attributes: FMST Core Courses

Not offered current academic year

COMP 299  (F)(S) On Occupations: Work, Colonization and Contemporary Life  (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: ENGL 294

Secondary Cross-listing

Reading political essays, critical theory, historiography, and literary works, in this course we will ask what thinking through the different senses of "occupation" can teach us about contemporary life. The course wagers that there is a connection between why some nations are or were "under" occupation and why, as individuals, all of us must "have" occupations. On the one hand, we will think about work: What does it mean to have an occupation today? There was a time when most people could distinguish between the time of work and that of leisure. But we live under a different
regime. What now is the difference between work and leisure for those working "gigs"? In the case of "creatives," Bifo Berardi says, it is the soul itself that has been put to work. And then there are those who are unemployed, i.e., those occupied by the most widespread form of work there is—looking for work. On the other hand, we will ask questions about colonialism: Did not Europe's occupation of the globe birth this world in which the only way to live is to be occupied in a narrow sense, i.e., to always be working or looking for work? And isn't one economic function of the occupation of peoples in our own times to create a cheap workforce? Finally, we will ask what art and political organizing can teach us about a "de-occupied" life—a life after work, a life without colonization. Writers will include Marx, Jyotiba Phule, Du Bois, Raymond Williams, Premchand, M. E. O'Brien and Eman Abdelhadi, Bifo Berardi, David Graeber, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Mahasweta Devi, Edward Said etc.

Requirements/Evaluation: Students will read 100-120 pages each week. Each student will do one classroom presentation about the week's readings. Other assignments include weekly journals, an annotated bibliography, a proposal, and a final paper.

Prerequisites: 100-level English course or a 5 on the AP literature exam, or permission of the instructor.

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: first-years and sophomores considering majoring in English or Comparative Literature, and English majors who have not yet taken a gateway course.

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ENGL 294(D1) COMP 299(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write over 20 pages in the semester and they will receive extensive feedback.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: Students will read and discuss texts about the organization of power in contemporary society. They will reflect upon the economic structures that underpin a range of oppressive social forms.

Attributes: ENGL 200-level Gateway Courses ENGL Literary Histories C

Fall 2024
SEM Section: 01  W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm  Paresh Chandra

Spring 2025
SEM Section: 01  W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm  Paresh Chandra

COMP 301  (F) Sublime Confusion: A Survey of Literary and Critical Theory

Cross-listings: ENGL 301

Primary Cross-listing

Which is more appealing, a roller coaster or a rose? For much of its history, art and literary theory has conceived itself as a science devoted to explaining and defining "beauty." But running alongside this is an edgier countercurrent that worships something else: an experience of excitement, fear, suspense, or thrilling confusion often described as "the sublime." The sublime interested early critics, from classical rhetoricians to the German Idealists, as a way to make aesthetics more scientific paradoxically by identifying the doorway through which art and literature escaped the realm of reason. More recently the notion of literature's exciting confusion has played a key role in modern critical theory from Russian formalism to new criticism, deconstruction, postmodernism, and posthumanism. (In fact, poststructuralist criticism itself has a thrillingly confusing quality that we will not ignore.) We will take up a cross section of critical theory from classical times to the present, focusing on careful reading of relatively short texts by Plato, Aristotle, Addison, Burke, Schiller, Nietzsche, Shklovsky, I.A. Richards, Barthes, Derrida, Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, Haraway, and others. Case studies ranging from opera to Xbox will enlighten, thrill, and confound you. Written assignments will encourage you to parse these theories carefully and apply them to the literary texts that most interest you: prose, poetry, or drama from any time and place; film, visual art, or architecture; music, new media, or digital media, and beyond.

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and active participation, several short response assignments, final project consisting of a scripted oral presentation and a 15-page final paper

Prerequisites: 200- or 300-level course in literature, theory, or philosophy, or permission of the instructor

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: students majoring or considering a major in a related field
COMP 303 (F) Embodied Archives: Global Theatre Histories, From Antiquity to 1900 (DPE)

Cross-listings:

Secondary Cross-listing

A survey of global theatre and performance, spanning from antiquity to 1900. Students will engage with the archives and repertoires of the theatrical past, approaching subjects both critically and creatively. Topics to be considered may include: Indian Sanskrit drama; ancient Greco/Roman theatre; pre-Columbian Mesoamerican dance/drama; Japanese Noh and Kabuki performance; Medieval and Renaissance English theatre; West African masquerade; French Neoclassicism; Spanish "golden age" theatre; and American melodrama. In addition, we will consider receptions of such traditions in the present, examining how contemporary theatre makers have engaged with (adapted, appropriated, recycled, or re-appropriated) historical sources. As a major project in the class, students will develop and share their own artistic approaches to selected archival works. While attending to theatre's formal aspects, we will at the same time focus on the relationship of performance to politics and society, as well as to the enduring legacies of empire, state power, colonialism, and private capital in which theatre is historically embedded. If and when possible, we will encounter archival sources housed in College Archives and WCMA. This course is required for Theatre majors and is a prerequisite for THEA 401.

Requirements/Evaluation: active participation in class discussion; a 5-7 page midterm paper; an oral presentation on a selected historical resource; a final creative adaptation/script, or live performance

Prerequisites: Theatre majors must have already taken THEA 101 by the time they enroll in this course

Enrollment Limit: 14

Enrollment Preferences: Theatre majors; Comparative Literature majors

COMP 305 (F) Dostoevsky and the Meaning of Life

Cross-listings: RUSS 305

Secondary Cross-listing

This course surveys the works of the great Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, whose oeuvre represents a life-long quest to uncover the meaning of life. Readings include Dostoevsky's major novels, Crime and Punishment, Demons, and The Brothers Karamazov, as well as several shorter works, including Notes from Underground. We will also examine Dostoevsky's journalism, so that we understand how he answers life's most troubling questions in the social and political context of his day, as well as what role artistic representation plays in these answers. All readings will be in English.

Requirements/Evaluation: willingness and ability to complete lengthy reading assignments, active class participation, two short papers, and final project

Prerequisites: none, open to all students
Enrollment Limit: 40

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RUSS 305(D1) COMP 305(D1)

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01    MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm    Julie A. Cassiday

COMP 306 (S) Tolstoy and the Meaning of Life

Cross-listings: RUSS 306

Secondary Cross-listing

This course examines the works of the great Russian writer Lev Tolstoy, whose stories and novels represent a life-long quest to uncover the meaning of life. Readings include Tolstoy's two major novels, War and Peace and Anna Karenina, as well as several shorter works, such as The Death of Ivan Ilych and Hadji Murad. We will also examine Tolstoy's aesthetic and didactic writing so that we understand precisely how Tolstoy answers life's most troubling questions, as well as what role artistic representation plays in these answers. All readings will be in English.

Requirements/Evaluation: timely completion of all reading assignments, active participation in class discussions, 2 short papers, and a final project

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 50

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RUSS 306(D1) COMP 306(D1)

Attributes: GBST Russian + Eurasian Studies

Not offered current academic year

COMP 307 (S) Aesthetic Outrage

Cross-listings: ENGL 332

Secondary Cross-listing

In this course we will explore interdisciplinary ways of understanding and theorizing the outraged reception of provocative works of film, theater, and fiction. When riots, censorship, trials, and vilification greet such works in moments of political and social upheaval, the public outrage is often strangely out of proportion to either the work's aesthetic nature or its overt commentary on the political crisis. Something powerfully symptomatic is at work, then: a set of threatened investments, unacknowledged values, and repressed ideas which surface explosively, but indirectly, in the aesthetic outrage. In an attempt to understand the strange logic of public outrage against works of art, we will explore the respective works' historical contexts, and use theoretical models--aesthetic, political, psychological, social--as a means of illuminating the dynamics of outrage and exposing understated linkages between a work's figurative logic and the political passions of its historical moment. We will study instances of outrage in the context of the French Revolution (Beaumarchais' The Marriage of Figaro), the wave of anarchist terrorism in turn-of-the-century Paris (Jarry's Ubu the King), the trials of Oscar Wilde for "gross indecency" (The Picture of Dorian Gray), the Irish Revolution (Synge's The Playboy of the Western World and O'Casey's The Plough and the Stars), and Stalinist collectivization (Eisenstein's suppressed film Bezhin Meadow). Non-literary reading will include historiographic work on these crises, as well as essays and excerpts by theorists from various disciplines, such as Kristeva, Foucault, Freud, Girard, Arendt, Sedgwick, Bakhtin, Douglas, and Rancière.

Requirements/Evaluation: active participation in class discussions, two papers 8-10 pages in length.
**Prerequisites:** a 100-level ENGL course, or a score of 5 on the AP English Literature exam, or a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam

**Enrollment Limit:** 22

**Enrollment Preferences:** English majors and Comparative Literature majors, then highly qualified sophomores

**Expected Class Size:** 18

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

COMP 307(D1) ENGL 332(D1)

**Attributes:** ENGL Criticism Courses ENGL Literary Histories C

Not offered current academic year

**COMP 308 (F) Building Francophone Cities: Literature, Art and History** (DPE)

**Cross-listings:** RLFR 307

**Secondary Cross-listing**

Through literature, visual art, and urban history, this class will engage with the remarkable histories, presents and imagined futures of five Francophone cities: Casablanca (Morocco), Algiers (Algeria), Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Fort-de-France (Martinique) and Port-au-Prince (Haiti). We will learn about their colonial foundations and postcolonial transformations while paying attention to how these urban spaces and their people and histories are represented and imagined by poetry, novels, and visual art. (Conducted in French)

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Active participation, weekly 1-page response papers, midterm 5-page paper, final project (oral presentation and 8-page paper).

**Prerequisites:** RLFR 105 or above, or by permission of instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 18

**Enrollment Preferences:** French majors or certificate students, Comp. Lit. majors

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1) (DPE)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

RLFR 307(D1) COMP 308(D1)

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** This course examines the French colonial history and postcolonial futures of five major Francophone cities and pays particular attention to questions of representation of class, race and gender in the historical, literary and visual record.

Not offered current academic year

**COMP 310 (F) Transcending Boundaries: The Creation and Evolution of Creole Cultures** (DPE)

**Cross-listings:** RLFR 320 / GBST 306 / AFR 306

**Secondary Cross-listing**

Born out of a history of resistance, Creole cultures transcend racial boundaries. This course provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the creation of Creole nations in various parts of the world. Beginning with an examination of the dark history of slavery and French colonialism, we will reflect upon the cultural transformation that took place when people speaking mutually unintelligible languages were brought together. We will then delve into the study of how deterritorialized peoples created their languages and cultures, distinct from the ones imposed by colonizing forces. As we journey from the past to the present, we will also explore how international events such as a worldwide pandemic, social justice, racism, and police brutality are currently affecting these islands. Potential readings will include prominent authors from different Creole-speaking islands, including Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Maryse Condé from Guadeloupe, Ananda Devi from Mauritius and Jacques Roumain from Haiti. Conducted in French with introductions to different creoles.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Active class participation, three papers (of 3-4 pages each), presentation, final research paper (7-8 pages)

**Prerequisites:** Any RLFR 200-level course or above, or by permission of instructor.

**Enrollment Limit:** 18
Enrollment Preferences: All are welcome. If overenrolled, preference will be given to French majors and certificate students; Comparative Literature majors; Africana Studies students; Global Studies students; and those with compelling justification for admission.

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RLFR 320(D1) COMP 310(D1) GBST 306(D2) AFR 306(D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course qualifies for a Difference, Power, and Equity requirement because it examines the history of slavery as related to French colonialism in different parts of the world. It also considers International issues of social justice, racism and police brutality.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 311 (S) Environmental Literature and Film in Latin America (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: ENVI 311 / RLSP 304

Secondary Cross-listing

What use are aesthetics when the world is (literally) on fire? We will take up this question and others in a critical engagement with Latin American cultural production of the twentieth and twentieth centuries, especially works of literature and film that directly or indirectly engage with environmental crisis. Students can expect to explore a variety of media, forms and genres, including works that range from (more or less) mainstream to cutting edge. Our examinations of literature and film will be supported by theoretical writings produced in the Americas and other places. Writers and directors whose work may be considered include, but are not limited to: Lucrecia Martel, Ciro Guerra, Rafael Barrett, Samanta Schweblin, Ernesto Cardenal, Juan Rufio, María Luisa Bombal, Eduardo Gudynas, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Isabelle Stengers.

Requirements/Evaluation: This course will be conducted seminar-style. Students will be expected to prepare thoroughly and be active, engaged participants in class discussions. In addition to day to day preparation and participation, other graded assignments will include discussion-leading, one short (5-7 page) essay and a longer (15-20 page) paper combining research and original analysis.

Prerequisites: One college literature of film course at the 200-level or above.

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Envi majors and concentrators, Comp Lit majors, Spanish majors and those working towards the Spanish certificate.

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ENVI 311(D1) RLSP 304(D1) COMP 311(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: All students in the course will write (and rewrite) no less than 20 pages. Major writing assignments will be scaffolded, with explicit discussion of the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revision) and consultation.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: The works of literature and film that we will be examining challenge North American conceptions of climate change (and environmental crisis more broadly) by making visible (often uncomfortably so) the colonial and neocolonial history of extractivism.

Attributes: ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives

Not offered current academic year

COMP 313 (S) Disinterest in the Bhagavad Gita

Cross-listings: ENGL 353 / REL 353 / ASIA 351

Secondary Cross-listing

In this course, students will read the Bhagavad Gita alongside selected responses to it. These responses range from philosophical and theological commentaries written in Sanskrit by Shankaracharya, Abhinavagupta, and Ramanuja, to later “Bhakti” poetic responses in other Indian languages, to 18th and 19th century European aesthetic and political commentary (Herder, Schlegel, Hegel), to the work of 20th century commentators like M.K. Gandhi, B.G. Tilak, B.R. Ambedkar and D.D. Kosambi. We will examine the Gita's theory of action and the place of disinterest in this theory. We will inquire into the social, metaphysical, and political conditions of possibility of such disinterestedness, and think about disinterestedness itself as a condition for political action and aesthetic experience. Finally, we will reflect on how such a comparative history of interpretation might help us model a
dialectical history of thought.

Requirements/Evaluation: Weekly meetings, weekly reading; weekly essay or response. Attendance in 2-3 lectures over the semester.

Prerequisites: No prerequisites

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: Majors in English and Comparative Literature; Religion, Classics, or Philosophy majors; Sophomores looking to major in any of these.

Expected Class Size: 8-10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ENGL 353(D1) COMP 313(D1) REL 353(D2) ASIA 351(D1)

Attributes: ENGL Literary Histories A

Spring 2025

TUT Section: T1 TBA Paresh Chandra

COMP 314 (F) Paris on Fire: Incendiary Voices from the City of Light (DPE)

Cross-listings: RLFR 316 / WGSS 315

Secondary Cross-listing

During the 1830s, Honoré de Balzac described Paris as a "surprising assemblage of movements, machines, and ideas, a city of one hundred thousand novels, the head of the world," but also characterized the French capital as a "land of contrasts," a "monstrous wonder," a "moral sewer." Similarly, writers from Victor Hugo to Émile Zola have simultaneously celebrated Parisian elegance and condemned the appalling misery of Paris's urban poor. Since 1889, Paris has been fêted as the "City of Light" for its Enlightenment legacy, Eiffel Tower modernity, and luminous energy, captured in countless paintings, photographs, and film. However, Paris is also the site of revolution, resistance, and riots. From revolutionary revolt (1830, 1848, 1871), to wartime resistance (1870, 1914-18, 1940-44), to reformist and race riots (1968 and 2005), Paris has repeatedly sparked with incendiary passion and political protest. As fires raged during the 2005 riots, many heard the echo of Hitler's 1944 question, "Is Paris burning?" and asked: why was Paris burning again at the dawn of the twenty-first century? Following the 2015 terrorist attacks, many wondered yet again what the future would hold for the City of Light. To answer these questions, we will examine the social, political, and literary landscape of Paris during the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, from urbanization and modernization, to occupation and liberation, to immigration and globalization. Readings to include poetry, short stories, and novels by Hugo, Balzac, Baudelaire, Maupassant, Verne, Zola, Apollinaire, Colette, Duras, Perec, Rochefort, and Charef. Films to include works by Clair, Truffaut, Godard, Minnelli, Clément, Lelouch, Luhrmann, Kassovitz, Besson, and Jeunet. Conducted in French.

Requirements/Evaluation: Active class participation, midterm exam, and two papers.

Prerequisites: Strong performance in RLFR 106, or another RLFR 200-level or 300-level course, or permission of the instructor.

Enrollment Limit: 16

Enrollment Preferences: French Majors and French Certificate students, Comparative Literature Majors.

Expected Class Size: 16

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RLFR 316(D1) WGSS 315(D2) COMP 314(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course examines the operations of difference, power, and equity in French film and fiction, history and politics, art and culture, from 1830 to 2025. In readings, lectures, and discussions, we will look at how class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality structure the lives and struggles of the working class and urban poor, women and men, migrants and immigrants. Students will learn critical tools to better understand and interrogate social inequity and injustice.

Attributes: GBST Urbanizing World
"Social construction" can often seem like the great collegial insight. By now, you've all heard that categories such as race, gender, and sexuality are in some sense not part of nature, but instead are created and maintained socially or culturally. The idea of social construction has been vital to critical race theory and queer theory, and, in this course, we will push ourselves into philosophy of science to see whether or not these same insights apply to everything. If we know that "Whiteness," "heterosexuality," and "masculinity," for instance, are all socially constructed, we will ask if the same is true of "electrons," "money," "the solar system," and "climate change." Can it be that all of our reality is socially constructed? Or does social construction have limits? If so, what are they? We will also ask more fundamental questions, such as: What does it mean to say something is socially constructed? How does social construction relate to claims that an aspect of the world is "real" or "not real?" Is social construction a theory about language, power, culture, societies, human perceptions, or the limits of science? What kind of political, ethical, ontological, or epistemological work do theories of social construction do? We will begin with different accounts of the social construction of race, gender, and sexuality. In the second part of the course, we will dig deeper into philosophical debates about social construction as such. Then we will explore constructionism about natural science. In the last part of the course, we will change gears and explore look at cutting-edge work in the theory of social science aimed at explaining the construction and ontology of social worlds. The class will culminate in a project in which students will put their social construction theories into practice.

Requirements/Evaluation: regular attendance and participation, short weekly reflection papers, a 8-10 page research paper, and final project

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Preference will be given to majors and concentrators from STS, ANSO, COMP, REL, PHIL, WGSS, AAS, LATS, JWST, and AFR. If the class is overenrolled students will be asked to submit an email about themselves and why they want to take the course.

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 315(D1) WGSS 302(D2) STS 301(D2) SOC 301(D2) REL 301(D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: Central to REL 301 will be an analysis of the social construction of race, gender, and sexuality. It will show how power and difference are tied up in their construction and maintenance of these categories. Students will be taught how to critically analyze race, gender, and sexuality as well as social construction as such. Students will also learn sophisticated tools for studying systems of social power and difference.

Attributes: PHIL Related Courses

Spring 2025

COMP 318 (F) Twentieth-Century French Novel: From Adversity to Modernity (DPE)

Cross-listings: RLFR 318

Secondary Cross-listing

In his futurist novel Paris in the Twentieth Century (1863), Jules Verne envisions an era of technological superiority, complete with hydrogen cars and high-speed trains, televisions and skyscrapers, computers and the internet. But in Verne's vision of modernity, technological sophistication gives way to intellectual stagnation and social indifference, in a world where poetry and literature have been abandoned in favor of bureaucratic efficiency, mechanized surveillance, and the merciless pursuit of profit. To contest or confirm this dystopic vision, we will examine a broad range of twentieth-century novels and their focus on adversity and modernity. In a century dominated by the devastation of two World Wars, the atrocities of colonial empire, and massive social and political transformation, the novel both documented and interrogated France's engagement with race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, colonialism and immigration. Within this historical context, we will discuss the role of the novel in confronting war and disease, challenging poverty and greed, and exposing urban isolation and cultural alienation in twentieth-century France. Readings to include novels
by Colette, Genet, Camus, Duras, Ernaux, Guibert, Begag. Films to include works by Fassbinder, Annaud, Ducastel, Martineau, Téchiné, Charef. Conducted in French.

Requirements/Evaluation: Active class participation, two shorter papers, a midterm, and a longer final paper.

Prerequisites: A 200-level course (at Williams or abroad), or by placement test, or permission of the instructor.

Enrollment Limit: 16

Enrollment Preferences: French majors and certificate students, Comparative Literature majors, and those with compelling justification for admission. Seniors returning from Study Abroad (in France or other Francophone countries) are particularly welcome.

Expected Class Size: 16

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 318(D1) RLFR 318(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: As the course description explains, this course focuses on a critical examination of difference, power, and equity in twentieth-century France. The course also employs critical tools to teach students how to examine the roles of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, colonialism and immigration, in the French novel's critical representation of war and disease, poverty and greed, urban isolation and cultural alienation during the twentieth-century.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 319  (F)  Black Migrations: African American Performance at Home and Abroad

Cross-listings: THEA 317 / AFR 317 / DANC 317 / AMST 317 / ENGL 317

Secondary Cross-listing

In this course, students will investigate, critique and define the concepts migration and diaspora with primary attention to the experiences of African Americans in the United States and Europe. Drawing on a broad definition of performance, students will explore everything from writing and painting to sports and dance to inquire how performance reflects, critiques and negotiates migratory experiences in the African diaspora. For example, how did musician Sidney Bechet's migration from New Orleans to Chicago to London influence the early jazz era? How did Katherine Dunham's dance performances in Germany help her shape a new black dance aesthetic? Why did writer James Baldwin go all the way to Switzerland to write his first novel on black, religious culture in Harlem? What drew actor/singer Paul Robeson to Russia, and why did the U.S. revoke his passport in response to his speeches abroad? These questions will lead students to investigate multiple migrations in the African diasporic experience and aid our exploration of the reasons for migration throughout history and geography. In addition to critical discussions and written analysis, students will explore these topics through their own individual and group performances in class. No prior performance experience is necessary.

Class Format: discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, in-class student performances, several 2-page performance response papers, one 10- to 12-page research paper, a final performance with a 3-page report

Prerequisites: none; open to all

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Africana Studies majors and concentrators; Dance and Theatre majors; American Studies, Comparative Literature, and English majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

THEA 317(D1) AFR 317(D2) DANC 317(D1) AMST 317(D2) COMP 319(D1) ENGL 317(D1)

Attributes: AFR Core Electives  AFR Culture, Performance, and Popular Technologies  AMST Arts in Context Electives  AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora  AMST Space and Place Electives  GBST Borders, Exiles + Diaspora Studies

Not offered current academic year

COMP 320  (S)  Kafka  (WS)
"It's so Kafkaesque!" We love to use the most famous Austro-Hungarian-Czech-Jewish writer of all time to characterize puzzling and dispiriting situations. But close examination of Franz Kafka's work and life reveals a multi-dimensional world that goes far beyond the cliché. Jewish in an increasingly anti-Semitic environment, German-speaking surrounded by Czech-speakers, deeply alone in a family that didn't understand him, Kafka produced texts that simultaneously demand and refuse to be interpreted. In this tutorial we will begin with intensive readings of selected short stories and parables, then move on to an exploration of Kafka's own words from diaries and letters, as well as secondary sources. The course will conclude with discussions of how Kafka's texts and their contexts might relate to contemporary conditions and/or to students' own lives and thoughts. This will be a modified tutorial, with five groups of three students apiece. Conducted in English.

**Class Format:** the class will be divided into groups of 3. At each weekly meeting, one of the 3 will present a 5-page paper, another will present a formal response, and the third will participate actively in discussion. Students will incorporate at least one of their papers into a final project that links their discussions of Kafka to their own interests and/or to contemporary issues.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Three 5-page papers, three 1-2 page responses, one final project, discussion leading. Evaluation: Tutorial papers will receive extensive comments, but no grade; the instructor will meet with individual students at least twice during the semester to discuss how things are going for them. Responses will not be evaluated by the instructor, but instead will function well or less well in the context of the discussion. The final project will receive a grade, and the final grade will be determined by the overall trajectory of the student's learning.

**Prerequisites:** One college literature course

**Enrollment Limit:** 15

**Enrollment Preferences:** majors or prospective majors in Comparative Literature or German

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1) (WS)

**Writing Skills Notes:** Modified tutorial. Students will write 3 five-page papers apiece, plus the same number of 1-2-page response papers, and will revise and expand one of their papers for a final project. Each paper will receive extensive comments.

Not offered current academic year

**COMP 322 (S) Comic Lives: Graphic Novels & Dangerous Histories of the African Diaspora**

**Cross-listings:** ENGL 356 / ARTH 223 / AFR 323 / AMST 323

**Secondary Cross-listing**

This course explores how the graphic novel has been an effective, provocative and at times controversial medium for representing racialized histories. Drawing on graphic novels such as the late Congressman John Lewis' *March* and Ebony Flowers' *Hot Comb*, this course illustrates and critiques multiple ways the graphic novel comingles word and image to create more sensorial access into ethnic traumas, challenges and interventions in critical moments of resistance throughout history. Students will practice analyzing graphic novels with the help of critical essays, reviews and film; the chosen texts will center on Africana cultures, prompting students to consider how the graphic novel may act as a useful alternate history for marginalized peoples. During the course, students will build comic creation and analysis skills through short exercises, eventually building up to the final project of a graphic short story that illustrates historical and/or autobiographical narratives. No art experience is required, only an openness to expanding one's visual awareness and composition skills. This course is often taught in collaboration with the Williams College Museum of Art's Object Lab program, which allows the class to have its own space and art objects that are directly related to the course topic. This class may feature Object Lab participation, film screenings, and collaborations with guest speakers.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** class participation, written responses, student-led facilitation, one 3-page graphic analysis, one 6- to 8-page essay, and a final project (producing a graphic short story)

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 20

**Enrollment Preferences:** If the enrollment limit is exceeded, preference will be given to Africana Studies concentrators or students who have taken AFR 200, the department's introductory course.

**Expected Class Size:** 20

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Unit Notes:** this course is part of the Gaudino Danger Initiative

**Distributions:** (D1)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ENGL 356(D1) ARTH 223(D2) AFR 323(D2) AMST 323(D2) COMP 322(D1)

Attributes: AFR Core Electives AMST Arts in Context Electives AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora GBST Borders, Exiles + Diaspora Studies

Spring 2025
SEM Section: 01    TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am     Rashida K. Braggs

COMP 324  (F)  Japanese Art and Visual Culture: Private/Public/Pop  (WS)
Cross-listings:  ARTH 525 / ASIA 324 / ARTH 324

Primary Cross-listing
This tutorial offers a survey of Japanese art and visual culture across time and media, with particular attention to two areas: the links between different artistic media, and the relationship between art and its audience. We'll begin with early court diaries and related scroll paintings as examples of "private" art. Then we'll move through progressively more public visual media of the 17th through 21st centuries: Kanô screen painting; nô, kabuki, and puppet theater; premodern architecture; popular woodblock prints; turn-of-the-century photography; and finally some examples of contemporary popular culture like comics, animation, and/or film. We will focus on the specificities of each medium while simultaneously developing formal visual reading skills that can work across different media.

Class Format: Students will meet with the instructor in pairs or trios for 75 minutes each week. This tutorial is offered simultaneously at the 300 level for undergraduates and at the 500 level for graduate students: graduate students will be paired with other graduate students and undergraduates with undergraduates.

Requirements/Evaluation: For undergraduates: weekly participation, 5 short written assignments in alternate weeks (ranging from 1 to 5 pages), and several 1-page peer critiques. For graduate students: weekly participation and 3-4 short written exercises that build toward a final 15-page research paper.

Prerequisites: No previous knowledge of Japanese art or culture is required. Students with similar preparation and interests will be paired with one another.

Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: Graduate Art students, followed by undergraduates majoring in Art History or Comparative Literature.

Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ARTH 525(D1) ASIA 324(D1) ARTH 324(D1) COMP 324(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write several regularly spaced papers that build on one another by tackling similar problems from different angles. Students will receive detailed feedback from the instructor on each paper, addressing argument, organization, and style, as well as peer feedback. (See requirements for details about the number and type of assignments.)

Not offered current academic year

COMP 327  (F)  Romanticism, Belatedly  (DPE)
Cross-listings:  ENGL 324

Secondary Cross-listing
What is Romanticism? Instead of searching for an answer at the movement's supposed point of origin (1790-1830, in Germany, England, and France), we will begin in early twentieth-century South Asia. In the nineteenth century, English Romantic poetry and, to a lesser extent, ethico-political and aesthetic ideas associated with German Idealism circulated in South Asia as part of a colonial education aimed at producing "a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay). The intentions of this plan of education aside, it unwittingly opened channels for literary, philosophical, and political exchange that were harmful to colonial rule, and essential to how we understand worlds of literature today. Behind the backs of its homegrown, self-anointed inheritors, Romanticism in the "colonies" led multiple other lives and was transformed in encounters that must--belatedly--be read back into its originary texts. Hence, in counter-chronological fashion, in this class we will begin
with important postcolonial works by Faiz Ahmad Faiz (Urdu), Suryakant Tripathi Niral (Hindi), Mahadevi Verma (Hindi), Sarojini Naidu (English), Mohammad Iqbal (Urdu and Persian), and Rabindranath Tagore (Bengali), to move on to Karl Marx and Heinrichs Heine (German), Charles Baudelaire (French), and George Eliot (English), to end with John Keats (English), William Wordsworth (English), and G.W.F. Hegel (German). In considering these texts with an eye to poetics and interpretation, we will pay close attention to concepts that they bring to the fore, key among them "belatedness" (Nachträglichkeit), "allegory", "critique," "non-identity." We will read non-English language texts in translation, though we will have occasion to discuss originals.

Requirements/Evaluation: One mid-term essay (6-8 pages), one presentation or participation in roundtable, one final paper (12 pages)
Prerequisites: a 100-level ENGL course, or a score of 5 on the AP English Literature exam, or a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: English majors, then sophomores considering the major
Expected Class Size: 25
Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (DPE)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 327(D1) ENGL 324(D1)
Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course examines how the political impact of colonization upon both Europe and South Asia gets expressed in literary productions of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. It explores the way these literary works understand the axes of social identity that shape oppression and inequity--coloniality, race, caste, gender--as constitutive of the unevenly developing world of capitalism. The concepts upon which the course focuses are essential to contemporary social critique.
Attributes: ENGL Literary Histories B  ENGL Literary Histories C
Not offered current academic year

COMP 329 (S) Literary History: Shakespeare, Dickinson, Celan, Knausgaard
Cross-listings: ENGL 346
Secondary Cross-listing
This course will consider literature as a distinctive kind of historical object, one that emerges within a specific linguistic, cultural, and political context and that, nevertheless, travels far beyond its point of origin into unknown and, indeed, unknowable futures. The four figures who will concern us this semester are interested in one another - the later writers are careful readers of the earlier ones - but our thinking will go beyond reception history and the dynamics of literary influence. Instead, we will focus on the way in which literature's own temporality structures its history and, indeed, the way in which history itself might be conceived in literary terms. We will read a lot of lyric poems, but we will end the semester with perhaps the most important contemporary European novel. We will also read a significant body of theory and criticism, including works by Theodor Adorno, Giorgio Agamben, Maurice Blanchot, Martin Buber, Sharon Cameron, Anne Carson, Jonathan Culler, Joel Fineman, Virginia Jackson, Boris Maslov, and Sianne Ngai.
Requirements/Evaluation: Midterm paper of 6-8 pages, final research paper of 10-12 pages, thoughtful participation in class discussions
Prerequisites: either a 100-level ENGL course, a score of 5 on the AP English Literature exam, a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam, or permission of the instructor
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: English majors and those intending to major in English. Reading knowledge of German welcome but not expected.
Expected Class Size: 25
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ENGL 346(D1) COMP 329(D1)
Attributes: ENGL Literary Histories A  ENGL Literary Histories B  ENGL Literary Histories C

Spring 2025
SEM Section: 01   MR 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm   Emily Vasiliauskas
COMP 331 (F) The Brothers Karamazov (WS)
Cross-listings: RUSS 331 / ENGL 371
Secondary Cross-listing
Widely hailed as one of the greatest novels ever written, Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov contains a series of enigmas, not the least of which is precisely who murdered the Karamazov father. In addition to exploring the shared guilt of all four of the brothers Karamazov in the crime of patricide, Dostoevsky poses the most probing questions of his day: Are families tied together merely by blood or by deeper spiritual bonds? Is religious faith possible in an age of reason, science, and technology? Can man's earthly laws ever carry out divine justice? Is humanity prepared to bear the burden of responsibility that comes with freedom? This tutorial will spend an entire semester exploring Dostoevsky's masterwork, and we will read a variety of secondary sources alongside The Brothers Karamazov, including history, philosophy, and literary theory. Our goal will be to understand Dostoevsky's answers to these so-called "accursed questions" through the unique artistic form of The Brothers Karamazov.

Requirements/Evaluation: completion of weekly reading and writing assignments, as well as active engagement during tutorial sessions
Prerequisites: at least one 200-level literature class
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: students majoring or considering a major in Russian, Comparative Literature, or English
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (WS)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
RUSS 331(D1) COMP 331(D1) ENGL 371(D1)
Writing Skills Notes: Students will write six 6-page papers in the course of the semester and receive detailed feedback on their writing and argumentation for each paper, which they will be expected to incorporate into subsequent papers.
Attributes: JLST Interdepartmental Electives
Not offered current academic year

COMP 332 (F) Popular Culture in the Arab World: Youth, Populism, and Politics (DPE)
Cross-listings: ARAB 331
Secondary Cross-listing
Since the uprisings in the Arab world in 2011 and the counter-revolutions that followed, much attention has been paid to the significant role of the "popular" in creating social and political transformations. The voice of the youth and "the street," in particular, emerged as massive sources and sites for political mobilization. But, are these categories identical? Does youth culture equal popular culture? This survey course is designed to provide students with an introduction to the different layers that constitute popular culture in the Arab world since the decolonization of Arab states in the 1950s. Questions that we will ask include: What constitutes "popular culture" in the Arab world? How is it different than folk culture, mass culture, or "high" culture? Who are the key players in the creation and dissemination of "popular" culture? Besides globalization, for example, what other social, political and economic dynamics engulf the definition of the "popular"? What are modes of self-fashioning and representation of Arab identity that characterize this culture? To answer these questions we will examine original sources (with English translation) that include a graphic novel, political cartoon and graffiti, documentaries, TV shows, soap operas, video clips, music, comedy, blogs, news and social media. A selection of essays from anthropology, Arab culture studies, political science, journalism, and online videos will be used to provide historical and critical context for the material discussed in class.

Requirements/Evaluation: active class participation, two shorter papers (3-4 pages), two film reviews and critical reflections (1-page), a performance, and a longer final paper (7-10 pages)
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: students majoring in or considering a major in Arabic Studies
Expected Class Size: 19
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D1) (DPE)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: As the course description explains, this course engages the concept of the popular through a critical examination of difference, power, and equality in the context of national revolt against colonialism, dictatorship, and socioeconomic injustice in the Arab world since the 1950s. The content will focus on addressing how voices from the margins, particularly the youth, the urban poor, and women, articulated a political language of popular resistance against the dual hegemony of state and colony.

Attributes: GBST Middle Eastern Studies
Not offered current academic year

COMP 333 (F) Fanaticism

Cross-listings: ENGL 331

Secondary Cross-listing

From the early modern period on, writers of literature and political philosophy have repudiated fanaticism, whether as a religious, political, or amorous posture. But what is fanaticism, and why should it be considered such a threat? In this course, we will examine these questions by considering literary texts that dramatize fanaticism in light of accounts by philosophers and historians. Readings will draw on literary works by Spenser, Swift, M. Shelley, Hogg, Dickens, Eliot, Conrad, among others, and political philosophy and historical writings by Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Voltaire, Kant, Diderot, Burke, Hume, Carlyle, Adorno, and a range of recent critics. We will also watch films by Riefenstahl, Hitchcock and Pontecorvo, and look at paintings, drawings and sculpture by Fragonard, Goya, and Shibonare. Since fanaticism has recently had considerable political currency, we will also examine contemporary accounts that reanimate the debates and concerns of the course.

Requirements/Evaluation: Regular class participation and two papers, 7-10 pages in length.

Prerequisites: a 100-level ENGL course, or a score of 5 on the AP English Literature exam, or a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam

Enrollment Limit: 22

Enrollment Preferences: English and Comparative Literature majors, then qualified sophomores and first-year students.

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 333(D1) ENGL 331(D1)

Attributes: ENGL Criticism Courses ENGL Literary Histories A ENGL Literary Histories B

Not offered current academic year

COMP 334 (S) Imagining Joseph

Cross-listings: REL 334 / ANTH 334 / JWST 334

Secondary Cross-listing

Beloved son, rival brother, faithful servant, dreamer, seer, object of desire, lover, husband, bureaucrat, Joseph is one of the most fully-limned and compelling figures in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scriptural traditions. The story of Joseph unfolds over fourteen chapters in the Hebrew Bible, and is the subject of the fourth longest sura in the Qur’an. Through millennia, the story of Joseph has inspired a wealth of interpretations, commentary, apocrypha, re-tellings, and back-story, including an apocryphal book of scripture about Joseph and his wife, Asenath, Sufi poetry about Joseph and Zuleikha (Potiphar's wife), a trilogy by the 20th century German novelist Thomas Mann, a musical by Andrew Lloyd Weber, and many expressions in Western visual art. The course will explore these various expressions, looking to them for the ways in which Joseph has captured the imaginations of peoples and cultures across time and space. The course will be organized as a collaborative seminar in which the class will read the foundational scriptures together, followed by thematic discussions to which students will contribute insights from their own readings of particular peripheral texts. Students will learn the pleasures of close and intense exegetical reading in approaching the Hebrew Bible and Qur’an, as well as the more expansive pleasures of linking post-scriptural expressions together.

Requirements/Evaluation: occasional response papers; substantial final project and paper; class participation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: based on responses to a questionnaire
**Expected Class Size:** 12

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 334(D2) ANTH 334(D2) COMP 334(D1) JWST 334(D2)

**Attributes:** JWST Core Electives

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Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01  W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm  Peter Just

**COMP 335 (F) Poetry of Indignation: Poetics and Transnational Liberation**  (DPE) (WS)

**Cross-listings:** AFR 328 / ARAB 320

**Secondary Cross-listing**

Poetry is usually associated with beautiful, metered, and charged language. However, beyond its poeticity, poetry has also functioned as a tool of liberation and transnational construction of identities and solidarities. States have national poets, and, in many countries, national anthems were written by famous poets. From Abu al-Qasim al-Shabbi and Claude McKay to Pablo Neruda, poetry has acted as a space for life, rebellion, resistance, revolution, and the defense of a common humanity that transcends the barriers of language and national aesthetics. This course draws on a variety of materials from the Caribbean to Africa and from the Middle East to India to conceptualize a "poetics of indignation" against slavery, social injustice, colonization, authoritarianism, capitalism, and globalization. The students in this course will read poets, such as Okot p'Bitek, Derek Walcott, Tsitsi Jaji, Mahmoud Darwish, and Pablo Neruda, among many other poets, to examine how poetics changed and shifted across times and geographic boundaries while retaining a commitment to indignation, rebellion, and anger at almost the same recurring oppressive forces.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Two 5pp. midterm papers; a 1000-word reflection statement; weekly GLOW posts; one 10-minute presentation; active participation in the discussions in class.

**Prerequisites:** None

**Enrollment Limit:** 14

**Enrollment Preferences:** If the class is overenrolled, the students will submit a 200-word paragraph in which they explain how the course fits within their plan of study at Williams.

**Expected Class Size:** 14

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

AFR 328(D2) COMP 335(D1) ARAB 320(D1)

**Writing Skills Notes:** The students in this course will receive intensive feedback on their writing. This includes writing two 5pp. papers as well as a 10pp. final paper. The students will submit weekly GLOW posts and a final reflection statement.

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** The students will understand that poetry is a field in which power dynamics and imbalances of access to resources are reflected. They will also pay attention to who writes what and who publishes where in order to understand the imbrication of inequality within the institutions that produce, disseminate, and reward poets.

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Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01  MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm  Brahim El Guabli

**COMP 343 (F) Shakespeare on Page, Stage and Screen: Text to Performance**  (WS)

**Cross-listings:** ENGL 345 / THEA 340

**Secondary Cross-listing**

Four centuries on, Shakespeare still challenges us. How should we weigh the respective claims of our own era’s concerns—with matters of gender, sexuality, race, class, or materiality, for instance—against historicist attention to the cultural, political and theatrical circumstances in which his plays
were actually written? And when it comes to realizing the texts in dramatic performance, such challenges—and opportunities—multiply further. Critical fidelity to Shakespeare's times, language and theatrical milieu prioritizes a historical authenticity that can be constraining or even sterilizing. At the other extreme, staging the plays with the primary aim of making them "speak to our times" risks revisionary absorption in our own interests. We will read six plays, of different genres and written at different periods of Shakespeare's career. These will likely be _Romeo and Juliet, Henry V, Twelfth Night, Hamlet, The Tempest, and A Midsummer Night's Dream_. Close reading of the texts will be the priority, but we will also attend to the demands and opportunities of performance, and assess a range of recent film and stage productions.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Three papers ranging from 4 to 7 pages; regular Glow posts; class participation.

**Prerequisites:** A THEA course; a 100-level ENGL course; a score of 5 on the AP Literature exam or a 6 or 7 on the IB exam; or permission of instructor.

**Enrollment Limit:** 18

**Enrollment Preferences:** Theatre and English majors or prospective majors

**Expected Class Size:** 18

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1) (WS)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

ENGL 345(D1) THEA 340(D1) COMP 343(D1)

**Writing Skills Notes:** Three papers rising from 4 to 6+ pages; regular discussion board postings and several short response papers. Students will receive substantive feedback on their writing, and there will be opportunities for revision.

**Attributes:** ENGL Literary Histories A

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**COMP 345 (F) Wonderland(s): Alice in Translation**

**Cross-listings:** GBST 345 / ENGL 365

**Primary Cross-listing**

“What do you mean by that?” said the Caterpillar, sternly. “Explain yourself!” “I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir,” said Alice, “because I'm not myself, you see?” The confusion around personal identity, which Alice is seen to experience as she makes her way through Wonderland, can be examined productively as an allegory of translation. Beyond its representation of the developmental and socio-cultural transitions of a child, what happens to Alice, a seminal text in children's literature, when it travels down the rabbit hole to a new linguistic wonderland? For starters, the seven-year-old girl becomes Marie in Danish, Arihi in Maori, Ai-chan in Japanese, and Paapachchi in Kannada. Then there are the highly idiosyncratic humor, word play, embedded English nursery rhymes, and iconic illustrations by Tenniel. How do they fare in new linguistic, cultural, and even genre contexts? Lewis Carroll told his publisher in 1866: “Friends here seem to think the book is untranslatable.” And yet. Over 200 translations later, including Kazakh, Shona, Papiamento, Braille, and Emoji, _Alice_ continues to delight and confound readers all over the world and to pose myriad challenges as well as opportunities for translators. This course will serve as an introduction to the theory and practice of translation using Carroll's _Alice_ as an anchoring primary text. We will examine key disciplinary issues and concepts, such as equivalence, domestication, foreignization, and autonomy, and challenge the old canard that translation leads ineluctably, and exclusively, to loss.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** active, regular, and substantive class participation; discussion leading; weekly translation exercises; 2-3 short writing assignments; final project

**Prerequisites:** students must have at least three years of college-level second-language instruction already in place, or the equivalent (advanced proficiency), or permission of the instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 16

**Enrollment Preferences:** COMP majors; language majors; language students

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 348 (S) Drawing Democracy: Graphic Narratives as Democratic Ideals

Cross-listings: AMST 348 / LATS 348

Secondary Cross-listing

This course examines the graphic narrative in terms of how each author/illustrator employs narrative elements (plotting, structure, characterization, text, and visuals) to express social realities within the context of democratic ideals. Regular assignments and in-class exercises throughout the course offer students the opportunity to create their own graphic narratives.

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and class participation, short writing exercises, 4-5 page midterm paper (close-reading a text), 10-15 page final creative paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: LATS concentrators

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 348(D1) AMST 348(D2) LATS 348(D2)

Attributes: AMST Arts in Context Electives AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora LATS Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

COMP 350 (F) Separation: An Introduction to Postcolonial Literature (DPE)

Cross-listings: ASIA 353 / ENGL 352

Secondary Cross-listing

Few themes in the history of human societies have produced as much writing as that of separation--from a lover, from one's homeland, from God(s). In the past two centuries, this theme has been essential to representing experiences of exile and migration in the wake of the colonially mediated transition to world capitalism. In this course, we will take up the theme of separation as a privileged point of entry into postcolonial literature and towards understanding the multiple meanings of "postcoloniality." We will encounter examples in which this theme shapes critical thought and helps imagine new modes of existence, as well as those in which the grief of separation shades into such overpowering melancholy that writing becomes impossible. We will also look at what the preoccupation with separation can tell us about the ways human beings relate to human and non-human objects, and how they make and experience history. To think through these issues, we will read nineteenth and twentieth century works dealing with experiences of love, ecstasy, migrancy, and exile, composed in diverse geographical, socio-political, and linguistic contexts. We will read works (novels, poems, memoirs, essays) and watch films from South Asia, Egypt, the Caribbeans, the US, and Europe, composed in multiple languages (English, Hindi, Urdu, Persian, French, Arabic, Bengali and Malayalam).

Requirements/Evaluation: mid-term paper (6-page), participation in class discussions and one roundtable, final paper (15-page)

Prerequisites: a 100-level ENGL course, or a score of 5 on the AP English Literature exam, or a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: English majors, then sophomores considering the major

Expected Class Size: 25

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ASIA 353(D1) COMP 350(D1) ENGL 352(D1)
Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course examines how the political impact of colonization upon both "colonizer" and "colonized" gets expressed in literary productions of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. It explores the way these literary works understand the axes of social identity that shape oppression and inequity--coloniality, race, caste, gender--as constitutive of the unevenly developing world of capitalism. The concepts upon which the course focuses are essential to contemporary social critique.

Attributes: ENGL Literary Histories C

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01    TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm    Paresh Chandra

COMP 360  (F) Boucicault to McDonagh: Irish Theatre, 1870 to the present  (DPE)

Cross-listings: ENGL 364 / THEA 336

Secondary Cross-listing

During the Irish Literary Revival of c.1885-1920, Irish writers sought to assert "Irishness" as culturally distinctive, and resisted the marginalizing impacts of British colonial rule. The achievement of Independence in 1923 brought years of insularity and censorship, but over the past three decades Ireland's embrace of globalization and the hybridizing impacts of postmodernism has led to a remarkable flowering of creative vitality. This course will trace the evolution of Irish theatre over the past century-and-a-half. We will read plays by Dion Boucicault, Oscar Wilde, W.B.Yeats, J.M.Synge, Augusta Gregory, George Bernard Shaw, Douglas Hyde, Sean O'Casey, Samuel Beckett, Brendan Behan, Brian Friel, Marina Carr, Frank McGuinness, Christina Reid, Conor McPherson, and Martin McDonagh, and also chart the course of the founding and history of the Abbey Theatre, one of first National Theatres in Europe.

Requirements/Evaluation: Two essays of 6+ pages; regular Glow posts; class participation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Theatre majors, English and Comparative Literature majors

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 360(D1) ENGL 364(D1) THEA 336(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course is centrally concerned with identity politics within a colonial context. Irish writers prior to independence from Britain sought to assert "Irishness" as culturally distinctive. After 1923, they continued to wrestle with the legacies of colonial subjection and the inferiorizing identifications that had been ingrained during colonial rule. The texts we will read centre on questions of cultural self-definition and explore (and resist) the process of othering.

Attributes: ENGL Literary Histories B    ENGL Literary Histories C

Not offered current academic year

COMP 361  (F) Repairing a Broken World: Intro to North African Contemporary Art  (DPE)

Cross-listings: RLFR 360 / ARTH 460 / ARTH 560 / ARAB 360

Secondary Cross-listing

How do artists respond to a world in crisis? How does visual art engage violent histories, injured bodies, social injustice and ecological disaster? In this course we will explore the political and ethical concept of repair as it emerges in the work of contemporary North African visual artists. Repair is both a material and symbolic transformational practice of putting together something that is torn or broken. It is never complete, nor does it redeem a history of harm or violence. Rather repair is an invitation: a bringing of people, histories, objects, buildings, feelings and geographies into relation with one another in order to link worlds that have been splintered and separated. It is also a call to imagine other futures. North African contemporary artists have deeply engaged in this type of repair work, attending to colonial history, economies of extraction and environmental damage, race and slavery, housing inequity, gender identity and broken transmission of memory. We will dive into the work of individual artists as well as collectives while reading theoretical texts about broken-world thinking, reparative epistemology, alternative archives, and material reparations.

Class Format: Conducted in French.
Requirements/Evaluation: For undergrads: Active participation, 8 1-page response papers, 5-page mid-term paper, 10-12 page final paper and presentation. For grad students: Active participation, 8 response papers, 5-page mid-term paper, and 20-page final paper and presentation.

Prerequisites: Any RLFR 200-level course or above, or by permission of instructor.

Enrollment Limit: 18

Enrollment Preferences: If over-enrolled, preference will be given to RLFR, ARAB, ARTH and COMP majors, and only 2 spots will be offered to Grad Art students.

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
RLFR 360(D1) ARTH 460(D1) ARTH 560(D1) ARAB 360(D1) COMP 361(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course critically examines art work that engages colonial history, economies of extraction and environmental damage, race and slavery, housing inequity, gender identity.

Fall 2024
SEM Section: 01 TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm Katarzyna M. Pieprzak

COMP 362 (S) Stories We Tell

Cross-listings: SOC 362

Secondary Cross-listing

From The Moth to StoryCorps to Williams College's own Storytime, stories are ubiquitous in contemporary society. Indeed, sociologists have argued that social life is itself "storied"—that we locate ourselves within familiar narrative structures, using them to "construct" identities and "tell" our lives. Stories, in this view, are not only the stuff of literature, but also the very fabric of social life: the foundation for individual and collective identities. This course grapples with the role of stories and storytelling in modern social life. What role do stories play in constituting personal identity? What cultural templates structure the stories we tell? Why are memoirs so popular, and how can we explain the more recent resurgence of interest in oral forms of storytelling? What role does storytelling play in politics and social movements? Specific topics will include confessional culture, podcasts, memoir, politics, and social change. Along the way, we will pay explicit attention to medium, and consider how sociologists might learn from journalists, documentarians, and memoirists to convey stories from their own research.

Requirements/Evaluation: occasional discussion questions, one 2-page reflective essay, one 6-8 page paper, and a final project (either a 10-page paper or an equivalent podcast or video essay)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: if overenrolled, students will be asked to submit a short statement of interest

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
SOC 362(D2) COMP 362(D1)

Spring 2025
SEM Section: 01 TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am Christina E. Simko

COMP 363 (S) Where are all the Jews? (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: REL 268 / JWST 268 / ARAB 363

Secondary Cross-listing

Until four decades ago, many Maghrebi and Middle Eastern cities and villages teemed with Jewish populations. However, the creation of the Alliance...
Israelite Universelle's schools (1830s), the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the decolonization process in the Maghreb and the Middle East, and the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War accelerated the departure of Arab and Berber Jews from their homelands to other destinations, including France, Israel, Canada, the United States, and different Latin American countries. Arab and Berber Jews' departure from their ancestral lands left a socioeconomic and cultural void that Maghrebi and Middle Eastern cultural production has finally started to address, albeit shyly. The course will help students understand the depth of Jewish life in the Maghreb and the Middle East, and interrogate the local and global factors that led to their disappearance from both social and cultural memories for a long time. Reading fiction, autobiographies, ethnographies, historiographical works, and anthropological texts alongside documentaries films, the students will understand how literature and film have become a locus in which amnesia about Arab/Berber Jews is actively contested by recreating a bygone world. Resisting both conflict and nostalgia as the primary determinants of Jewish-Muslim relations, the course will help students think about multiple ways in which Jews and Muslims formed communities of citizens despite their differences and disagreements.

Requirements/Evaluation: 400-word weekly, focused responses on Glow; a book review (600 words); two five-page papers as mid-terms; one ten-page final paper; one presentation.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 14

Enrollment Preferences: students interested in critical and comparative literary, religious or historical studies.

Expected Class Size: 14

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 363(D1) REL 268(D2) JWST 268(D2) ARAB 363(D1)

Writing Skills Notes: Students are required to present an outline of their papers before submitting a draft paper. The professor will give feedback on each written work to improve students' writing skills. Students are required to incorporate the feedback to improve their drafts before they become final. Students will receive detailed and consistent feedback about their writing. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: Students in this course will understand the historical process that lead to the disappearance of Arab/Berber Jews. Students also will work out alternative ways to grasp Jewish-Muslim relations beyond nostalgia and conflict. Finally, students enrolled in the course will grapple with and try to disentangle the complexity of Jewish-Muslim citizenship in both pre-colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

COMP 366 (S) Joyce, Woolf, and Proust

Cross-listings: ENGL 325

Secondary Cross-listing

This seminar focuses on novels by three of the most important writers of modernist fiction: Marcel Proust (Swann's Way, the first novel of his sequence In Search of Lost Time); Virginia Woolf (To the Lighthouse); and James Joyce (Ulysses, read in slightly abridged form). By juxtaposing these pathbreaking texts, we will examine the distinctive yet related ways in which they explore crucial preoccupations of modernism: the threat and the exhilaration of cultural loss in face of social and political transformations in the early twentieth century; the turn to memory, to art, and to objects as stays against de-stabilized subjectivity and as means of re-thinking value; the emergence of new forms of political and sexual identity; the heightening of consciousness to the verge of transport or disintegration; and the roots and perversities of desire. Students who have studied Ulysses in a previous course are welcome.

Requirements/Evaluation: regular class participation, two 8- to 10-page papers

Prerequisites: a 100-level ENGL course, a score of 5 on the AP English Lit exam, or a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam; students who have taken ENGL 360 are welcome

Enrollment Limit: 22

Enrollment Preferences: English and Comparative Literature majors

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ENGL 325(D1) COMP 366(D1)

Attributes: ENGL Literary Histories C

Not offered current academic year

COMP 369 (F) Indigenous Narratives: From the Fourth World to the Global South  (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: HIST 306 / ARAB 369 / GBST 369

Primary Cross-listing

In the late 20th century, world literature has witnessed a "boom" in indigenous literature. Many critics and historians describe this global re-emergence of the subaltern and the indigenous in terms of literary justice fostered by post-colonial studies and the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, by the UN General Assembly on December 18, 1992. In this course, we will investigate this "indigenous boom" by reading novels and short stories from the Americas, the Middle East and North Africa from the 1970s to the present. Through these trans-regional and trans-historical peregrinations, our principal goal will be to examine and compare narratives about conquest, settler colonialism, colonial nationalism, indigeneity, sovereignty, indigenous epistemology and philosophy. At the same time, we will consider the following questions: How did pioneering indigenous women writers, such as the Laguna Pueblo Leslie Marmon Silko in the US and the Mayan playwrights of La Fomma in Chiapas, Mexico lead the feminist front of the indigenous literary renaissance? How did Palestinian folktales, Amazigh poetics in the Maghreb, and Mayan dream narratives in Mexico and Guatemala produce narratives of decolonial history? What does the aesthetics of magical realism in Arabic, Quechua and Spanish, respectively, as evident in the works of the Kurdish writer Salim Barakat (Syria) and the mestizo writer José María Arguedas (Peru) tell us about the intersection of race, ethnicity, and indigenous epistemology? What is the connection between the recent "boom" of English translations of Indigenous texts and neoliberalism, multiculturalism and neo-colonialism? Ultimately, our goal is to trace how these texts contributed to global indigenous literature and the trans-historical and trans-geographical connections between them.

Requirements/Evaluation: active class participation, several short response assignments (3-4 pages), two film reviews (1 page), a performance project, and a final paper (7- to 10-pages)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Comparative Literature majors

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 369(D1) HIST 306(D2) ARAB 369(D1) GBST 369(D2)

Writing Skills Notes: This course will enable students to write weekly while engaging with various forms of writing skills: articulating arguments in short response papers (3-4 pages each), developing visual criticism through writing two film reviews, (1 page each), journaling through writing a personal reflections on a performance project, and honing research language in producing a final paper of 7-10 pages. Instructor's feedback and peer review sessions will include review of drafts and argumentative structures.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: At the heart of this course is the history of global Indigenous struggle for liberation and decolonization. The various novels, short stories, poems, films and other texts that students will engage with narrate histories of colonial dispossession, racial oppression, economic subjugation and dehumanization of minoritized Indigenous communities in the Americas, North Africa and the Middle East.

Attributes: GBST Borders, Exiles + Diaspora Studies

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01 MR 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm Amal Eqeiq

COMP 378 (S) Proust's "In Search of Lost Time"

Cross-listings: ENGL 378 / RLFR 378

Secondary Cross-listing
In this seminar we will study Marcel Proust's novel-sequence *In Search of Lost Time*, widely regarded as one of the most transformative works of 20th-century fiction. The first-person narrative chronicling the life of a fictional figure bearing a close relationship to Proust himself spans several decades from the late 19th to the early 20th century, centering on French high society as it enters the modern world, shaped by historical events such as the Dreyfus Affair and the First World War. Proust's exploration of the consciousness of the protagonist, an aspiring writer, has led readers to see him as a philosopher of aesthetics, of the psyche, of time, and memory, and of the nature of desire. His narrative ranges from meditations on such subjects to social satire to absorbing and sometimes soap opera-like plots exploring upward and downward social mobility and a wide array of sexual entanglements, straight and queer. Through his fluent prose, Proust renders the vicissitudes of desire, loss, and joy, of betrayal and emotional intransigence, and tests the power of memory and the imagination to recapture the past. Because of the length of *In Search of Lost Time*, the emphasis of the course will be more on reading (about 7 to 7½ hours per week) and less on writing (four or five 1½-page journal entries and a final paper of 8-10 pages) than the average 300-level course; and approximately one-third of the sequence will be bracketed as optional reading.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Regular class participation, several 2-page journal entries, and a final paper of 8-10 pages

**Prerequisites:** a 100-level ENGL course, a score of 5 on the AP English Lit exam, or a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam

**Enrollment Limit:** 22

**Enrollment Preferences:** English, French, and Comparative Literature majors

**Expected Class Size:** 16-18

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

ENGL 378(D1) COMP 378(D1) RLFR 378(D1)

**Attributes:** ENGL Literary Histories C

Not offered current academic year

**COMP 380 (F) Literary and Critical Theory in the Twentieth Century**

**Cross-listings:** ENGL 370

**Primary Cross-listing**

From the rise of modern literary criticism around 1900 to the explosion of high theory in the 1980s and 1990s, the twentieth century witnessed an international flowering of new ideas about how to interpret art and literature: Russian Formalism, American New Criticism, French Structuralism and Deconstruction, and a welter of post- prefixed concepts that claim to transcend national boundaries: the poststructural, the postmodern, the postcolonial, the posthuman. What are the ideas associated with these different movements, and how are they connected? Does each represent a radical break with previous ways of reading, or do they actually build on one another and evolve in a systematic way? And given the entanglement between criticism and teaching, which are the theories that seem to define the work we do (and want to do) here at Williams? This course will focus on a very careful reading of essays representing major 20th-century critical schools (and a couple of their earlier precursors), by critics like Plato, Schiller, Shklovsky, Richards, Barthes, Derrida, de Man, Beauvoir, and Butler. Written assignments will encourage you to parse these theories carefully and apply them to the literary texts that most interest you: prose or poetry from any time and place; film, visual art, or architecture; music, new media, or digital media, etc.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** attendance and active participation, several short response assignments, final project consisting of a scripted oral presentation and a 15-page final paper

**Prerequisites:** at least one previous literature or theory course

**Enrollment Limit:** 15

**Enrollment Preferences:** Comparative Literature majors

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

COMP 380(D1) ENGL 370(D1)

**Attributes:** AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives ENGL Criticism Courses

Not offered current academic year
COMP 390 (F) Feminist and Queer Horror Films (DPE)

Cross-listings: WGSS 398 / THEA 390 / ENGL 333 / AMST 390

Secondary Cross-listing

This course focuses on pairing theoretical readings with a variety of horror films with feminist or queer themes. Many tropes are associated with this genre - "the final girl" in slasher movies, "the transvestite murderer," femme lesbian vampires, supernatural BDSM figures, vampires as allegories for HIV/AIDS, werewolves as metaphors for FTM gender transitions or puberty, lonely mothers in creaky houses as unreliable narrators, Satanic spawn, and creepy long-haired girls. Some films reinforce gender stereotypes while others snap on more explicitly feminist and queer lenses. This course functions as a survey of many different genres, introducing students to classic 1970s films and working up to the present day and we will learn how these tropes developed and then were subverted by more modern day films such as those by A24 Studies and the new renaissance of Black horror, etc. Most films will focus on the US, with some notable exceptions in Japan, Spain, and elsewhere globally. There will be graphic content. You must be 18 or over to take this class.

Requirements/Evaluation: Class participation, short reflection papers, 2-3 extemporaneous oral class responses, several creative assignments.

Prerequisites: None. Prior WGSS courses will be helpful.

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Stage 1 is a statement of interest form; Stage 2 will be a very brief interview. There is NO preference by major or class year.

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Materials/Lab Fee: Some of the creative assignments will have an "artsy-craftsy" component, but should not cost more than 25 dollars total per student per semester, though amounts will vary depending on how the student chooses to execute the assignment.

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

WGSS 398(D2) THEA 390(D1) ENGL 333(D1) COMP 390(D1) AMST 390(D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course necessarily examines power when it comes to gender and sexuality - who has it? what do they do with it? how does this power turn deadly? how can agency be regained? Horror is almost never about equitable situations but rather the imbalance that comes from difference (along whatever axis) causing a lack of equity.

Attributes: WGSS Racial Sexual + Cultural Diversity Courses

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01  MW 7:00 pm - 8:15 pm  Gregory C. Mitchell
SEM Section: 02  MW 8:25 pm - 9:40 pm  Gregory C. Mitchell

COMP 397 (F) Independent Study: Comparative Literature

Comparative Literature 300-level independent study.

Requirements/Evaluation: To be determined in consultation with the instructor.

Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor

Enrollment Limit: None

Enrollment Preferences: None

Expected Class Size: NA

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

Fall 2024

IND Section: 01  TBA  Christopher A. Bolton
COMP 398 (S)  Independent Study: Comparative Literature
Comparative Literature 300-level independent study.

Requirements/Evaluation:  To be determined in consultation with the instructor.
Prerequisites:  Permission of the instructor
Enrollment Limit:  None
Enrollment Preferences:  None
Expected Class Size:  NA
Grading:  yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions:  (D1)

Spring 2025
IND Section: 01    TBA    Christopher A. Bolton

COMP 406 (S)  The Historical Novel

Cross-listings:  ENGL 402

Secondary Cross-listing

Setting a novel in a prior time period risks estranging a reader, yet the genre has roused deep-rooted interest, intense critical debate, and aesthetic daring. In this course, we will explore the complex and layered uses of a historical past in literary works of the seventeenth through twenty-first centuries, by way of novels by Madame de Lafayette, Scott, M. Shelley, Dickens, Eliot, Ford, Woolf, Morrison, Sebald, and Roy. Exploring the uses of gothic and sensational effects, dystopian and utopian possibilities, and fractured time, we will consider the aesthetic and political experiments historical novels have spawned. We will do so in context of the sustained critical engagement with the genre by such thinkers as Lukacs, Benjamin, Adorno, Jameson, McKeon and Moretti.

Requirements/Evaluation: class discussion and two 8-10 page papers or one longer final paper.
Prerequisites:  a 100-level English course and a 300-level English course or permission of the instructor
Enrollment Limit:  15
Enrollment Preferences:  English majors
Expected Class Size:  15
Grading:  yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions:  (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 406(D1) ENGL 402(D1)
Attributes:  ENGL Criticism Courses  ENGL Literary Histories B  ENGL Literary Histories C
Not offered current academic year

COMP 412  (S)  Senior Seminar: Nineteenth-Century French Novel: Desperate Housewives and Extreme Makeovers  (DPE)

Cross-listings:  WGSS 408 / RLFR 412

Secondary Cross-listing

In 1834, Honoré de Balzac wrote that "Paris is a veritable ocean. Sound it: you will never know its depth." The same can be said of the French nineteenth-century novel and its boundless ability to echo the past and illuminate the present. From the Romanticism of Stendhal and Hugo, and the Realism of Balzac and Flaubert, to the Naturalism of Zola and Maupassant, the novel became a forum for examining illicit sexuality, institutional misogyny, social injustice, criminal passions, revolutionary struggles, and Parisian pleasures in nineteenth-century France. Characters such as the miserable housewife Emma Bovary, the reluctant revolutionary Jean Valjean, the social climber Julien Sorel, the ambitious undergraduate Eugène de Rastignac, and the domestically abused Gervaise Macquart became synonymous with France's turbulent social and political landscape from the 1830s to the 1880s. As recent film adaptations make clear, these desperate housewives and extreme makeovers continue to haunt our twenty-first century present. Reinterpreted by such actors as Gérard Depardieu, Isabelle Huppert, Uma Thurman, Claire Danes, and Jennifer Aniston, the nineteenth-century novel continues to sound out the scandalous and sensational depths of our own century. Readings to include novels by Balzac,
Stendhal, Hugo, Flaubert, Maupassant, Zola. Films to include adaptations by Clément, Berri, August, Arteta, Lelouch, Chabrol. Conducted in French.

Requirements/Evaluation: Active class participation, midterm exam, and two papers.

Prerequisites: A 200-level or 300-level RLFR course at Williams, or Advanced coursework during Study Abroad in France or the Francophone World, or permission of the instructor.

Enrollment Limit: 16

Enrollment Preferences: French Majors and French Certificate students, Comparative Literature Majors, Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Majors.

Expected Class Size: 16

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

WGSS 408(D2) RLFR 412(D1) COMP 412(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course analyzes difference, power, and equity through its examination of gender diversity, institutional misogyny, urban criminality, human sexuality, social injustice, and revolutionary struggle in nineteenth-century France. In class discussions and critical essays on 1830s-1880s France, students will examine and articulate the inequities and injustices between women and men, the privileged and oppressed, the wealthy and working class, and both the rural and urban poor.

Spring 2025

SEM Section: 01    TR 11:20 am - 12:35 pm     Brian  Martin

COMP 414 (S) Senior Seminar: Coming of Age: French and Francophone Childhood and Adolescent Film (DPE)

Cross-listings: RLFR 414

Secondary Cross-listing

Like the bildungsroman in literature, the coming of age story is a genre in itself in cinema. In this senior seminar, we will watch, discuss, and analyze French and Francophone childhood and adolescent narrative films whose protagonists bring into focus larger issues such as racial discrimination, class, gender, sexual identity, social mobility, repression from the state, regime change, delinquency, justice, bereavement, and human trafficking. We will watch seminal films by Euzhan Palcy, the Dardennes brothers, Céline Sciamma, Férid Boughédir, François Truffaut, Faiza Ambah, and Raoul Peck.

Requirements/Evaluation: three three-page response papers; thesis statement, methodology, and works cited list on one page; 2 low-stakes presentations and one script of a video essay or academic journal "special issue" essay

Prerequisites: 200-level RLFR courses

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: French and Comparative Literature majors and certificate students

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

RLFR 414(D1) COMP 414(D1)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course qualifies for a Difference, Power, and Equity requirement because the films we focus on racial inequality, class, gender, sexual identity, post slavery society in the Caribbean, lack of social mobility, repression from the state, regime change, delinquency, justice, bereavement, and human trafficking.

Not offered current academic year

COMP 415 (S) Breaking the Silence: Women Voices, Empowerment and Equality in the Francophone World (DPE)

Cross-listings: WGSS 415 / RLFR 415

Secondary Cross-listing
How have Francophone women challenged the historical and current effects of colonialism and gendered racism in France and the Francophone world? How have Francophone women writers challenged the status quo of patriarchy and advocated for change? Beginning with political activist Olympe de Gouges, who published *Le droit de la femme et de la citoyenne* (1791) challenging gender inequality in France, we will then examine Claire de Duras' portrayal of the intersection between race and gender, Simone de Beauvoir's challenge to traditional femininity and gender roles, and Ananda Devi's intimate portrayal of violence against women in post-colonial societies. Throughout the course, we will use a feminist and intersectional lens to analyze how Francophone women writers have broken the silence then and now.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Three 3-4-page response papers, a final 10-page research paper, presentation and active participation.

**Prerequisites:** Any 200-level RLFR course, or by permission of instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 18

**Enrollment Preferences:** Senior French majors and students completing the certificate in French, but open to advanced students of French; Comparative Literature majors; Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies majors; and those with compelling justification for admission.

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1) (DPE)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

WGSS 415(D2) COMP 415(D1) RLFR 415(D1)

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** In its focus on Race, Gender, and Political Power, this course centers on a critical examination of difference, power, and equity. This course uses a feminist and intersectional lens to analyze how French and Francophone women writers have challenged the historical and current effects of colonialism and gendered racism.

*Not offered current academic year*

**COMP 483 (S) Representing History**

**Cross-listings:** ENGL 483

**Secondary Cross-listing**

Moments of political turmoil expose the highly charged ways in which a culture structures itself around a narrative past. In this course, we will read literary and cinematic works that invoke such moments of upheaval -- the French and Russian Revolutions as well as those of 1848, the rise of fascism and the Great Depression of the 1930s, the battle for Algerian independence, and the AIDS crisis -- in order to explore those fraught narratives of the past. We will consider such issues as the aesthetics of fascism and of democracy under pressure, fantasies of decolonization, representational clashes of culture, forms of affective and sexual disorientation, and the uses of melancholy in representing historical loss. Readings will be drawn from literary works by Mary Shelley, Balzac, Eliot, Conrad, Kafka, Borges, Stoppard, Kushner, Morrison, Pamuk, Bolano, Sebald, and Philip, and essays by Kant, Burke, Marx, Benjamin, Adorno, Foucault, Jameson, Lefort, and Ahmed. Films will include such works as Eisenstein's *October*, Riefenstahl's *The Blue Light*, Wellman's *Nothing Sacred*, and Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers*.

**Class Format:** discussion

**Requirements/Evaluation:** two shorter or one longer paper/s, approximately 20 pages

**Prerequisites:** a 300-level English course or permission of the instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 15

**Enrollment Preferences:** English and Comparative Literature majors

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

COMP 483(D1) ENGL 483(D1)

**Attributes:** ENGL Criticism Courses ENGL Literary Histories B

*Not offered current academic year*

**COMP 490 (S) Senior Portfolio**

This is a required, non-credit, pass/fail course for Comparative Literature majors in their final two semesters at the college who are not writing a senior
Class Format: There are no regular meetings for this class. Please contact the chair of the Program in Comparative Literature for further information.

Requirements/Evaluation: Students must successfully complete their Senior Portfolio project.

Prerequisites: Majoring in Comparative Literature

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: Comparative Literature majors in their final two semesters who are not writing a thesis.

Expected Class Size: NA

Grading: pass/fail option only

Distributions: (D1)

Spring 2025

IND Section: 01 TBA Christopher A. Bolton

COMP 493 (F) Senior Thesis: Comparative Literature

Comparative Literature senior thesis; this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494).

Requirements/Evaluation: Substantial progress on research and writing of the senior thesis.

Prerequisites: Permission of the Comparative Literature advisory committee.

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: Candidates for Honors in Comparative Literature

Expected Class Size: NA

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

Fall 2024

HON Section: 01 TBA Christopher A. Bolton

COMP 494 (S) Senior Thesis: Comparative Literature

Comparative Literature senior thesis; this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494).

Requirements/Evaluation: Completion of the senior thesis, including presentation of the thesis at the spring Senior Portfolio Symposium or, for fall degree candidates, an equivalent venue in the fall.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of COMP 493 and permission of the Comparative Literature advisory committee.

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: Candidates for Honors in Comparative Literature

Expected Class Size: NA

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

Spring 2025

HON Section: 01 TBA Christopher A. Bolton

COMP 497 (F) Independent Study: Comparative Literature

Comparative Literature 400-level independent study.

Requirements/Evaluation: To be determined in consultation with the instructor.

Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor.
Enrollment Limit: None
Enrollment Preferences: None
Expected Class Size: NA
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1)

Fall 2024
IND Section: 01  TBA  Christopher A. Bolton

COMP 498 (S) Independent Study: Comparative Literature
Comparative Literature 400-level independent study.
Requirements/Evaluation: To be determined in consultation with the instructor.
Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor.
Enrollment Limit: None
Enrollment Preferences: None
Expected Class Size: NA
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D1)

Spring 2025
IND Section: 01  TBA  Christopher A. Bolton

Winter Study---------------------------------------------------------------

COMP 13  On Stupidity
This course is guided by what is perhaps the wisest question in literary-cultural criticism: "What is stupidity?" Since the early modern period, the pursuit of knowledge by means of reason has redefined what it is to know and to be knowledgeable. But what about the other side of the coin - what can we glean from not knowing, or refusing to know? In this course, we will consider the stupidest books, the stupidest authors, and the stupidest readers in the Germanic and Slavic literary traditions. Looking at opera, film, and theater, we will discuss the role of media in the expression of stupidity. We also will reflect on which freedoms stupidity allows cultural expression, especially under oppressive regimes. Engaging with philosophical writings on stupidity (Kant, Bakhtin, Horkheimer and Adorno, Kristeva), literary representations of stupidity (Rilke, Hölderlin, Dostoyevsky, Gogol, Erofeev, Kafka, Walser), operatic depictions of the buffoon (Mozart and Schnittke), we will consider the many variations on the trope of stupidity such as idiocy and poetic courage, sublime dumbness and speechlessness, willful ignorance and notions of the "sheep", resistant and alternative forms of knowledge in stock figures such as the buffoon and the holy fool. Class meetings will consist of mini-lectures, free writing opportunities, discussions, and activities. Outside of the classroom, students will write three mini essays applying terms and ideas from our theoretical materials to literary works of their choice. The course will culminate in a final project shared in a class reception in the last session. The language of instruction will be English, but students with a reading knowledge of Russian and German will have the opportunity to read and discuss our materials in the original language. By the end of the course, students will have mastered stupidity and will have the ability to apply it to their remaining undergraduate coursework.
Requirements/Evaluation: Paper(s) or report(s); Presentation(s); Performance(s); Creative project(s)
Prerequisites: None
Enrollment Limit: 16
Enrollment Preferences: Majors and prospective majors in Comparative Literature, German, and/or Russian
Expected Class Size: NA
Grading:
Unit Notes: Mercer Greenwald is a PhD Candidate in Harvard's Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures. She focuses on literature from the Age of Goethe to the present, Austrian literature, and the intersections of philosophy and psychoanalysis.
COMP 15  Comics and Visual Thinking
What can we learn by reading comics or other examples of "sequential art?" Even more interesting, what can we teach others by creating sequential drawings? We will study comics that use a series of drawn images to convey a narrative—whether that is a fictional story (Frank Miller's Batman, Tezuka Osamu's manga), a factual history (Alison Bechdel's Are You My Mother?), a scientific experiment (Eadweard Muybridge's Animal Locomotion, Henry Reich's Minute Physics), or a critical argument (Scott McCloud's Understanding Comics). Logistics permitting, we'll also take an optional field trip to The Center for Cartoon Studies in White River Junction, Vermont to meet with comic artists and instructors. Students will have a choice of final projects: write a paper analyzing a favorite comic or produce an original narrative comic of their own.

Requirements/Evaluation: Regular attendance, preparation, and participation, plus a final project: either a short paper or a short original comic

Prerequisites: None. No experience with comics or drawing is required.

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: Comparative literature majors

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: Not offered current academic year

COMP 31 (W) Senior Thesis: Comparative Literature
To be taken by students registered for Comparative Literature 493-494.

Class Format: independent study

Grading: pass/fail only

Not offered current academic year

COMP 99 (W) Independent Study: Comparative Literature
Open to upperclass students. Students interested in doing an independent project (99) during Winter Study must make prior arrangements with a faculty sponsor. The student and professor then complete the independent study proposal form available online. The deadline is typically in late September. Proposals are reviewed by the pertinent department and the Winter Study Committee. Students will be notified if their proposal is approved prior to the Winter Study registration period.

Class Format: independent study

Grading: pass/fail only

Not offered current academic year