

Department of English 2022-2023

Second-Year Seminar Descriptions

Questions about these courses can be sent via email to the Undergraduate Director, Jennifer Blair, at engdiru@uottawa.ca, or to the professor who is teaching the course.

ENG 2124 A (Fall 2022)

Title: Form, Metamorphosis, and Literary Transformations

Professor: G. Rector

Course Description: Whether in the form of ancient epics, medieval tales, science fiction, films, or graphic novels, we have told stories of the metamorphosis of humans into animals in many different ways. Depending on where and when and how the stories are told, the transformation might be variously attributed to gods, magic, poetry, science, or our own sins, moral or environmental. This course will start with stories of animal transformation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a Roman catalogue of ancient myth that would later be known as the 'poet's bible.' It will follow the story-type through works like the *lais* of Marie de France— a 12th century writer of werewolf and animal transformation stories— Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*— a nightmare of modern scientific experimentation— and Charles Burns' *Black Hole*, increasingly viewed as a classic graphic novel, in which horror-movie-esque transformations are closely tied to sexual transformations.

The purpose of this course is to prepare students for the kinds of critically informed debate, analysis, research, and writing that they will encounter in upper-year courses. As a seminar, the course trains students how to engage with their subject matter in several different formats: in-class discussion and dialogue; regular written responses to the reading; oral seminar presentations; and a research paper. More broadly, it asks students to pose discipline-relevant questions about their texts, and to pursue the solution to those questions according to discipline-relevant methodologies: that is, to develop and apply the tools of literary analysis.

Texts:

Available at Benjamin Books (Osgoode St):

- Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Oxford Classics edition)
- Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Arden Shakespeare)
- H. G. Wells' *Island of Dr. Moreau* (Penguin Classics)
- Charles Burns, *Black Hole* (Pantheon Books)

Available as pdf:

- Marie de France, *Lais*: 'Prologue,' 'Bisclavret,' 'Laüstic,' 'Yonec,' and 'Guigemar'

– Critical readings

Evaluation:

- In-/ For-Class Writing and Presentation Exercises Jan. 13- Feb. 3: 4x5% (20%)
- Seminar Reading Responses: 3x5% (15%). Feb. 10 to March 30
- Seminar Presentation: 25%
- format to be handed out in class. The presentation requires an in-person meeting with me at least one week prior to the presentation. Failure to make the interview within the time period will reduce the presentation grade by 50%; failure to follow the seminar presentation format will reduce the presentation grade by 50%.
- Final Paper: 25%. (due during exam period; date tbd)
- Class Participation: 15%
- Mid-Semester Interview (without interview, no class participation grades given)

ENG 2124 B (Fall 2022)

Title: Literatures of Epidemic

Professor: Sara Landreth

Course Description: During the ongoing waves of our current pandemic, we have all become firsthand witnesses to loss, fear, and uncertainty as well as to unexpected discoveries and joys of life under lockdown. As unprecedented as these events are in our lifetime, English literature has a long and rich history of engaging with epidemics. This class will explore representations of infectious disease from 1722 to the present in poetry, autobiographical writing, theatre, short stories, and the novel. Why are apocalyptic narratives so compelling? In what ways do pandemics spark conspiracy theories and fan the flames of prejudice? How will our current crisis change how metaphors of contagion and pestilence inform our work, travel, and social interactions? What does it mean to engage with literature in order to imagine or even fantasize about the breakdown of “modern society”? Our class discussions and a series of short assignments will develop your skills in close reading, argumentation, and engaging with literary criticism and theory. This work will prepare each student to write an excellent final essay; the writing process will include personalized feedback from the professor and hands-on guidance through a careful process of revision.

Method: seminar and discussion

Readings will include:

Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722)

Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (1992)

Max Brooks, *World War Z* (2006)
Emily St John Mandel, *Station Eleven* (2014)
Michael Salcman (Ed.), *Poetry in Medicine* Anthology (2015)

Participation: questions, comments, having texts with you: 20%

Assignment 1: oral explication of passage using OED: 5%

Assignment 2: grammar quiz: 5%

Assignment 3: Two paragraphs interpreting primary source: 10%

Assignment 4: Two paragraphs integrating critical/secondary source: 10%

Assignment 5: Seminar Presentation: [last 3 weeks of term]: 20%

Assignment 6: Final Essay: 30%

Objectives: To engage deeply and critically with a wide range of texts; to foster a generous intellectual environment where discussion and debate can thrive; and to hone our skills in both oral presentation and essay writing through completion of all 6 assignments; and to become more comfortable with in-person verbal communication.

ENG 2124 C (Fall 2022)

Title: Renaissance Rebels

Professor: Jennifer Panek

Course Description: A wife who gangs up with her female relatives to transform a controlling husband. An English king who wants nothing more than to be with his male lover. A tough young woman on the streets of London who wins her community's respect while dressing like a man and taking down her detractors in sword fights. With two of these three plays based on real-life individuals and situations, these are the stories that Shakespeare never told—but his edgier, more daring rivals John Fletcher, Christopher Marlowe, and Thomas Middleton did. This section of the second-year seminar uses these plays—two hilarious comedies (*The Tamer Tamed* and *The Roaring Girl*) and a most unconventional historical tragedy (*Edward II*)—as a basis for teaching the critical analysis skills your professors will require of you in future English courses. Class discussion and a series of short assignments build your skills in close reading, argumentation, contextualization, and engaging with literary criticism; the term concludes with seminar presentations and personalized instruction on the practice of in-depth revision that you will use to turn your presentations into excellent final papers.

Method: seminar and discussion

Texts:

John Fletcher, *The Tamer Tamed, or The Woman's Prize* (Revels Student Edition)
Christopher Marlowe, *Edward the Second* (New Mermaids)
Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker, *The Roaring Girl* (Norton Critical Edition)
Course reader of contextual and critical readings

Evaluation:

Class participation: 10%
Short assignment one: 5%
Short assignment two: 10%
Short assignment three: 10%
Short assignment four: 15%
Seminar presentation: 25%
Final paper: 25%

ENG 2124 D (Winter 2023)

Professor: Lauren Gillingham

Course Title and Description: TBA

ENG 2124 E (Winter 2023)

Title: Writing War

Professor: Andrew Taylor

Course Description:

“So now I meet my doom. Well let me die—
but not without struggle, not without glory, no,
in some great clash of arms that even men to come
will hear of down the years!”

Hector’s death speech in *The Iliad*.

“A true war story is never moral. If a story seems moral do not believe it. If at the end of a war story you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie.”

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

Do the war stories of the past, such as Homer's *Iliad* or Shakespeare's *Henry V*, celebrate human courage unequivocally, or do they tell what O'Brien calls "a very old and terrible lie," or do they offer a more complex understanding of what war is really like? Should we look on war stories as efforts to promote pointless military aggression or as efforts to inspire us to heroism and self-sacrifice? Can people describe the experience of war honestly or do they always fall back on the conventional accounts they have already heard? Can the challenges of describing the experience of war drive literary creation and inspire new kinds of writing? How does the writing of warfare play into traditional gender roles? These are some of the questions we will consider.

Texts:

Pat Barker, *The Silence of the Girls* (Penguin, 2018)

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990)

William Shakespeare, *Henry V* (Oxford Classics)

Course pack