

# Spring 2017 Graduate Seminars (updated 09.23.2016)

<p>ENGL 7001 J. Wheeler</p> <p>6:00-9:00 T <a href="mailto:jwheeler@lsu.edu">jwheeler@lsu.edu</a></p>	<p><b><u>Writing Literary Nonfiction</u></b> <i>Prereq: admission to the MFA program or permission of instructor.</i></p> <p>The great lexicographer Samuel Johnson defines essay as “a loose sally of the mind”. So, in this class we'll loose our mind sallies. While the expanse of creative nonfiction is vast (memoir, profile, criticism, technical and travel and nature writing, etc.), all of it shares an imperative to communicate a process of thought about a particular subject. And nowhere in literature is the process of human thought laid bare quite like it is in the tradition of the essay. Our workshop will use the history of the essay to investigate how to best translate a process of thought from the brain to the page. Each week we'll read a loose sally from Seneca or De Quincy or Didion and use those readings as guides for writing our own work and responding to the work of our peers. Over the course of the semester you'll write about 30 pages of literary nonfiction (workshopped as a single long essay or two shorter essays).</p>
<p>ENGL 7006 J. Wilcox</p> <p>3:30-6:30 W <a href="mailto:jwilcox1@lsu.edu">jwilcox1@lsu.edu</a></p>	<p><b><u>Fiction Writing</u></b> <i>Prereq: admission to the MFA program or permission of instructor.</i></p> <p>A hint of genius is often found in the way a composer modulates with a perfect fusion of surprise and inevitability. This combination can also enhance our own fiction. Whether we're writing flash fiction, longer stories, or working on a novel during this seminar, our ability to balance these two opposing elements will help us gauge the narrative tension. Often we might successfully convey a sense of inevitability, but without that magical element of surprise, our fiction might seem less vital. Although these two elements are what make the endings of many stories so unforgettable, we can see them at work all throughout our fiction, even on a sentence level. A glimmer of the unexpected just before a period can add a spark of energy to our narrative. Editing a colleague's work during this semester will be an important aspect of honing our awareness of these two key elements.</p>
<p>ENGL 7007 L. Glenum</p> <p>3:00-6:00 TH <a href="mailto:lglenum@lsu.edu">lglenum@lsu.edu</a></p>	<p><b><u>Poetry Workshop</u></b> <i>Prereq: admission to the MFA program or permission of instructor.</i></p> <p>In this workshop, we will engage in a dynamic exploration of the craft of poetry writing. We will work from the premise that poetry is a vital and potentially radical art form with much to contribute to contemporary cultural dialogue. The class will focus primarily on individual student work but is designed to rapidly develop critical lenses for writing, reading, and editing via collective reading lists and a variety of individual and collaborative projects. To make the class as dynamic and flexible as possible, a wide range of workshop models will be offered.</p>
<p>ENGL 7221 C. Barrett</p> <p>12:30-3:30 M <a href="mailto:cbarrett@lsu.edu">cbarrett@lsu.edu</a></p>	<p><b><u>Topics in Critical Theory and Cultural Studies (Person/Place/Thing: Renaissance Poetics and Ecomaterialisms)</u></b></p> <p>This course centers on interdisciplinary contemporary theories that rethink the distribution of subjecthood across human and non-human forces and actors/actants, both organic and otherwise. The matrix of ecomaterialist theories includes critical environmental studies, ecocriticism, thing theory (including object oriented ontology and vibrant materialism), and new materialisms, a flexible emergent discourse that seeks to understand--especially in the Anthropocene--the interplay of non/human forces on a dynamic global scale and in a newly thought ethical context. Our theoretical commitments will be to these ecomaterialist explorations, and our primary texts will be drawn from early modern English literature, with special focus on the epics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the ways they construct a proto-ecological discourse of being and agency. The principal task of the term for each of us will be the drafting and preparation of a critical article for submission to a peer-reviewed literary or humanities journal, along with the completion of a substantial bibliography for personal research use and a syllabus for an undergraduate course.</p>

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<p>ENGL 7423 C. Ware  3:00-6:00 T <a href="mailto:cware1@lsu.edu">cware1@lsu.edu</a></p>	<p><b><u>Topics in Folklore (Louisiana Folklore and Folklife)</u></b> This course explores verbal, material, and customary folk culture in Louisiana through an ethnographic perspective. With a special emphasis on connections between place and folklife, we will study food customs, folk belief and healing, narrative traditions, and festive events, emphasizing the meanings they hold for participants.</p>
<p>ENGL 7714 I. Shport  12:30-3:30 F <a href="mailto:ishport@lsu.edu">ishport@lsu.edu</a></p>	<p><b><u>Topics in Sociolinguistics (Investigating Sounds, Intonation, and Rhythm in Local Speech)</u></b> This course is focused on the phonetics and phonology of English sounds with a special emphasis on Southern English. Course requirements include discussion of readings and in-class practice of speech analysis. Students will use either a field methods or a laboratory phonology approach to investigate an issue in a local speech community of their interest and write a 20-page paper. MFA students may write a “hybrid” paper consisting of a combination of creative writing, linguistic analysis of the creative piece, and relevant literature review. Undergraduate students with at least one linguistics course under their belt, 75 semester hours, and 3.5 GPA are welcome to join the seminar and develop an individual or group research project.</p>
<p>ENGL 7920 S. Weltman  3:00-6:00 T <a href="mailto:enwelt@lsu.edu">enwelt@lsu.edu</a></p>	<p><b><u>Dissertation Workshop</u></b> This course is a workshop for PhD students who are ABD (All But Dissertation)—in other words, those who have passed their General Exams and are working on their dissertations. Students will present, discuss, and receive feedback on their work in progress. The course will help students to generate and maintain momentum on dissertations while also working toward publication in a scholarly journal or equivalent. Besides functioning as a guided writing group and encouraging students to prepare pieces for publication, the course will help students to position themselves better within the profession. Goals may include submitting abstracts to conferences, proposing conference panels, preparing conference papers, writing a dissertation abstract, and writing a book review. Depending where individual students are in the dissertation process, some will want to work on drafting, selecting, and/or revising an article-length portion of the dissertation aimed at publication. Students will also research and present on important journals in their fields with the goal of submitting an essay to one of those journals, though actual submission is not required for the course. Dissertation-writing can be lonely, and the lack of a structured work schedule and collective support can result in attrition. This course offers a solution to these common dissertation woes.</p>
<p>ENGL 7972 B. Costello  12:00-3:00 TH  <a href="mailto:bcostell@lsu.edu">bcostell@lsu.edu</a></p>	<p><b><u>Topics in Southern Literature (Comics and the South)</u></b> This course will double as an introduction to the burgeoning academic field of comics studies and an exploration of new territory in the more thoroughly burgeoned but no less vital field of southern studies. In addition to investigating comics as an aesthetic form with particular properties that emerge in different ways across a variety of historical eras and publishing models, we will examine how cartoonists have utilized the unique capacities of comics to represent and interrogate the South as an idea and as a geographic space. Authors to be considered might include Alan Moore, Nate Powell, Kyle Baker, Walt Kelly, Ho Che Anderson, Howard Cruse, Jeremy Love, and others.</p>
<p>ENGL 7974 J. Berman  3:30-6:30 M <a href="mailto:jberman@lsu.edu">jberman@lsu.edu</a></p>	<p><b><u>Topics in American Literature (The War on Terror and its Literature)</u></b> This class will examine the intertwined subjects of terrorism and American national identity through the lens of literature. Focused specifically on creating a conversation between Arab and American perspectives on the US War on Terror, the class will read fictional accounts of the War in Iraq written by both former US soldiers and Iraqi citizens. In addition, we will consider a number of theoretical approaches to describing American identity after 9/11, including trauma theory, as well as Arab American responses to 9/11. The goal is to cultivate a critical vocabulary that moves past the normative terminology of national identification and towards the creation of an inter-cultural aesthetic.</p>

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ENGL 7975

I. Lavender III

12:30-3:30 W

[isiahl@lsu.edu](mailto:isiahl@lsu.edu)

## Novels of the Harlem Renaissance

Unofficially, the Harlem Renaissance lasted from 1919 to the early 1930s and refers to the collective artistic spirit of Black writers, artists, philosophers, musicians, and activists who sought to define African American culture by creating a body of work remarkable for its complexity and breadth. This course will focus on the major novels, while briefly touching on poetry and essays, in order to dig deeply into the meaning of this exciting movement's cultural impact and to understand its lasting legacy and influence on America today. The threefold demand placed on this talented group of black writers—to create more urbane literary works, to create "authentic" black texts, and to respond for or against the demands of racial uplift in their writing—is of particular interest. The problems of writing for an elite audience, alienation, marginality, the use of folk materials, and the use of the blues tradition are some of the common themes we will encounter as we consider the way our texts answer all of these issues raised by the tripartite stresses of racial politics in the early twentieth century.

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ENGL 7983

P. Rastogi

12:00-3:00 T

[prastogi@lsu.edu](mailto:prastogi@lsu.edu)

## Topics in Ethnic and Postcolonial Literatures (Literature of the NOW: Global Fictions of Today, 2015-2017)

This class will expand the acronym in its title. What is the NOW? Is it a handy description for a Newly Oriented World? Could it refer to Notably Original Work? Or to literature that is Not Only Western? How about shorthand for Novels Others Write? In reading fiction from across the English-speaking world and published in the last two years, we will think about how our understanding of literature changes when we focus on a highly-compressed period of time. In addition to constricted temporality, we will also reflect on immediate contemporaneity: how do we read and write about fiction that is being published—or was just published—as we are beginning class? The streamlined chronology will be balanced by the wide geographic range of the fiction, which will include novels and short story collections from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Iraq, Haiti, Jamaica, and the Philippines. Reading fiction spatially, regionally, nationally, and transnationally in the tight span of two years will help us develop a broad “horizontal” knowledge of contemporary global fiction rather than a long “vertical” understanding that reading across wide swathes of time generates. Most importantly, we will learn to read, appreciate, and understand literature from outside the borders of ourselves, our communities, and our nations. Since the fiction is primarily about/from the former British colonies in South Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Caribbean, we will also read recent post-colonial theory to anchor the literature of the NOW in the critical trends of today.

Our opening novel, Salman Rushdie's *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (India/USA, 2015), fittingly takes up two years as a central theme in understanding our contemporary present. Other fiction will include Hasan Namir's *God in Pink* (Iraq, 2015), Sunjeev Sahota's *The Year of the Runaways* (India/Britain 2015), Pettina Gappah's *The Book of Memory* (Zimbabwe, 2015), Anuk Arudpragasam's *The Story of a Brief Marriage: A Novel* (Sri Lanka, 2016), Annie Holmes and Olumide Popoola's *Breach* (Britain/France, 2016; the first collection of short stories on the Syrian refugee crisis), Yaa Gyaasi's *Homegoing* (Ghana/USA, 2016), Helen Oyeyemi's *What is Not Yours is Not Yours* (Nigeria/England, 2016), Zadie Smith's *Swing Time* (Britain, 2016), Nicole Dennis Benn's *Here Comes the Sun* (Jamaica, 2016), Yasmine El Rashidi's *Chronicle of A Last Summer* (Egypt, 2016), Yewande Omotoso's *The Woman Next Door* (South Africa, 2016-2017), and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (Pakistan, 2017).

Each work of fiction will be paired with a theoretical counterpart so that theory and literature open apertures of understanding into each other rather than stand apart as separate and discrete entities. Theoretical essays will include Robert Young's "Postcolonial Remains," Benita Parry's "What is Left of Postcolonial Theory," Ato Quayson's "The Sighs of History: Postcolonial Debris and the Question of (Literary) History" and extracts from *What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say*, *The Cambridge Companion to the Postcolonial Novel*, *The Worlding of the American Novel*, *The Empire Prays Back: Religion, Secularity, and Queer Critique*, *Migrating from Terror: The Postcolonial Novel after September 11*, *This Thing Called the World: The Contemporary Novel as Global Form*, *Can Non-Europeans Think?*, and *Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change*.

Requirements for the course include attendance in body and mind, active class participation, weekly Moodle posts, leading class discussion in pairs on an assigned text, one 20-page research paper to be written in increments of 5, 10, 15, and 20 pages and to be revised after professorial and peer review of each iteration. MFA students may write a "hybrid" paper consisting of 10 pages of creative writing and 10 pages of literary analysis OR a 20-page paper consisting of reflective and scholarly analysis of their own fictions of the NOW. Creative and reflective essays must be framed against the themes of the class. Student groups of three will also each select one postcolonial Anglophone novel/short story collection published in 2017. The whole class will then vote on the selections; we will read and discuss the winner in the last week of the semester.