

Heads up!

This issue of *English Matters* is coming at you just in time for Spring registration. Round about this time of the semester, most of us feel like this guy, William Blake's indelible image of Sir Isaac Newton, who shows an almost superhuman dedication to his work. In this print, Blake is hinting that Newton would have been better off if he took a step back and considered the big picture—good advice for us too, now that we all need to pick out our courses for next year...

So this month's newsletter is intended to help you take stock of how far you've come, and where you need to go next. As always, we have some important announcements for you, but most of this edition of *English Matters* is given over to the professors who will be teaching classes in the major next semester. Read down to hear what they have planned, and what they are looking forward to. And in our "Life in Books" section, we give the floor back to the students: see what two of your peers said about the good things happening in their English classes right now.

So read on! And enjoy!

Major Notes



Prof. Allison Pease

English Major Advisor

The fall semester is scarcely half-done, but the time has come to look forward to spring.

By now, you should have been in contact with your Faculty Advisor to plan out your schedule for next semester. With registration starting next week, there is still time to get some sound advice from your advisor, to make sure you are on track and making progress toward the degree.

Please look carefully at the rich and diverse schedule of classes we have planned for next semester. If you don't have a copy of the Spring 2010 course offerings in Literature and in Writing, you can download them here:

http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/english/academic_electives.asp

On those handouts, you'll find complete details about when sections meet, what the prerequisites are, and who is teaching the classes.

Department News

Registration is almost here!

- Spring 2010 registration for upperclassmen begins November 9. 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.

Assistance with Post-Grad Study:

- The Pre-Law Institute organizes events throughout the academic year—way too many to detail here. If you're thinking about a legal career, why not sign up for their listserv and/or Facebook fan page? <http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/centersinstitutes/prelaw/>.
- The Ronald McNair Program's goal is to increase PhDs from underrepresented populations. To qualify, you must be a US Citizen or permanent resident with a 3.0 or better who is a member of an underrepresented group AND/OR a first generation college student with a low income. McNair recruits from upper sophomores and lower juniors with a rolling deadline throughout the semester. McNair offers free GRE prep, one on one mentoring, \$2000 yearly stipend for the students, visits to graduate schools and a trip to a national conference of McNair scholars to present their research. More information about the McNair Program can be found here: <http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/academics/1451.php>
- The CUNY Pipeline program is designed to provide educational and financial support for undergraduates interested in pursuing the PhD. Students are recruited during their Junior year from CUNY Senior colleges and must have completed 80 credits with a 3.2 GPA. CUNY Pipeline offers a stipend of 3,250 including 1500 for participation, 750 to apply towards the GRE and grad school application fees. They also receive \$1000 upon completion of the program. The deadline is Feb 15th for this year. More information on the CUNY Pipeline program can be found here: <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/oeodp/pipeline.asp>

Spring 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 peek at what they're planning. Here's what they said they are looking forward to:



Prof. Marny Tabb

I'm teaching the Senior Seminar in Literature, "*Hamlet and Revenge*." Many of you will have read *Hamlet* by now, in high school, in college, maybe even in a Shakespeare course. We will read *Hamlet* in my senior seminar on revenge, too—at the very end of the course. But first we'll look at revenge during Shakespeare's time from many other perspectives—in religious and didactic (moralizing) and philosophical texts of the period, in other revenge plays, and in the work of 20th/21st century scholars. When we finally get to *Hamlet*, you'll see that it's quite a curious play that reflects to all the paradoxes and contradictions apparent in attitudes toward revenge of the period. Oh yes—you get to write and write, too, and talk and talk—formally, informally to each other, to your prof. And it looks like we got lucky; we can go as a class to a revenge play being performed in the spring: *The Duchess of Malfi* (written 1611, a few years after *Hamlet*) at the Red Bull Theatre in Feb./March. Fun!



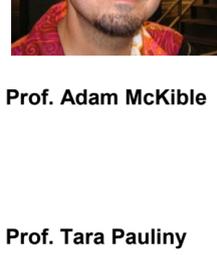
Prof. JoEllen Delucia

In the spring, I will be teaching the Senior Seminar in Literature and Law. The class is entitled, "Coquettes, Contracts, and Castles: Imagining the Law in Enlightenment Literature." If you have ever wondered how the law deals with haunted castles or abandoned lovers, this might be the course for you. This would be an excellent course for students considering careers in the law as well as anyone who likes romance, adventure, and a challenge.



Prof. Paul Narkunas

"Justice?—You get justice in the next world, in this world you have the law" claims the lead character, a lawyer, in William Gaddis' novel, *Frollic of His Own*. Keeping Gaddis' enigmatic statement in mind, my section of Foundations of Law and Literature (LIT 305) will follow the theme of "...and justice for all?" to explore the subtle yet forceful distinctions between justice and law. Why does it seem so easy to break the law, while justice seems so elusive? What does it mean to stand before the law, and how does power affect law and justice? Mixing works of literature by Sophocles, Shakespeare, Franz Kafka, and Albert Camus and landmark court cases like *Marbury v. Madison*, *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, and the "Slaughter-House Cases," we explore how literature and law are systems of storytelling, and consider why we might read law as literature.



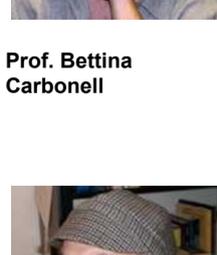
Prof. Adam McKible

In my Text and Context section (LIT 300), we'll be looking closely at *The New Negro*, one of the most important publications of the Harlem Renaissance. By carefully examining this wonderful anthology of African American stories, poems, essays, and art from the 1920s, we will develop a greater understanding of the writing, social concerns, and artistic trends of the era. I am personally looking forward to enhancing my understanding of the connections—and differences—between the New Negro movement and the Harlem Renaissance, which were interconnected but distinct developments in African American life, thought, and literature.



Prof. Tara Pauliny

Next semester I'll be teaching an elective, ENG 316: "Gender and Literature." My class will focus on memoir—specifically contemporary memoirs whose authors struggle to come to terms not only with their own varied identities, but also with how culture-at-large views those identities. The primary texts for the class will likely include Audre Lorde's *The Cancer Journals* paired with Tanya Katan's *My One Night Stand with Cancer*, Dorothy Allison's *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, possibly John Copapinto's *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl*, and others.



Prof. Bettina Carbonell

In my elective, LIT 342: "Perspectives on Literature and Human Rights," we will be reading a selection of the most important and eloquent "official" statements of rights—those issued by governments and national and international rights organizations—but our main interest will be equally powerful statements to be found in American poetry, fiction, and drama. Our focus will be on the struggle for cultural (including indigenous / Native American) rights, women's rights, worker's rights, and civil rights. What I am most looking forward to are the unpredictable directions the class will take when students turn our attention to the particular rights and specific texts they want to include in the discussion.



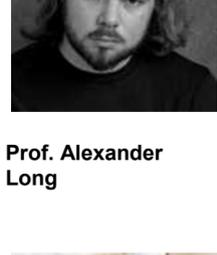
Prof. Jay Gates

Next semester I'm offering an elective, Lit 371: "Vikings! Invasion, Conquest, and Community in Anglo-Scandinavian England." With blood and beer soaking the floor, this course will examine the literature of Viking-English contact at the height of the Viking invasions in England. We will read a mix of English and Viking heroic, legal, and religious texts. Through them we will consider how communities dealt with the invasions and their struggles with themes of violent resistance and peace-making, conquest and conciliation, and ethnic and national identity.



Prof. Melinda Powers

In Mythology in Literature (LIT 360), we'll be reading several ancient Greek myths together with an eclectic mix of their contemporary, multicultural adaptations that address social justice issues such as apartheid in South Africa, incarcerated women in San Francisco, gang violence in Los Angeles, and the suffering in Post-war Japan. I'm looking forward to many lively discussions on these works and reading the thoughtful papers that will emerge from our study.

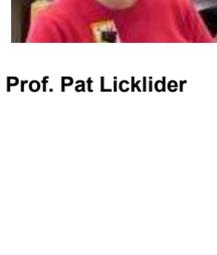


Prof. Alexander Long

Sex! Death! Desire!

Prosody? The Sonnet? What's a Villanelle?

In "The Architecture of Desire: a History of Poetic Forms" (LIT 290), we will explore poetic forms with special emphasis on the formal features of poetry as well as on the social, historical, theoretical, and political contexts in which it appears. We will build up critical thinking skills through creative expression, close-reading, organized thought, and clear and powerful writing. We will gain insight into forms of poetic expression from Shakespeare to Public Enemy.



Prof. Pat Licklider

How does a society try to channel the energies and egos of its best men? What do we learn from a hero's struggles about his culture's sense of virtue and honor? How might an individual's own sense of justice clash with that of his larger society? What happens when a hero rages out of control, threatening to harm, even destroy his own society? In my Topics in Ancient Literature course, "The Hero in Ancient Word and Image" (LIT 370), we will attempt to answer these questions by reading parts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, contrasting their heroes; the Celtic *Tain* for the Irish hero Cuchulainn; the Hindu *Ramayana* for Rama and his wife Sita, and other selections of ancient lit. We will also consider some modern theories about epics and heroes. To make up for the distinctly male gender of most ancient heroes, we will also consider the women in their lives: Is there such a thing as an ancient female hero?

And this is just a small sample of all the courses offered next year! See the Spring Course Bulletin for full details on over 20 literature courses and 10 writing courses.

Life in Books

Our continuing feature, "Life in Books," asks the hard questions about what makes us tick. Sometimes. This issue we're talking about what's going on in the classroom—we asked a couple of your peers what was pleasing them about their English classes, and this is what they had to say.

What's the best thing happening in your English classes this semester?



Karla Cruz

The most interesting thing that has happened to me this semester as an English major is the collage of characters that's building confusingly in my mind. Esther from *Bleak House* becomes Lucie from *A Tale of Two Cities*, while Davy Carr from *When Washington was In Vogue* appears in the film *Boyz n The Hood*. By the end of the semester, I will have a new novel in my head with all these characters interacting with each other.



Jeffrey Aguilar

In Professor Heiman's ENG 218 (The Writing Workshop), my peers, along with myself and Professor Heiman, give and receive constructive criticism and insightful advice to improve our creative writing skills. We have just segued from the personal narratives that we've been producing since September, to formal and free verse poetry. Next, we will be working on short fiction pieces. The focus in the class is to be as creative, honest, and original as possible, which are the factors that can always be improved. My peers are extremely diverse, friendly, knowledgeable, and most importantly, willing to learn, which adds to the amazing experience we've been having all semester in and out of class.

English Matters is a more-or-less regular publication of the John Jay English Department for the instruction and delight 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.