

15F Honors

ENGL 110 Course Descriptions

ENGL110-080

The American West: The Romance and the Reality

Bruce Heggen

From the time of the Spanish conquest and exploration of the American southwest to Jefferson's commission of the Lewis and Clark expedition investigating the massive territory recently purchased from France to the dust bowl and great depression of the 1930s to the present, the American land west of the Mississippi river has continually been a source of grand vistas, leading the imagination to visions of wide-eyed romance, of hard reality, and often both at once. This course will look at only a few "postcards" from the rich, fertile (and occasionally arid) historical and literary western panorama. We will frame our exploration by reading and writing in response to selections from Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* and Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West*. We will further inform our conversation by reading narratives by such authors as Kent Haruf, Annie Proulx, Cormack McCarthy, Willa Cather and John Steinbeck; environmental studies may include authors John Muir, Edward Abby and Terry Tempest Williams. To complement the assigned readings, class participants will be encouraged to see how "the romance and the reality of the American west" continue to be kept alive in popular portrayals of the west from "The Unforgiven" to the more recently rescreened "The Lone Ranger" or in artistic explorations by such artists as Georgia O'Keefe, Thomas Hart Benton, and Frederic Remington. Writing projects will include unstructured, in-class responses to readings and visuals, and shorter and longer essays; there will be a major research project. The course will encourage collaboration among classmates and the production of "alternative texts," such as dramatic and video presentations.

ENGL110-081 & 90

Written in Blood – Law, Crime, and Trials in American Culture

John Jebb

"We are a nation of laws," according to an American legal cliché, yet many hard cases have shown the limits and challenges of those laws. This course will consider matters such as appropriate evidence, vengeance and justice, the social aspects of trials, even cosmic retribution. Our first unit will look for these concerns in fiction and journalism. Among the fiction writers, we may look at violent stories by William Faulkner, Truman Capote, James M. Cain, perhaps Reginald Rose. For journalism, we will sample from several decades with authors such as Joan Didion, Thomas Grann of *The New Yorker*, and Skip Hollandsworth of *Texas Monthly*. In this unit, students will examine the issues raised via short essays, followed by a full-sized essay on negotiated topics. In the second unit, students will follow real trials' day-to-day coverage via the news accounts and produce their own overviews of the significance of the cases. We will use *New York Times* articles, material from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, even Delaware cases. The third unit will be the research project: each student will negotiate an in-depth study of a topic raised in our work. The final unit will add more texts (perhaps from the earlier authors) to let students consider and write about big questions about American law and violence.

ENGL110-082

Losing Sight of the Shore: Ageless Exploration

Lisa Dill

Exploration is one of the key definers – and unifiers – of the human race. We have been testing our limits and the limits of our planet since before written history. New research in neurology and psychology seem to indicate that there is an evolutionary purpose to discovery. What, then, can we learn from the personal writings of our great explorers? What aspects of their adventures has history forgotten? And, now that it seems that all the maps have been drawn and followed, where will we go next? This course will consider exploration from primary and secondary sources, determining how and why these great adventures began, and what these men and women can teach us about themselves and us. To begin thinking about these questions,

we will read travel narratives and memoirs, likely including *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* by Sir Walter Raleigh, sections from *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* (DeVoto) and *First on the Moon*, from Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Edwin Aldrin, as well as Ian Leslie's *Curious*, a text about the science and psychology of the quest for discovery. We will incorporate news reports, letters, and historical artifacts, as well as documentary film clips. Students will make two brief presentations on their work and write a variety of papers, including short response papers, critical reviews, longer analytical essays, a small original map project in conjunction with the UD Special Collections library, and finally a research paper that will contrast a first-person narrative of exploration to portrayals of the same experience by historians, politicians and/or the news media and extrapolate what this comparison brings to our understanding of the trip and its long-term effects to society or global politics. Possible field trips include The American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia (holders of the original journals of Lewis and Clark), a tour of NASA's Goddard Flight Center in Maryland, and a day trip on the *Kalmar Nyckel* in Wilmington, a working replica of the tall ship that brought Swedish Settlers to New Castle County in the 17th century.

ENGL110-083

Motion & Thinking: Running, Walking and Writing

Christine Cucciarre

There is a special synergy between writing and movement. Many writers acknowledge that they compose when they walk. Likewise, there are many writers who run and many runners who write and those who do both know that secret. As walking and running become further rooted as American pastimes, research shows that movement enhances thinking and learning. In this class we will read two books: Christopher McDougall's *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen*; Haruki Marukami's *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* and excerpts from George Sheehan's essay collection on running, and essays from writers, poets and thinkers who claim that movement clarified their thinking. Students will be asked to run or walk weekly and there will be times when we will move together to explore the relationship of these two healthy and addictive habits. But besides running, walking and reading about each, we will explore the science behind movement, brain activity and learning to understand that this synergy might not be entirely anecdotal. Both in popular media and in academic scholarship, the connection between motion and thinking is getting a lot of attention. Students will write weekly in multiple modes about the class, their reading, their writing and their running and will write more formal responses to essays from writers such as Joyce Carol Oates, Susan Orlean, Malcolm Gladwell, and Don DeLillo. The work we do will culminate into two parallel term papers: one will be a conventional researched paper about an issue from the readings, and the other will be a parallel narrative on the process of writing and running or walking during the drafting of that researched paper.

ENGL110-084

Who owns that? Authorship, Ownership, and Intellectual Property

Jane Wessel

“Composition is the art of stealing wisely.” – Arthur Murphy

No, I'm not advocating plagiarism. Neither was Murphy, who celebrated appropriation and rewriting in a 1754 essay “On Imitation.” Instead, he was using sensational language to make the point that all writing is based on prior writing. When we write, we build on others' ideas, combining and reworking them for our own purposes. Nowhere do we see this more clearly than in our musical remix and mashup culture. But while mashup artists create exciting new pieces of music, they also provoke outrage for their “theft” of someone else's “original” work. US culture is protective of individuals' intellectual labor and property. This course will examine the history of intellectual property, from the development of copyright in the 18th century to contemporary debates about adaptation, parody, and fair use. We will think about what it means to be an “author” and why authorship is so closely tied to ownership. We will work to break down the myth of the solitary genius, instead studying the ways in which writing and authorship are always collaborative. Moreover, we will explore how proprietary authorship has changed with new technologies. Can you copyright a tweet? As we study these issues, we will practice building on others' ideas (productively and ethically) in our own work, engaging in various forms of public and multimodal writing such as blogging and Wikipedia-editing. Readings will include Joseph Harris's *Rewriting*, US copyright cases, various musical and literary mashups, and a series of essays on

authorship, originality, and intellectual property, including Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition*, Arthur Murphy's "On Imitation," Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author," Kenneth Bruffee's "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" and Peter Stallybrass's "Against Thinking." Assessment will be based on reflective blog posts, a 4-5 page analysis of an adaptation or remix, a 10-12 page researched argument, and a final digital project, in which students will rewrite the research paper for a new audience in a new medium.

ENGL110-085

Protest Poetry: Patriotism, Propaganda, and Poetic Rhetoric

Paula Persoleo

"At its root, poetry is the language of protest. Whether centered on love, beauty, or the ills that plague a nation, it's all inherently political, and it all holds up as a force in any conversation." –Juan Vidal, "Where Have All the Poets Gone?"

For centuries, it has been the duty of the poet to respond to the political agenda of his or her concurrent historical era with an alternative viewpoint. This course will urge students to become part of the conversation between that political agenda (i.e., encouraging patriotism through propaganda) and the poet's desire to speak against it. Students will determine how poetic rhetoric can reshape a culture's ideology, specifically during World War I, the Counterculture Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the current worldwide fight for gender equality. Probable texts will include *Poetry of the First World War*, *Words of Protest*, *Words of Freedom*, *The Portable Beat Reader*, and *The Sky is a Nest of Swallows*. Some poets whose work will be discussed include Rudyard Kipling, Wilfred Owen, Amiri Baraka, Gwendolyn Brooks, Allen Ginsberg, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Students will also read and discuss relevant essays (including "Reframing First World War Poetry" and "Why Afghan Women Risk Death to Write Poetry"), political posters, and music (from Bob Dylan to Jefferson Airplane) that speak to the dialog of protest. Assignments will include short essays that respond to, critique, and analyze the roles of these poets. A research project, including a 10-page essay and an oral presentation, will demonstrate students' understanding of the rhetoric of protest poetry in a historical context.

ENGL110-086

Awesome Ignorance Epic Fail: Varieties of Science Writing

Raymond Peters

This course will explore the writing of scientists, technologists, and science writers. In particular, we will examine different forms of science writing in various media (book, scholarly article, popular science article, online writing, TED talks) in order to observe how scientists and science writers engage their audiences. We will also explore the development of open access publishing and its impact on science writing. Throughout the course, the emphasis will be on the rhetorical analysis of texts. Readings may include work by authors such as Atul Gawande (*Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance*), Neil deGrasse Tyson, *Death by Black Hole: And Other Cosmic Quandaries*, Henry Petroski (*To Engineer Is Human: The Role of Failure in Successful Design*), Richard Feynman, Steven Pinker, Stuart Firestein, Michio Kaku, Oliver Sacks, Richard Dawkins, Ben Goldacre, and Paul Offit. In order to develop skills in academic writing, we will analyze research papers in the Arak Anthology and other samples of academic writing. Students will write brief response papers, critical reviews, analytical essays, editorials, and a research paper analyzing a technological failure.

ENGL110-087

A Menu for Writing: how food reflects, predicts, and defines who we are as individuals and as a culture

Claire McCabe

Food inserts itself into the most intimate parts of our lives. It declares our culture and ethnicity, our sophistication, or lack thereof. Food is political. Entire social movements are based on food preferences such as vegetarianism and the slow foods movement. Our popular culture is permeated with reality TV shows, such as *Hell's Kitchen* and *Top Chef*, as well as food blogs. We celebrate life's milestones with delicacies, and comfort ourselves with daily food habits such as that morning cup of coffee. Just as food has inspired scientists, artists, and writers, it will inspire this honors class with endless material for research and writing. We'll explore such

questions as: Is industrial food production ecologically sound? Can the world be fed organically? Why do some countries deal with illnesses of overabundance, while others deal with starvation? Are food scientists corrupting the food supply with GMOs, or are they saving the planet? Is the creation of gourmet food an artistic endeavor? Our menu of writing will include appetizers of journal entries and reading responses on topics such as a favorite home recipes and a restaurant (or dining hall) review. Side dishes will be short research papers that may incorporate analysis of the use and images of food in art and literature, or may require collecting data on topics such as food insecurity in the United States. Main courses will be in-depth research papers that allow each student to explore a compelling food-related topic. We will read a fun book about food, such as Laurie Colwin's *Home Cooking: A Writer in the Kitchen*, a thoughtful book about food, such as Michael Pollen's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*; view in whole or part both documentaries and dramatic films about food such as *Food Inc.*, *Big Night*, and *Babette's Feast*; and we will also read a number of shorter pieces including food critiques, essays, editorials, and articles. Our final dessert banquet will include the presentation of student research to the class, so we can all feast on what you have discovered during this semester with food. In addition we will plan one or two excursions during the semester to eateries, a food bank, or soup kitchen.

ENGL110-088

The Cultural Impact of the Super-Hero

Jim Burns

Super-heroes are everywhere it seems. A common staple of comics, graphic novels, film, television and even serious fiction; any parent will understand the ubiquitous appeal that super-heroes have for the young. Any trope this common allows for fertile cultural interpretation. The course will explore the idea of the super-hero in several ways. We will look at the proto super-heroes of history (Odysseus, Arthur, etc.) and how they articulated cultural ideas. We will examine super-heroes through the lenses of race, gender and class. The main reader for the class will be *Secret Identity Reader: Essays on Sex, Death and the Superhero* by Lee Easton and Richard Harrison. In addition we will examine the graphic novel *Watchmen* and films that portray the super-hero. Students will hone their writing skill in short response papers dealing with readings from the Easton and Harris text; longer papers will focus on the cultural lessons in race and gender taught by super-heroes. Students will write a longer research paper expanding on these ideas.

ENGL110-089

Writing the Last Frontier: Neuroscience and the Mind-Bending Brain

Emily Carson

Historically, the brain has been perceived as a machine-like organ that was fixed and unchanging. If a person lost function due to illness, trauma, birth, or old age, those limitations were permanent. With developments in neuroscience, however, we now see the brain as malleable and its rehabilitative potential as almost miraculous. This course explores the ways some innovative scientists and determined individuals navigated this uncharted territory over the past few decades through invention, courage and experimentation. In an age of heightened awareness of learning differences, disability, chronic disease, mental illness and extended life-expectancy, the brain represents a last frontier. Our main text for this class will be *The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science*, in which Norman Doidge, M.D. details riveting case histories of people whose lives were transformed by neuroplasticity. We will supplement these case studies with historical perspectives, first-person narratives and articles that address topics such as intelligence, rehabilitation, memory, attraction and love, stroke, anxiety and addiction. While neuroplasticity suggests immeasurable rehabilitation, there is also a darker side that exposes human vulnerability. This encourages us, as a class, to develop our critical thinking as we explore the implications of this re-vision of the brain. What are the limits and potential of neuroplasticity? How does culture modify our brains? What deliberate choices can we make about what we think and the way we spend our time that can develop our potential or minimize risk? How does the media reorganize our brain? What can we learn from other individuals and cultures to help us improve our own thinking and functioning? What do we learn by seeing the brain as a text to be studied, analyzed and revised? Writing for the course will follow the development of Doidge's book as it moves from personal stories to science to philosophy. It will include reflection and response papers and culminate in a research project that

explores the implications of recent neuroscientific discovery for a disease, a disability, a mental illness, a sport or a discipline.

ENGL110-091

Hamlet

Kristen Poole

This seminar might be better named “Hamlet-fest.” For a full semester, we will be exploring all things Hamlet – we will be looking at the play and through the play as one might look through a prism. We will be delving into the language, examining its historical context, and experiencing a variety of film translations of the play. We will be spending lots of time in the library’s Special Collections working with original sixteenth- and seventeenth century archival books (think the Restricted Section of the library at Hogwarts...). We will also be spending a lot of time in the library’s Media Viewing Room working with film. And we will be coordinating the seminar with a special occasion – the visit of a rare copy of Shakespeare’s First Folio to UD. The course will be using the online collaborative platform Basecamp, the social media of the professional world. Students will therefore be learning important professional skills of collaboration and communication. No previous experience of Shakespeare’s language is required – we will begin by working with Shakespeare’s rich wordplay, and we will be gradually acquiring a deeply layered understanding of the characters and the play’s engagement with different forms of history, both past and present. Students will be learning analytical skills that are transferrable across all disciplines and forms of writing, and we will be working not only on structure but on refining writing style. We will also be learning the skills of collaborative editing. Writing assignments begin with short close reading exercises, and build through short papers to a longer research paper.

ENGL110-093

Writing the Future of Science

Bill Rivers

This course will explore the impact of cutting-edge scientific advancements in areas such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, and computer science on key parts of life such as medicine, education, communication, transportation, and entertainment. Students will find, read, analyze, and discuss recent articles like “Filming the Invisible in 4D: New Microscopy Makes Movies of Nanoscale Objects in Action” from magazines such as *Scientific American* or blogs from MIT or articles from scientific journals. The focus of the class will be on developing academic reading and writing skills. After a careful consideration of audience and purpose, students will draft, peer edit, and revise critical reviews, brief abstracts of technical articles, blog responses to the readings, an extended definition of an area of science, and analytical essays. They will produce an academic research project speculating on the impact of cutting-edge scientific advancements on our lives in the near or distant future. Students are encouraged to choose research topics in their majors. The best projects will open lines of inquiry that fit with the student’s career aspirations. For example, a recent computer science major studied the promise of augmented reality on areas as dissimilar as the operating room and the battlefield. A biology major with hopes of becoming a doctor investigated real-life “iron man” suits that “join artificial muscles and control systems into a wearable suit” to help severely injured patients walk and take part in daily activities. A theater major researched how recent advancements in robotic technology have resulted in robots so life like that they are replacing live actors performing on stage in some Japanese theaters. From terraforming, to genetically modified foods, to 3D printers, to cars that drive themselves come with us as we investigate the future—your future.

ENGL110-094

What Does YouTube Say?: Writing On and About YouTube

Caitlin Larracey

From laughing babies, autotuned rainbows, and sneezing pandas to today’s Harlem Shakes, Gangnam Styles, and the explanation of what the fox says, YouTube has been immensely influential over the last decade. The site just recently, in fact, celebrated its ten-year anniversary. YouTube has been a source of fame and a draw for the famous many times over. It also serves a democratic purpose; users can post (almost) anything to the

site. And users can comment on anything – for good or for bad (we’ve all read troll comments). Yet, YouTube is important as more than a source of entertainment, DIY videos, remixes, and, most recently, live broadcasting. It is also a mode of composition. In looking at YouTube, we will analyze not only its history, major players, categories of video, interactions with race, class, gender, copyright, and privacy, but also its function as a writing form. In doing so, we will read about YouTube and “read” YouTube videos themselves. While the class will certainly look at YouTube’s greatest hits, there is space over the semester for students to draw the class’s attention to personal favorites – or the videos that never resonated. Also, we will keep an eye out for the next viral hit. Secondary materials may include a range of articles about YouTube, such as Henry Jenkins’s piece “What Happened Before YouTube,” and clips from TED Talks and documentaries that investigate YouTube. Assignments related to these readings include short informal writing pieces, a short paper analyzing a YouTube video (of students’ choosing), a longer, critical essay on any of the near infinite YouTube related topics, and (of course) a short YouTube video, in which students approach their critical essay question with a different composing form. YouTube began with the slogan “Broadcast Yourself,” a verb and a subject that has shifted over ten years and billions of videos and that we will question and complicate over the semester.