

17F Honors ENGL 110 Course Descriptions

ENGL 110-080

The Witching Hour: Representations of Gender and Magic

Sean Lovitt



From Salem to Hogwarts, the image of the witch has changed dramatically over time while maintaining crucial to our understanding of gender. For hundreds of years, the witch figured in European culture as a profoundly negative vision of womanhood and the charge of witchcraft was often fatal. In the 1960s, the Women's Liberation movement reclaimed the witch for feminism. Similarly, Wicca provided another form of reclaiming witchcraft, in this case as a spiritual practice. In the decades since, the witch has appeared in popular culture in new roles, often reflecting the changing views of gender. We will trace this history in order to consider these questions: What threat did the women once labeled witches represent? Was the charge of witchcraft meant to uphold traditional gender roles or produce new ones? What changes do recent representations of witches mark or generate? We will begin to answer these questions by reading witch trial statements alongside classic literature, such as *Macbeth*. Over the first half of the semester, we will explore the development of the witch in both art and popular culture by looking at examples of 18th century Occultism, 19th Century Spiritualism, and folk tales. The second half of the course will be devoted to the reception, adaptation, and revisioning of the witch figure over the past 100 years. Potential objects of study will be taken from a variety of media, including television (*Buffy*, *Charmed*), film (*The Craft*, *The Witch*), musical subcultures (Occult Rock, Goth), comics (*X-men*) and fiction (*Harry Potter*). Students will complete three major assignments: 1) a short paper that reconstructs an aspect of early modern witchcraft (ex. a spell) with commentary, 2) a multimodal presentation that investigates a representation of gender and witchcraft 3) a research paper that traces the lineage of a specific contemporary depiction of witchcraft.

ENGL 110-081

Get Rich or Die Tryin': Wealth, Poverty, & the Pursuit of Happiness

Délice Williams

What does it mean to be rich? What does it mean to be poor? What does it mean to be middle class? How are class and status represented and imbued with value in mass culture? (Why) does income inequality even matter? Beginning with these essential questions, this course embarks on an exploration class and status in the US, and in a larger global context. We will consider readings that deal with actualities: nonfiction pieces about the possibilities and constraints that people living at different income levels face. However, we will also consider some of the fantasies about wealth as they are depicted in advertisements, film, and short fiction. Our goal is to read the ways that class and status are represented in different cultural productions. Readings for the course include short fiction by Nancy Welch and Karen Bender; the New York Times' collection *Class Matters*, and excerpts from Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*. Together, the three main writing assignments for the course will challenge you to develop creative analytical arguments about visual and verbal texts, and to articulate those arguments in rhetorically persuasive ways both in class and online. Our final project for the course will be the development of a website that features student writing about the course theme.

ENGL 110-082

A Menu for Writing: How Food Reflects, Predicts, and Defines Who We are as Individuals and as a Culture

Claire McCabe

Food often declares our culture and ethnicity, our sophistication or lack thereof. Food is political. Food is art. 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 focusing on food, food blogs, and advertisements for food products. Food will inspire this honors class with endless material for research and writing: Is industrial food production ecologically sound? Can the world be fed organically? Why do some countries suffer illnesses of overabundance, such as obesity and diabetes, while others deal with starvation? Our menu for writing will include journal entries and reading responses, a short analysis paper, a more in-depth research project, and a final presentation that can include multimedia. In addition, we'll plan one or two excursions during the semester to an eatery, a food bank, a farm, or a soup kitchen.

ENGL 110-083

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*, and pair these accounts with contemporary reports about crimes in the current news, such as mass killings or crimes in college settings. 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.

ENGL 110-084

Creating Musical Taste

Ray Peters



This course will explore the connection between writing about music and creating musical taste. Thanks to the cloud, we have easy access to an almost limitless range of music. How do we decide what to listen to? Why is “bad music” for some “good music” for others? Are there good reasons for thinking some music is better than other music? How do we develop musical taste? Why do some musical tastes remain the same or change? What is the connection between creating music and developing musical preferences? How does social interaction influence musical taste? What role do recommender systems and collaborative filtering play in creating musical taste? Are our musical tastes nothing more than a data profile? Our primary focus will be popular musical forms (rock, pop, punk, rap, hip-hop, country, blues, etc.), but we will also consider classical, musicals, jazz, experimental, and the difficult to classify. Throughout the course, the emphasis will be on the rhetorical analysis of texts. We will read Carl Wilson’s *Let’s Talk about Love: Why Other People Have Such Bad Taste*, Peter Shaffer’s *Amadeus*, Geoff Dyer’s *But Beautiful: A Book about Jazz*, and a number of articles about contemporary music. We will also listen to samples of the music under discussion. Students will write brief response

papers, critical reviews, analytical essays, and a research paper and multimodal project examining the creative process in the work of a composer or musician of their choice.

ENGL 110-085

Modern Monsters: Popular Culture Goes Bump in the Night

Petra Clark



From classic tales such as *Frankenstein* and *The Curious Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to contemporary shows such as *Penny Dreadful*, *Hannibal*, and *American Horror Story*, it is safe to say that consumers of popular media have long been enthralled by “monsters” of various sorts. The last two decades in particular have seen the revitalization of monsters such as vampires, zombies, and werewolves as well as serial killers and mad doctors, who slink and shamble across our screens and pages in peppy comedies as well as dark thrillers. Whether wholly, partly, or formerly human, to be a “monster” is to be above all aberrant or deviant—but what about these monstrous Others makes them so fascinating or terrifying? What is the line between acceptable difference and objectionable abnormality, and how do we reconcile these identities against larger cultural norms? In this course, we will explore the ways in which the monsters featured in popular media manifest our fears about modern life, and examine how issues of gender, sexuality, race, disability, and class factor into these representations. In addition to the aforementioned primary texts, readings may include the comic book series *Monstress*, the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and the *Lore* podcast, as well as excerpts from contemporary critical texts such as Stephen T. Asma’s *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* and Alexa Wright’s *Monstrosity: The Human Monster in Visual Culture*. Through these readings and your collaborative and independent work in this class, you will hone your critical reading, writing, and cultural criticism skills. Your written work for this course will consist of blog posts, short analytical essays, and a longer research-based paper, and a final multimodal project that focuses on a specific “modern monster.”

ENGL 110-086

Banned Books

Jim Burns



“Lewd, indecent and violent contents are hardly suitable for young students,” was the excuse used to ban a book from a Brooklyn Center, Minnesota library. This line of reasoning is an oft-repeated mantra to exclude books from libraries and classrooms across the nation. Generally, a small group in a community finds something offensive in a book and sets

about trying to save the rest of the community from the possible hazards of dangerous ideas. In this case, the book of questionable content was the Bible. This class will examine some of the controversies that arise when books are challenged or banned. We will read offending texts and explore the battles that have been fought concerning them. We will grapple with questions of who determines what is offensive and what can (or should) be done with material that pushes the envelope of community standards. The class will read Allen Ginsberg's famous poem *Howl*, and look into the court case against its publishers. We will deal with the always contentious case of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and the debates that still surrounding its suitability for young (or old) readers. We will see how debates about controversial ideas have been represented in fiction and film by exploring *Gone With the Wind*. Students will write short papers on each of the two main texts used in the class, as well as a longer research paper on a challenged work of their choice. Response papers will serve as a basis for class discussion on issues of censorship. Students should be aware that some class materials may be offensive in content or language. An attitude of academic objectivity is strongly encouraged.

ENGL 110-087

Writing for Social Justice: Listening As Rhetorical Practice

Emily Johnston



"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you" (Maya Angelou). "The pen is mightier than the sword" (Edward Bulwer-Lytton). "Learn to speak by listening" (Jalaluddin Rumi). This seminar will explore writing as a tool for telling our stories, and for challenging hate. At a cultural moment of widespread political unrest, and of mass communication on social media, writers have an unprecedented opportunity to make their voices heard. In this seminar, you will learn how to employ writing to become more socially responsive in an increasingly digitized, globalized world. We will write about social inequalities that marginalize people along intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, with particular attention to injustices in our campus community. Rhetorical listening, a foundation for impactful writing, will be our guidepost. We will write to "listen to" UD campus culture; we will listen to assess UD's campus climate; and, ultimately, we will propose strategies for making our campus community a more just and equitable place. At the end of the semester, our class will host a "Writing for Social Justice Conference" in which you will present your proposals to a public audience. Course texts include *Undoing the Silence: Six Tools for Social Change Writing* (Dunlap, 2007) and *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (Alexander, 2012). Additionally, we will read excerpts from *The Color of Violence Anthology* (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2016) and *Rhetoric for Radicals: A Handbook for 21st Century Activists* (Del Gandio, 2008), as well as examples of influential social justice writing, such as Martin Luther King's "Letter From Birmingham Jail." We will also watch and read critical work on the documentary, *The Hunting Ground: The Inside Story of Sexual Assault on American College Campuses* (Dick & Ziering, 2016).

ENGL 110-088

To Pass or Not to Pass: Racial Passing in America

Franklin Hillson



Racial passing involves people of mixed ancestry who make the difficult decision to blend into the dominant culture. To be sure, passing can involve various races and is, in fact, a two-way street, but this honors course will focus mainly on the African American who passes as white. This weighty decision occurred for hundreds of years in America and involved hundreds of thousands of African Americans who clandestinely “transitioned” into white society, perhaps only ending in the late 20th century. But why would one try to pass as a member of another race? Yes, the advantages of being part of the majority can provide better jobs, upward mobility, especially in an era of racial discrimination, but what about the incredible social toll on family and the stress on the passer leading a double life? Is one a charlatan, a poser, a traitor to one’s race or a savvy survivor thumbing his or her nose at “the system”? What does passing say about the land of the free and the home of the brave if its citizens have to pretend to be something they are not? This course will examine racial passing beginning with Charles Chesnutt’s *The House behind the Cedars* (1900), which “explores . . . two young African Americans who decide to cross the color line in order to claim their share of the American dream.” Next, we will read Nella Larsen’s *Passing* (1929), a novella concerning two biracial women in Harlem. Then, we will look at a memoir, *Life on the Color Line: The True Story of a White Boy Who Discovered He Was Black* (1996), by Gregory Williams. Our final text is a collection of recent scholarship. *Passing Interest* (2014) will address, per its complete title, *Racial Passing in US Novels, Memoirs, Television, and Film, 1990-2010*. Discussing these texts will provide you a rich vehicle to write thought provoking and rewarding essays. Your first paper allows for any discussion of a passing novel that intrigues you. Another essay gives you the opportunity to use your visual rhetoric skills to analyze ads or posters that deal with passing movies, personalities, books, or merchandise. Other assessments will include another short essay, participation, quizzes, a presentation on your research topic, and the research paper where you will explore an aspect of passing that impacts current society.

ENGL 110-089

The Dark Web: The Wild West of the Internet

Christina Durborow

To many of us, the Internet is a convenient tool that makes communication easier and more efficient while providing convenient access to information. Hard to say, then, that the Internet is a “bad” thing. But it’s also difficult to ignore its tendency to compromise our privacy or its potential for far more nefarious uses. With these realities in mind, we enter a discussion considering both the role, some might say responsibility, of the government to regulate the Internet and protect its citizens and the right to privacy and personal liberty held dear by those very same individuals. Integral to this discussion is what’s commonly referred to as the dark web; accessible only through Tor browsers, it allows users to browse the web anonymously, offering an alternative to the traditional online experience. Some people use Tor browsers purely to avoid government surveillance, but others—drug dealers, gun runners, hit men, child pornographers and sex traffickers, to name a few—use it to circumvent the law. The dark web serves as a haven for hackers, cybercriminals and terrorists, but it also protects political dissidents who are in legitimate danger of being persecuted by their own governments. Some questions we’ll consider: Is the danger posed by the dark net a reality? Or is it a clever distraction from government attempts to limit freedom and legislate morality? And what’s more important to us—safety or privacy? Class texts may include Jamie Bartlett’s exploration of the web’s underbelly in *The Dark Net: Inside the Digital Underworld*; the documentary *Deep Web*, on the downfall of Dread Pirate Roberts and his Silk Road drug market; programs that have explored the internet underworld like *Mr. Robot* and *House of Cards*; and current reporting from publications such as *Vanity Fair*, *Rolling Stone* and *Wired*. Required writing for the course is intended to develop your critical voice while

sharpening your academic prose and may include response papers, analytical essays, a research paper and a multimodal project.

ENGL 110-090

The Search for Identity: Adult Themes in Young Adult Literature

Paula Persoleo



Young Adult (YA) literature is often considered a genre exclusive to adolescent readers despite its widespread appeal. However, the universal themes typically found in YA fiction correspond with the need for readers to find a place in culture, in society, in the world, a need that is attributed to (if not exclusive to) adolescents. This course will challenge common classifications of YA literature by delving into its larger themes of the individual's search for any number of identities, including race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Texts will include S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*; Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*; Gary Soto's *Buried Onions*; Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*; and Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Students will also read and discuss relevant essays, short fiction, and poems that consider issues of identity and the process of the protagonist's self-discovery. Assignments will include short essays that respond to, critique, and analyze the "adult" themes inherent in YA literature. A research project, including a 10-page essay, will demonstrate students' consideration of the genre's stylistic and thematic evolution with respect to its changing readership. A group project will offer students the chance to present and critique how YA films use visual rhetoric to depict the protagonist's journey of identity and self-discovery.

ENGL 110-091

Dissent, Debate, and Democracy: Writing Resistance

Halina Adams

"Scratch that—this not a moment—it's the movement," so proclaims Lin Manuel Miranda's Alexander Hamilton in the hit song "My Shot." Miranda's musical and its lyrics tap into a quintessentially American tradition of dissent and debate, a tradition rooted in civil (and sometimes uncivil) exchange, one that has shaped the contours of American democracy for the last two hundred and forty years. In this class we will unpack the rhetorical strategies, political moves, and social flourishes made by those who engage in public dissent. Our examination of documents, speeches, and movements will serve as a starting point for understanding the ways in which those in power and those on the periphery of power persuade audiences, call for action, and utilize facts and fictions to make change. This course is divided into three sections: the early debates, growing pains, and contemporary dissent. Drawing on early primary texts such as excerpts from *The Federalist* and *The Anti-Federalist* papers, Henry Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience," and the Lincoln/Douglass debates, we will examine the bedrock of American dissent and debate. Next, we will work with manifestos that build on the older tradition in order as their authors call for changes in society—works including Mina Loy's "Feminist Manifesto," Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," and Harvey Milk's so-called "Hope Speech." Finally, we will study contemporary real and fictional movements and iterations of dissent, such as the Tea Party Movement, the book *Indivisible*, and Miranda's *Hamilton*. You will be expected to complete daily short writing assignments, as well as bi-weekly 1-page reading responses to our documents, two long papers (which will go through two drafts each), and a podcast as a capstone assignment.

ENGL110-092

Great Adaptations: How One Thing Becomes another While Remaining Itself

Kevin Burke

Adaptations are everywhere: books become movies, movies become video games; songs, books, films, graphic novels, games, advertising, fashion, and robust markets for various forms of accouterments and paraphernalia generate new versions of fictional and historical characters' careers and evolve multiple variations on familiar narratives. This course will examine the complex process of adaptation from a variety of perspectives. How does a book or video game become a film? What happens when a film becomes a video game? How do the genres of graphic novel and film influence each other? Why do people transform a beloved novel, comic book, or game into a different form? Why are some characters and story lines apparently infinite in their ability to be adapted? What are the ideological and economic aspects of adaptation? What is the status of the original? Is there an original? Students should expect to write several response papers, an extended review of an adapted work, and a research paper focusing on an adaptation project of the student's choice. The basic text for the course will be Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*. Works to be considered may include the *Assassin's Creed* series of video games and the recent film based on them; the various adaptations of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (zombie and otherwise); the new movie and BBC versions of Sherlock Holmes; and the Amazon TV series adaptation of Philip K. Dick's *Man in the High Castle*. Pending the release of their schedule for Fall 2017, we will also consider a theatre adaptation as presented by the University's Repertory Company.