

## **LITERATURE AND CULTURE COURSES 2023-2024**

### **1<sup>ST</sup> SEMESTER**

#### **ENGLISH FICTION**

This course aims at presenting a variety of genres, indicative of the artistic movements of their era, in diachronic succession and in relation to their historical and cultural parameters. Introductory lectures will include references to the timeline of the birth of the novel as well as excerpts from 18th-century prose by authors such as Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift. The rest of the syllabus will include a 19th-century novel, representative of realism, by Charles Dickens or George Eliot, as well as short stories (or even a novel) from the 20<sup>th</sup> century by authors such as Conrad, Joyce, Lawrence, and Forster.

### **2<sup>ND</sup> SEMESTER**

#### **AMERICAN FICTION**

The course deals with American fiction from its first period of development through the 19th-century classics and onwards towards the postmodern and multi-cultural authors of today. The historical and cultural parameters of fiction are examined in conjunction with stylistic differences as these were expressed via the various literary movements, that is realism, symbolism, modernism and postmodernism. The course also aims to develop the students' capacity for critical analysis of texts as cultural products and carriers of ideological and socio-cultural debates within the larger context of the era that produced them.

### **3<sup>RD</sup> SEMESTER**

#### **ENGLISH POETRY**

This course has a twofold purpose. First, to familiarize students with the elements of poetry, such as imagery, figures of speech, rhythm, symbol, and other conventions that will help them read, analyze, and understand poetry. Second, to offer students a historical overview of British poetry, examining the ways in which authors have used the above elements to express ideas and emotions throughout the centuries. The course is offered in the form of a series of lectures, always in dialogue with the students. Texts are taken from a main anthology and leaflets (provided). For the evaluation of knowledge gained, there will be a final exam, as well as the opportunity for optional extra-credit research papers. Students evaluate the course anonymously through a final questionnaire.

#### **CONTEMPORARY ANGLOPHONE THEATRE**

This introductory course examines contemporary anglophone plays through the sociohistorical cultural context of the 20th and 21st centuries. We analyze representative texts of various theatrical genres representing realism, expressionism, the epic, the theatre

of the absurd, etc. The course aims at sensitizing students to the particularities of the dramatic form, as well as at the development of critical thinking. There are weekly classes with lectures and dialogue. Course material includes plays, lectures from invited speakers, a photocopy pack with study questions and bibliographical lists. Students are encouraged to conduct further research on their own. The evaluation of knowledge gained is based on a final exam (80% of the grade) and on short critical essays (20%), written in the context of the critical essay workshop conducted separately as part of this course. The course will be evaluated through a questionnaire filled by the students at the end of the semester anonymously.

## **4<sup>TH</sup> SEMESTER**

### **THEORY AND CRITICISM OF LITERATURE**

The course examines the most important developments in 20th-century literary theory and criticism, from Russian formalism to New Historicism and Post-colonial theory. It focuses on select representative approaches to literature but also introduces students to a wide spectrum of schools and movements such as formalism, structuralism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, feminism, cultural studies and so on. Emphasis is given to the reading of well-known texts by theoreticians and literary critics, as well as the application of those theories on literary text analysis.

### **AMERICAN POETRY**

The course studies the tradition and development of American poetry from Bradstreet and Wheatley to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the aim of a detailed, comparative analysis of the work of major American poets who helped shape the cultural face of their era in their search for a personal poetic style that would help them determine truths about themselves and express its connections with the wider conceptual space that is “America.” The main schools of thought influencing poetry, from Puritanism to Ecocriticism, will be examined, along with overviews of the political and social developments that led to the formation and constant re-formulation of literary movements. Finally, class analysis will attempt to highlight the distinct characteristics of American poetry, which created the “tradition of the new.”

## **5<sup>TH</sup> SEMESTER**

### **THEORY OF CULTURE**

The aim of this course is the definition of the various concepts and figurations of culture, through which critical approaches to cultural/textual phenomena and the understanding of the ways in which creative activities contribute to the quality of human life will be examined. Issues concerning the relationship of culture and society, “higher” and “popular” culture, as well as the relations between sciences and the arts are investigated, while questions pertaining to the goals of cultural activities and the interaction among them are put forth and explored.

## **A.**

### **GREECE IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE**

Greece, as a site of relations between the classical and the modern, the West and the East, figured vividly in the Victorian imagination, inspiring novels, short stories, travelogues, essays, poems, as well as the visual arts. While ancient Greece informed Victorian Hellenism as a constitutive part of the West and its imaginary tropes, civilization and democracy, Modern Greece confused and often disappointed Victorians who took a critical distance from the hybridity that it represented. Through the analysis of representative texts which offered the British readers stories of heroism, war, and romance or satirized through word and image the historical and political developments in Greece, this course will explore the cultural relationship between Britain and Greece in the Victorian period. Starting from Mary Shelley in the 1830s and ending with Virginia Woolf in the early 1900s, we will discuss ideas such as: empire and nationhood, the role of gender, race, and class in interpretations of Greece, the interface between the popular and the scholarly readings of Greece, popular adaptations of Greek mythology, and Greece in Victorian material culture. Moreover, by doing their own research and finding new relevant texts, students will actively contribute to the original research project “Representations of Modern Greece in Victorian Popular Culture” (REVICTO, <https://revictoproject.com/>). The final grade will depend on a midterm exam, a final exam, and a class project/presentation, as well as optional posts in the eclass forum and blog.

## **B.**

### **BLACK CULTURES AND ACTIVISM IN THE U.S.**

The course maps how activist thinkers, poets, and artists approached a black African American consciousness, its histories and expression, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Through a focus on a range of forms, spanning political speeches, manifestos, poems, music and the visual arts, we will explore how cultural production at large intersects with activism and visions of social change. We will begin with the origins and the formation of the New Negro Renaissance in Harlem; we will discuss networks and the dissemination of the cultural production of Harlem and we will focus on the paradoxes and blindspots of the promotion of racial uplift, and the prevalent affirmative rhetoric of the leading figures of the movement. We will move onto the entanglement of race, class and gender through literary representations of New Negro Women, and explore the troubled political alliances with the Marxist Left through the trajectory Langston Hughes.

We will then examine how literature remains a form of protest after the New Deal, specifically in the writing of Richard Wright and James Baldwin, and how these writers paved the way for the political alliances that emerged in the Civil Rights era as the Black Power movement was gaining momentum. We will focus on how figures like Amiri Baraka and Sonia Sanchez, Jazz musicians like Max Roach and Abbie Lincoln, artists that were brought together in AfriCobra, embraced Black Power and engaged in their work the complex co-articulations of race and racism, gender, sexuality, cultural self-determination, the activist imperative, and formal experimentation. Throughout the

course, we will discuss how an art form and/or cultural practice is conceived as a form of resistance and active intervention, as is the case with black feminist abolitionism, how a cultural practitioner becomes an ally to a political and cultural vision, whether embracing a political cause may or may not compromise experimentation, and in the case of hip hop, how artists navigate fame, oppositionality and co-option.

It is essential that you familiarise yourselves with materials and related documentation before each class and that you study recommended secondary resources and handouts in advance of each session. You also need to become familiar with the richness of African American culture and tradition in order to approach critically the materials that we will study; you can access numerous links and resources on the e-class. All seminar material can be accessed on the eclass.

### **OSCAR WILDE: AESTHETICISM AND ITS LEGACIES IN THE LITERARY AND THEORETICAL THOUGHT OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

This course will concentrate on the study of important critical, theoretical and literary works by Oscar Wilde, familiarizing students with the basic principles of aestheticism in Britain during the 1890s. Seminal philosophical questions will be addressed such as the affinity between truth and lying, the critic as artist, and the importance of art and the beautiful in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the contemporary world. Major concerns of the course will be the exploration of the legacies of aestheticism in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and its impact upon the literary theory and critical thought of that century. More specifically, the course will establish the connections between Wilde's aestheticism (and aesthetics) and crucial theoretical schools of the twentieth century, such as the New Criticism and Deconstruction.

This course will be a combination of lectures and seminar activities. Evaluation will be based on the student's overall performance, optional written assignments (that will be presented in class), midterms and final exam.

### **C.**

#### **AMERICAN LEGENDS**

If myths and legends are the synecdoche for, and condensation of, the defining character of a nation, this course, through its detailed examination of American-born legends and myths created from the 15th to the 19th century will attempt to elucidate the defining traits of the nascent culture of the United States and use them in consequent evaluations of the native literature and cultural phenomena. Following the theoretical approach of American Cultural Studies critic Stephen Greenblatt, who sees culture and text as interacting through the manipulation of communicational "codes," the myths and legends will be examined both as literary (or oratory) statements and as negotiators of cultural norms. Students will be called upon, through journals, class discussions, papers and presentations, to evaluate and comment on the overt and clandestine meanings of the stories of Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed, Calamity Jane, Pecos Bill, Davy Crockett, Raggedy Dick, La Llorona, and a number of First Peoples' texts ranging from world creation myths to popular press renditions of Native figures in the 1800s.

#### **AMERICAN POETRY OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

The group of poems that we will explore in this seminar, reveal the diversity, the commitment, as well as the anxieties, of 21<sup>st</sup> century American poetry. September 11, 2001, Hurricane Katrina, the wars of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, the presidencies of Bush, Barack Obama and Trump, the 2008 economic meltdown, the 2010 BP oil disaster, school shootings, species loss, and climate change shape the American idiom, and undermine the familiar oppositions of public and private, political and personal. Caught in the contradictory obligations of truth-telling, daring and inspiring poets say what happened and, in the process, they question the very act of representation.

## **6<sup>TH</sup> SEMESTER**

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

The aim of the course is to introduce students to Shakespeare's drama through the analysis of representative plays taking into consideration the historical, social and theatrical context of the Renaissance society. Emphasis is also placed on the ways by which contemporary literary theories have affected the reading of his plays regarding the treatment of important issues such as gender, race, power relations.

#### **A.**

### **REPRESENTATIONS OF LONDON**

The course investigates the representation of the city of London in a variety of texts produced from the sixteenth to the late twentieth centuries. Examining London in its textual, historical, and geographical manifestations, it is neither confined to a single period nor is it a genre course. Periods, authors, and genres will be explored together with themes such as the impact of trade and immigration on the city; the marketplace and the rise of consumerism; xenophobia and cosmopolitanism; city places and urban identities; commodities and the urban subject; sex and the city and London as a world city. The course will also include visual material and films which present a view of the city in relation to the above themes. The course aims to create a sense of the development and constant transformation of London; to define the imaginative opportunities this contradictory city has offered; to establish the place of the city in contemporary social and political debate; to guide students in thinking about urban literary culture both historically and theoretically. The final grade will depend on a midterm exam, a final exam, and a class project/presentation.

#### **B.**

### **TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN DRAMA**

The aim of this course is to familiarize students with the aesthetic and ideological character of twentieth-century American drama. Through the study of representative works by playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, Sam Shepard, Adrienne Kennedy, Maria Irene Fornes, August Wilson, Tony Kushner, Paula Vogel, Suzan-Lori Parks students are led to attain a thorough understanding of the theoretical trends and practical modes that define modern American

drama. In addition, attention is given to the ways in which the plays of these outstanding American voices interrelate with their immediate socio-political and cultural contexts.

Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions and will be asked to react and comment on excerpts from filmed productions of the plays studied. Also, students will have access to a select list of relevant articles and books and will be invited to produce research papers on topics of their own interest in an effort to develop their writing and analytical skills. Finally, students evaluate the course by submitting anonymously a written questionnaire at the end of the semester.

### **C.**

#### **VICTORIAN POETRY**

Victorian poetry is influenced by both Romanticism and Neo-Classicism, while also paving the way for Modernism. Despite being more conservative than the 19<sup>th</sup> Century English novel due to its conventional form and somewhat didactic tone, Victorian poetry displays interesting innovations, such as the “painterly” evocation of scene and realistic representation of emotion. The leading poets of the day such as Alfred Lord Tennyson, Elizabeth and Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti are concerned with the same topical issues as the novelists, such as the rapid pace of social change and the Empire, class and gender relations, and the challenge of scientific progress to religion and morality. However, there is also a tendency for these poets to sometimes take refuge in an idyllic nature and/or mythical past that appears less unsettled and conflictual than 19<sup>th</sup> Century Industrialized England. Hence, this kind of poetry reflects certain typical responses of the period to the challenges of the modern world and lends itself particularly to cultural or historicist analysis.

The course takes the form of weekly planned lectures/seminars that allow for dialogue to develop in class. Besides the set texts themselves, the study materials include photocopied handouts and a list of printed and electronic sources. Assessment is based on the final examination and an optional, supervised, term paper. Finally, the students have the chance to express their views on the instructor and the course by filling out a special anonymous questionnaire.

## **7<sup>TH</sup> SEMESTER**

### **A.**

#### **NO LITERATURE COURSES OFFERED IN THIS SLOT**

### **B.**

#### **MODERNIST FICTION: THEMES AND STYLE**

This course offers a study of English Modernism considered within the historical, cultural, and social framework of the first part of the twentieth century. This period is generally thought to contain a particularly dense concentration of experimentation and innovation in literary form and theme as writers struggled to come to terms with drastic socio-political changes before and after World War I. Texts to be studied include fiction

by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Jean Rhys, poetry and short stories, which address issues such as the modern city, mobility, exile, and alienation, and gender conflicts. The course is conducted as a seminar, encouraging the participation of the students. The final grade will be based on the students' overall performance: written or oral assignments, active participation, and final exam.

### **C.**

#### **MEDIEVAL LITERATURE**

Welcome to the Dark Ages—quite a colorful time, actually, which we will attempt to shed light to in this introductory seminar! The aim of this course is to approach the European Middle Ages through a number of key English texts of the early, middle, and late period, in modern English translation. We will focus on both the formal aesthetic particularities of medieval literature, as well as its thematic idiosyncrasies, so foreign to us albeit so influential to the literary and cultural ages that followed since: the interplay between a strict religious worldview and a carnivalesque secularism; the construction of the socio-philosophical codes of fatalism and chivalry; the complex yet misunderstood role of women; and the formation of cultural idols. Through this brief but important selection of must-know texts, we will hopefully dispel common misconceptions about the Middle Ages while learning the truth behind them. Readings will be long, and often hard to identify with contextually; but the world they reveal is a fascinating one, and certainly worth knowing! At the end of the semester, students will be asked to evaluate this course via anonymous electronic questionnaires.

Although the instructor will provide introductory and analytical lectures for each item, your strong participation is indispensable for the implementation and assimilation of this course.

### **D.**

#### **SUBJECTIVITY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LABORING-CLASS WOMEN'S POETRY**

The course examines representative texts of eighteenth-century British laboring-class women poets in conjunction to the social, economic, and political changes that took place in Britain at that time. Based on contemporary theories of subjectivity, the course will analyze the ways in which eighteenth-century British laboring-class women poets struggled to articulate their identity as regards social class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and religion. Through an analysis of representative poems by Mary Collier, Mary Leapor, Ann Yearsley, Elizabeth Hands, Janet Little, etc., the course will shed light on the effort made by these poets to emulate their contemporary (male) literary tradition as well as strongly subvert it.

#### **CREATING DRAMATIC MONOLOGUES**

This creative writing workshop will focus on the processes for creating and shaping the theatrical genre known as dramatic monologue. The aim of this course is to improve one's relevant skills on various levels while also increasing the students' abilities to appreciate the many aspects of professionally written dramatic monologues. The method of this course is that of a seminar in which students prepare presentations and submit

projects. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and contribute with original work readings and comments on the work of their peers.

## **8<sup>TH</sup> SEMESTER**

**A.**

### **NO LITERATURE COURSES OFFERED IN THIS SLOT**

**B.**

### **CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH FICTION: DEVELOPMENTS IN THEME AND STYLE**

Contemporary English literature is characterized by a striking pluralism which reflects, on the one hand, various social-cultural and historical developments in the post WW2 England, and, on the other, the increasingly multicultural structure of English society in our times. The course focuses on representative novels by major authors of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and aims at exploring and identifying key thematic and stylistic trends that marked the fiction of the period. Novels by Chinua Achebe, Jeanette Winterson, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Ian McEwan will be studied in detail from a theoretical and socio-historical perspective, and topics to be examined include post-colonialism, national identity, Englishness, gender and sexuality, history vs. fiction, class, war, memory, truth, and self-consciousness in fiction. The course is conducted as a seminar, encouraging the participation of the students. The final grade will be based on the students' overall performance: written or oral assignments, active participation, and final exam.

### **CREATING FICTION**

This creative writing workshop will focus on the processes for creating, shaping, and publishing fiction. The aim of this course is to improve writing skills on the word, sentence, and discourse levels while also increasing the students' abilities to appreciate the many aspects of professionally written texts. The method of this course is that of a seminar in which students prepare presentations and submit projects. In addition, there will be a combination of films, visiting speakers, workshops, and lectures. The types of writing will be short fiction, drama (plays and monologues) and children's literature. Seminar attendance is obligatory.

**C.**

### **FACT AND FICTION: THE SLIPPERINESS OF "TRUTH" IN RENAISSANCE LITERATURE**

The course will focus on two important and related strategies of Renaissance literature: the boundary between fact and fiction, and the slipperiness in any truth claim—as concerns the Divine, the material world, and the self. A variety of contemporary texts, both "literary" (plays, poems and prose narratives) and "non-literary" (legal documents, scientific tracts, travel reports, engravings, conduct books) will be studied. An "anatomy" of Renaissance English society (that spans from 1500-1640) as regards its politics, art,



religion, and science will be conducted in relation to the above-mentioned *foci*. This analysis will forge an appreciation of the multifaceted as well as contradictory ways Renaissance men and women perceived and represented themselves, the divine, and the material world. The texts selected aim to outline the period under review, and reflect not only the simplicity of the drab age but also the complexities of the golden age and beyond as delineated in the work of Skelton up to that of Milton respectively.

The course is structured as a weekly seminar implemented by class dialogue. Course material includes a main theoretical text, literary texts, and a selected bibliography of suggested works. Student performance is evaluated on the basis of a final written exam and on interim tests, and course evaluation is effected through the submission of an anonymous written questionnaire by the students at the end of the semester.

### **ENGLISH ROMANTICISM AND CONTEMPORARY POSTHUMANIST PERSPECTIVES**

The course will delve into the poetry and prose of major romantic figures of England from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, discussing critical aspects of romantic thought through a historical/cultural framework, and addressing such concepts as ecological consciousness, creativity, the gothic, science, and the environment. English Romantic writing will also be discussed through important contemporary theoretical perspectives such as various posthumanist theories in the age of the Anthropocene.

### **D.**

### **FILM ADAPTATION THEORIES AND ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE AND CINEMA**

Drawing from film adaptation theories, this module explores the conditions, the reasons and the ways in which literary texts are adapted for the screen. Through the close reading of Anglophone literary texts and film adaptations, the students will examine comparatively the stylistic and technical characteristics of the literary and cinematographic modes of expression, and assess the director's choices as well as their ideological, aesthetic and commercial implications.