



English Matters 5.1

This is a mid-registration, post-superstorm edition of the Newsletter. Hurricane Sandy affected the New York City area very dramatically, and some of us more so than others. We hope that you and yours weathered the storm well. If you are having difficulty coming to class or doing your work as a result of power or transportation issues, please let your professors know immediately so they can accommodate you.

As we return to the classrooms, we return to our regular schedule and the work of reading, writing and discussion. Back on the carousel, so to speak, which never really stops. While we may still face some logistical difficulties, getting back into the normal flow of things may help us to remember that this crisis, too, will run its course, and that what we do in our classes matters when it comes to tackling difficult questions and difficult situations. As always, students are welcome to come by the English Department for advising, for a conference with a professor, or just to say hello.

As electricity slowly returns to many parts of our region, *English Matters* is here to remind you about registration procedures for Winter 2012 and Spring 2013, and about the wonderful variety and richness of courses offered in the English Department.

Major Notes



Prof. Allison Pease
English Chair

DO YOU STILL NEED ADVISING?

In order to register for the Spring semester, you have to speak to an English major advisor. You need advising if you still have a stop on your records and are not be able to register for classes. If you still need to get advising, you should see Prof. Pease for walk-in advising in her office (7.63.03 NB) Monday November 12 from 11 am – 1:30 pm, and Tuesday November 13 from 9 am-1:30pm. Prof. Reitz is also adding drop-in hours from 1-4pm on Wednesday, November 14, in addition to her regular office hours, which are posted outside her door.

MIND THE REQUIREMENTS

As you think about the courses you want to pick, think about the long term. This doesn't mean only about your career goals and intellectual interests, but also the path to graduation set out by the major. These requirements are laid out in a way that helps you to become and remain a better student. If you plan carefully, you can distribute the work load evenly so you don't end up with four literature courses in one semester and unmanageable reading and writing loads. For example, each student has to take four historical period courses (LIT 37x), as well as Text and Context (LIT 300). Make sure you start completing these requirements early on because they are all reading-intensive and writing-intensive courses. Not sure what to take when? Use the English Major Checklist to keep track of your progress:

http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/departments/english/Checklist_for_English_Major-F2010.pdf

Spring Course Preview

ENJOY YOUR TIME IN THE MAJOR!

While you are here, you have the opportunity to choose from an amazing variety of courses. Keeping in mind your path to graduation, try to revive your excitement about literature, thinking and writing each semester. In Winter 2012-13 and Spring 2013, these are some of the great courses on offer:

WINTER SESSION 2012-13



Prof. Toy-Fung Tung

Writing for the Humanities Experimental Course

Do you have an A-graded research paper that you think is really good? Or a B-graded paper that you wish could have been an A-paper? If so, bring it to this class, and I will help you make it ten times better. Papers from English, HJS, History, and Philosophy courses are all welcome. If you want to attend graduate or law school, or just to succeed at any career, learning to write at a superior level will give you the edge that you need. Getting fellowships or admission to a program often depends on a few hundred words arguing your own merits. This course will teach you how to present an argument effectively, and how to sharpen your research skills. Writing well requires rewriting. Good research requires understanding how to find and choose your sources. In this course, we will methodically rework and rewrite a paper until it sparkles.



Prof. Jay Gates

LIT 360: Gods and Monsters: Nordic Myth and Heroic Narrative

'Myth' is not just the primitive explanation of the perceived world, but is, as Roland Barthes stated, "a language." It is a flexible and ever-changing set of ideas used to explain how we inhabit the world through which we (re-)define the society we live in. Myth gives us a way to talk and a way to see. In this course we will explore how myth and heroic narratives defined the shaggy Germanic barbarians of the early medieval north. The reading will abound with gods and monsters, tricksters and heroes, and lots and lots of bloodshed.



Prof. Adam Berlin

ENG 216: Fiction Writing Workshop

We all have stories to tell and this course teaches students how to write these stories. ENG 216 will start with writing exercises to warm up our creative muscles and help us gain an understanding about the choices writers make. The course will then move into a workshop format where we will read and constructively critique each other's original work



Prof. Alexa Capeloto

ENG 233: News Reporting and Writing

Writing for a professor is one thing. Writing for a general audience is another. In this class, students will learn the basics of conceiving, reporting and writing stories for publication. We will cover news value, leads, story structure, attribution, AP style, libel law, and ethics. Students will learn to read and write news critically and to understand how newspapers and the stories within them are structured; how a news story differs from a press release or an academic paper; and how a hard news story differs from a news feature. During an additional lab hour each week, students will generate story ideas, write stories on deadline, and potentially prepare their work for publication in the student newspaper



Prof. Pat Licklider

ENG 245: Creative Non-Fiction

In this course, students will experiment with writing creative nonfiction. The class will produce a magazine from start to finish, including writing the articles and editing them for publication. Students will compose, revise and edit several pieces of nonfiction prose, both long and short, on topics of their choice. These may include observations of life in the city, an autobiographical sketch, or an interview/profile. Students will work on developing an authorial voice and on making their writing lively and concise. This course counts as an elective in the Writing Minor.



Prof. Jay Gates

LIT 300: Text and Context

The Name of the Rose: A Medieval Detective Story for a Postmodern Audience

Have you ever wanted to murder a monk?

This course is devoted to reading Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, a murder mystery set in a fourteenth-century Italian abbey and against the backdrop of one of the most politically and philosophically fraught periods in European history. Dead monks, monk-detectives, schismatic popes, heretics, and inquisitors will abound!

More important and more interesting than a mere murder mystery, the novel is a labyrinth to be traversed, a puzzle to be assembled, a code to be deciphered. As we work our way through the novel, we will be reading critical analyses which will introduce you to a range of methods of interpretation and significant conundrums of literary analysis—what is an author? what is a text? what is a library? who controls knowledge?

If you want the experience of the novel on its own—the thrill of the chase, the surprise of discovery—read it through the first time. Besides, you can never really appreciate a text the first time through it anyway.



Prof. Toy-Fung Tung

LIT 305: Foundations of Literature and the Law

Legal and Illegal Nations

How are Literature and the Law related? Not even the experts agree, and we will do our own exploration of the boundaries between law and storytelling, particularly when these two perspectives collide in acts of legalized violence or illegal justice. In this course, "Legal and Illegal Nations," we will explore the meaning of a nation or people, and how civil or national identity is sometimes divorced from individual human rights or state sovereignty. We will focus on myths of national identity, from the Old Testament to recent Supreme Court cases. Through contemporary works, like *The Round House* and *The Law is a White Dog*, we will examine the double legal standards applicable to certain groups, such as American Indians and prisoners in long-term administrative solitary confinement. We will also consider civil exclusion or "othering," as expressed in Old Testament stories of violence, medieval myths of monstrous races, descriptions of the New World's cannibalistic Amerindians, and Shakespeare's heroes and villains. We will see how non-legal works actually formalized legal exclusions. We will also read theory and criticism about "law and literature" as a field of study.



Prof. Dale Barleben

LIT 305: Foundations of Literature and the Law

The conversations between representations of the law in literature and legal discourse (judicial decisions, censorship, book banning, human rights, to name only a few) are rife with insight into the cultures which produce them. This Writing Intensive Course will ask central questions about literary and legal narratives, as well as the nature of "justice" and "truth" in each discipline by examining testimony and trials, linking reality to the imagined. "Legal interpretation takes place in a field of pain and death," says Robert Cover as he describes the roles language plays in enacting violence on the law's participants. Literary interpretation might not actually *take place* in a field of pain and death, but it is a field, nonetheless, with which literature is intimately familiar. We will read articles that will introduce the ideas of justice, truth and personhood, consider legal constructs like the rule of law and rights, and read both literary and legal narratives that interpret these constructs. In the midst of these studies, we will watch films, read newspaper clippings, and scrutinize advertisements to better situate our understanding of the ways law inflects not only literary production, but also popular culture and its expression.



Prof. Marny Tabb

LIT 313: Shakespeare

In this course, students will explore what makes Shakespeare such a powerful and enduring cultural presence, examining his conventions of plot, character, and language. Reading at least one comedy, history, tragedy, and romance, students will develop skills in the close reading of early-modern drama while exploring the intellectual, moral, and political questions Shakespeare poses, especially those involving justice, governance, social order, and gender. To learn to appreciate Shakespeare on stage, students will also analyze the plays as scripts, watching film versions and performing scenes themselves.



Prof. Olivera Jokic

LIT 346: Cultures in Conflict

Writing about Colonialism

Colonization is an economic, political and cultural process named after Cristóbal Colón, the man who 'discovered America.' It assumes interaction between two groups of different strengths: the colonizers and the colonized. What is the nature of this interaction? European colonization of the other four continents is an example of such an encounter. Yet, former European colonies came out of that experience looking very different: the United States, India, Brazil, and Haiti are all former European colonies. How do we explain this? If some countries fared worse than others after the colonizers left, did the process of colonization ever end? This course will introduce students to discussions about colonialism as a process that has been shaping the world in which we live for the past six centuries. Because its legacy is so complex, we will see how historians, sociologists and anthropologists think about it, and pay special attention to the way in which literature has reflected on its history and character.



Prof. Helen Kapstein

LIT 397: Banned Books

Under many different political regimes, texts have been banned, censored, and destroyed, and their authors fined, jailed, tortured, and even killed. In this course we will read a variety of texts, from several centuries and continents, which have at one time or another been banned for their content. Questions we will ask include: What is so threatening about literature that it gets banned and censored? How does censorship get used as a political tool and how can it be written around or resisted? What do specific instances of banning and censorship tell us about a society, its literature, and its values?

Prof. Helen Kapstein

Literature 260: Introduction to Literary Study

Context Matters! In Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, set in 1930's-era Alabama, blacks are disenfranchised by poll taxes, and women can't serve on juries. In Susan Glaspell's *A Jury of Her Peers*, set in turn of the century (19th/20th) Iowa, women are tyrannically oppressed by a patriarchal legal system. Explore texts like these by discovering how the US legal system perhaps inevitably continues to fail women in terms of gender equality, and how racial issues continue to divide the nation—for instance, news articles from November 2012 report that Alabama continues to refuse to modify its state constitution authorizing racial segregation and the disenfranchisement of blacks via a poll tax. Join me in engaging a multi-genre selection of literary texts such as these in broad social, legal, and historical context and discover literature's power to publicize injustices and sometimes even instigate real change!

Prof. Dale Barleben

LIT 400: Senior Seminar in Literature

Aesthetics and Literary Obscenity

This course will question theories of the aesthetic, their repetition, alteration and evolution alongside texts that were once thought obscene. Scrutinizing texts from Milton's *Areopagitica* to Alice Munro's *The Lives of Girls and Women*, we will inquire about the ways aesthetic theory and literary production challenged readers' moralities and values, and consider why many banned books of the past are lauded and valuable tomes of art now, having eventually taken their place in university courses like this one.

Prof. Toy-Fung Tung

LIT 405: Senior Seminar in Literature and the Law

Citizens, Aliens, and Non-persons

What do ghosts and Abu Ghraib have in common? In this course on legal identity, we will find out. What do you think means more, human rights or citizenship? Do you know that, throughout American history, the law has been used to deprive certain groups of citizenship—for example, by slavery laws and the Yellow Exclusion Act? Do you know that the law can create grey areas, like Guantánamo, where no citizenship status counts? In this course, we will read literary and legal works from the middle ages to the present, which deal with those excluded from citizenship, such as Job in the Bible, the Saracens in Malory, the Jews and Scots in Shakespeare, and the cannibalistic Amerindians in Columbus's times. We will also look at the expatriate literature of writers, such as Gertrude Stein and Saint-John Perse, who chose to live and write as exiles. We will examine the no-man's-land of contemporary maximum-security prisons, by reading *The Law is a White Dog* and related legal materials. We will consider what it means to be a citizen at home and abroad, and what it might mean to be a global citizen or non-civil person in today's world.

ENG 235: Writing for Management, Business and Public Administration

You have "it". Everybody tells you so. It's just a matter of time before your T-shirt designs become the next trend or your charm lands you a corner office at a Fortune 500 company, right? Maybe. Success in business and public administration depends on much that arguably can't be taught—people skills, creativity, risk appetite, etc. But even if you're wonderfully proficient in these areas, you'll find it hard to get past many doors unless you come across as "professional"—and to gauge whether you meet this criterion, employers and investors will often draw conclusions from the written documents you produce. In this class, we'll develop the writing skills required for careers in business, civil service, or public administration through extensive practice in various forms of correspondence, inter-office memos, informal reports, minutes of meetings, summaries, and briefings. For a final project, we'll apply our new fluency with various forms of business writing to create an original business proposal.

ENG 250: Writing for Legal Studies

Is law school for you? Take this course and find out. English 250, modeled in the spirit of a first-semester law school writing course, will introduce you to the type of analytical reasoning and writing you'll be expected to perform early on in law school. Getting a head start on the sink-or-swim "One-L" culture could be the key to your future GPA, which determines whether your trophy car one day is a Ferrari or a certified pre-owned Yugo. If you're more the Ferrari type, think about taking this course.

And this is just a small sample of all the courses offered next semester! See the Spring Course Bulletin for full details on both Literature and Writing courses.

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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 editors, Prof. Al Cop-