



English Matters

The time is now to start planning your classes—and not just for next semester! That’s a glimpse of the Hon. John Jay himself up there in our banner this issue. Think he was one to leave things to the last minute? Not on your life, pal.

Registration for Fall 2010 opens soon, so it’s time to get your courses figured out for next year. When you speak with your advisor, you may find it helpful to work out a rough plan for all of your remaining coursework in the major. John Jay’s English major is not one-size-fits-all, and there are so many great choices for designing a course of study that matters to you.

In fact, in this issue of *English Matters*, you’ll see just how diverse and exciting our course offerings are. We’ve asked the faculty who will be teaching classes in the major next year to say a few words about what they have up their sleeve. And we also took a poll of all the books that were taught in English major courses this Spring—you’ll be amazed at what we found out.

So why go it alone? Make a plan to speak with your advisor soon. Better yet, why not come to one of the two ENGLISH MAJOR ADVISING PARTIES we’re hosting this week? On Wednesday, March 24 and Thursday March 25, drop by the English Department between 3:30 and 5:50 pm to meet with faculty and get all your questions answered.

So read on! And enjoy!

Department News

Registration is almost here!

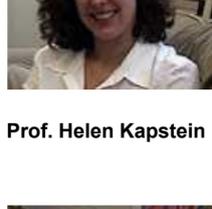
- ENGLISH MAJOR ADVISING PARTIES will be held this week on Wednesday and Thursday, at 3:30-5:50 pm in the English Department. We will have course descriptions of courses offered summer & fall 2010, and professors will be on hand to help you figure out your schedule. If that’s not enough, there’ll be coffee, cookies & soda, too. Drop by and bring a friend!
- Remember, Summer and Fall 2010 registration for upperclassmen begins soon. There is still time to contact your advisor to discuss your schedule before registration opens.
- Still don't know who your Faculty Advisor is? Contact Alicia Zayatz, English Department Administrative Coordinator, at azayatz@jjay.cuny.edu and she'll shoot you an e-mail letting you know.

Save the Date:

- All the graduating seniors in Prof. JoEllen Delucia’s senior seminar on law and literature will present original research at a symposium scheduled for May 3, at 4pm in 630T. Each student will discuss his or her research for five minutes, using power point. The students will take questions as a group after their presentations. More details on this can’t-miss event to follow!

Fall Course Preview

In this issue, English Matters looks ahead to next semester. We asked some of the professors who will be teaching courses in the major next semester to give us a sneak peak at what they're planning:



LIT 212: Literature of the African World

This course offers students insight into struggles over power and resistance that have shaped the history and geography of Africa. Obviously we can’t do justice to the literature of a whole continent, but we’ll try!

Prof. Helen Kapstein



LIT 300.02: Text and Context

Ralph Ellison: you know he's someone important--there's a new statue of him in Harlem--but you're not sure why. In-visible Man: you've heard of the book, but haven't read it. Remedy your ignorance! In Lit 300: Text and Context (T/Th), we will read the book that many consider the most important American novel of the twentieth century and we will explore in-depth its provocative literary history.

Prof. Liza Yukins



LIT 370: Topics in Ancient Literature

What is tragedy? Take Topics in Ancient Lit to find out more!

Prof. Melinda Powers



LIT 372: Topics in Early Modern Literature

This semester we’ll study fictional depictions of fraudulent and criminal behavior in literary works written between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, exploring how ruthless behavior puts pressure on standards of law.

Prof. Peggy Escher



LIT 260.01: Introduction to Literary Study

A scholar who sells his soul to the devil for absolute knowledge, a wisened-up detective trying to make sense of LA’s seedy underbelly, an amnesiac who must tattoo his body with clues to his past—we’ll meet all of these fascinating characters and many more in this class, which is organized around the themes of discovery, detection, and reading.

Prof. Al Coppola



LIT 373: Topics in 17th and 18th Century Literature

Entitled, “From Divine Right to Human Rights,” this course will explore literary responses to the two greatest challenges to the development of human rights in the modern period: the transatlantic slave trade and the colonial expansion of the British Empire.

Prof. Sanjana Nair



LIT 309.02: Contemporary Fiction

Small details, grand schemes: How do details of food, country, dress and gender propel stories forward? A course that will delve into the literary jargon associated with the interpretation of contemporary fiction.

Prof. Bettina Carbonell



LIT 260.03: Introduction to Literary Study

Students will explore contemporary fiction, poetry, drama and film in this gateway to the English Major. They'll learn to think and to write critically about literature and they'll have fun doing so.

Prof. Devin Harner



LIT 316: Gender and Identity in Literary Traditions

In this course on the figure of the female crime fighter, we will explore a range of texts that pose some difficult questions: Is crime gendered? Is justice? What is the relationship between feminism, individualism and the law? Above all, can a woman be a dick? (A *detective* that is...)

Prof. Caroline Reitz



LIT 314: Shakespeare and Justice

A troublemaker in one of Shakespeare’s plays said, “The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers.” But no author cares more deeply and thinks more profoundly about issues of law and justice than Shakespeare, as we will see from his plays *The Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, and *Julius Caesar*.

Prof. Andy Majeske



LIT 330: Alfred Hitchcock

Alfred Hitchcock is a great filmmaker, and a consummate storyteller, who recreates our FEARS on the big screen, and at the same time gives us great PLEASURE. We will explore HITCHCOCK'S WORLD by viewing and analyzing such movie classics as PSYCHO, REAR WINDOW, VERTIGO, and THE BIRDS to DETERMINE WHY WE DELIGHT in the horror of it all.

Prof. Barbara Odabashian

LIT 323: The Crime Film

Obsession, compulsion, alienation, aggression--Why are we fascinated by the villain-hero, and why are we seduced by the violence we see on the screen? We will attempt to answer these questions by exploring classic films like THE GODFATHER, SCARFACE, DOUBLE INDEMNITY, PULP FICTION, and GOODFELLAS.



LIT 327.03 The Literature of Crime and Punishment.

Desire, Transgression, Guilt, Confession, Redemption: and that's just Dostoevsky. Join me next fall when we'll read about interesting people doing very bad things.

Prof. Allison Pease



LIT 260.02: Introduction to Literary Study

So, you think you know what literature is? and a poem? a story? a novel? This course will put all your assumptions to the test as we read a variety of texts that explore the complicated problems of human desire.

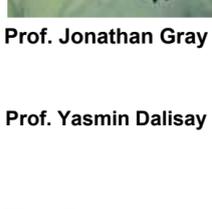
Prof. John Staines



LIT 300.01: Text and Context

This course focuses on Virginia Woolf, reading key novels and essays in the context of her extraordinary times, which witnessed the cataclysms of World War I, the 1917 Russian Revolution, the Spanish Civil War, and the rise of fascism in the late 1930's. To do so, we'll be using the critical lenses of two different theoretical approaches--feminist theory and new historicism.

Prof. Jean Mills



LIT 298: Comic Books and Graphic Novels

The best graphic novels revolve around the themes of justice, morality and minority rights in dystopian societies, making this course especially apt for a college dedicated to criminal justice. This course is an introduction to the Graphic Novel as a literary form.

Prof. Jonathan Gray

LIT 309: Contemporary Fiction

Prof. Yasmin Dalisay

The family: Is it a haven from the stormy world, or is it, as Rick Moody calls it, “all tricks and mirrors, flimflam?” We’ll try to sort that out in books by Sherman Alexie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Victor D. Lavalley, Alice Munro, and many others.

The List

Recently, we in the English Department took a survey of all the courses taught in the major this semester. We wanted to answer a simple question: just what were our students reading. Since all of our faculty select books to teach based on curricular needs but also on their interests and expertise, there is no standard list of texts that we’re locked in to teach from. It’s all left up to our faculty’s judgment—and that’s a good thing—but what did that mean?

Turns out, it means amazing diversity. The full list shows that there were 81—*eighty-one!*—different books taught, just in the core English Major classes alone. It seems like in some *other* English Departments, you have to read *Heart of Darkness* five times and they call it a BA. But not here.

Of course, there *were* four books that were taught in more than one class. *Hamlet*, *Frankenstein*, *Tale of Two Cities*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. Hard to think of a more central core of texts concerned with law and justice, wouldn’t you say?

In all, the list suggests that the department’s offerings are as varied and diverse as our students’ interests, and that there is a wide field of literature waiting for you to explore, one which is certain to feature texts you’re excited to read, and many more that will challenge you to expand your interests and expertise.

We in the English faculty are very pleased, and a little proud of this fact. We hope you are too.

English Matters 2.4 is a more-or-less regular publication of the John Jay English Department for the instruction of students in our major and minor programs. Questions? Comments? Complaints? Want to get involved? Contact the editor, Prof. Al Coppola, acoppola@jjay.cuny.edu.