

Spring 2012
ENG 2200 Critical Reading and Interpretation
Thematic Descriptions

2200 1 Critical Reading and Interpretation Cadeau 1:25PM - 2:15PM MWF
Double Lives: Literature Reimagined

This course explores the trope of double lives in works including Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Natasha Trethewey's *Bellocq's Ophelia*. How do the shifting identities of characters in these texts reflect and challenge class, race, sexual orientation, and gender mores? What is the relationship between secrets and privacy? These literary works also have double lives of their own, through re-release, adaptation, prequel, and archetype. We will investigate why subsequent authors have returned to these stories, and how the changes they make contemporize socio-political issues.

2200 2 Critical Reading and Interpretation Fiander 8:00AM - 8:50AM MWF
Adaptations

John Gardner, author of *Grendel*, once said that there are only two types of stories: 1) A hero goes on a quest, or 2) A stranger comes to town. If that is true, in whole or part, then what becomes just as important as the story itself is how its told -- who is telling it, when is it being told, and how is it being told to us? With that in mind, what happens when we tell the same story from different angles? What if, for example, the villain tells us the story instead of the hero? How does it change? What happens when we cast a story in a new historical or cultural context? What happens if we tell the same story through a different medium, such as when a book is interpreted for film? What happens when we fictionalize major historical events? And how do any of these changes in context affect the fundamental meaning of a text? In this class, we will read "alternate" versions of texts (for example, Gardner's *Grendel*, which is a reinterpretation of *Beowulf*), and discuss how these texts change and define meaning. We will discuss how much context we need -- how much knowledge of literature and history and culture -- are necessary for our understanding of a given text. Finally, we will discuss if and when these texts break away from their source material and begin to stand on their own and create their own meaning, and what the authors' intentions might be in casting established texts in a new, unfamiliar light.

2200 3 Critical Reading and Interpretation Scheidt 3:55 - 4:45PM MWF
Law and Literature

The law and those involved with law are regularly depicted in literature, films, and t.v. shows - from Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno" to *The Wire*. Likewise, legal texts such as judicial opinions often cite literature (e.g., Shakespeare's plays). Some even argue that legal texts are not only informed by literature but can be read as a kind of literature. This course considers the multiple relationships between law and literature by examining the literature of law, literature in law, and law as a kind of literature. How do selected literary texts represent the law as, for example, an institution, a system of processes, or a culture? How are various persons associated with the law represented (e.g., litigants, lawyers, judges)? What larger issues of justice do these literary texts raise and how do they consider and respond to these in comparison with legal texts? How does literature use or respond to certain aspects of law, not only its

content but its structures, themes, and forms of analysis? How does law use or respond to these same aspects of literature (especially narrative)? In what significant ways do literature and law differ? What is gained (lost) in seeing literature and law as sympathetic with one another, or distinct? Among terms and concepts significant to our pursuit of these questions are: the meaning of narrative, coherence, plausibility, precedent, and genres and fictions (both legal and literary).

2200 4 Critical Reading and Interpretation Summers 1:25PM - 2:15PM MWF
Ecoliterature: Literary Explorations of the Relationship Between Humans and the Natural World

Literary responses to environmental concerns are as old as the issues themselves: deforestation, endangered species, wetland loss, and rampant consumerism have all been appearing as controversial issues in Western literature for hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of years. This course will explore human connections to the environment, and especially to the natural world, in various literary works from the earliest times to the present. We will explore the ways that nature and the natural world are imagined through literary texts. To do so we will consider texts ranging from creation stories to medieval writers; from Shakespeare to Thoreau; from Kingsolver to contemporary essays; and also news reports, blogs, and film(s).

2200 5 Critical Reading and Interpretation Sellers 11:45AM - 1:00PM MW
Coming of Age Literature: The Dark Side

Through the novels, short stories, and poems of this course, students will study literature as a record of human experience, and come to understand the growth and development of a human being, how adult status is gained, and how cruelty, pain, and mistreatment influence characters' lives forever. Students will come to identify the common themes of this genre and understand that the definition of "growing up" changes from era to era.

2200 6 Critical Reading and Interpretation Kozma 3:55PM - 4:45PM MWF
From *Dracula* to *Twilight*: Vampires in Literature

Vampires are a hot topic in contemporary pop culture. But what is it about the vampire figure that inspires such fascination in readers and audiences? This section of English 2200 explores vampire narratives in literature and film from early vampire stories such as J. Sheridan Le Fanu's tale of a lesbian vampire, *Carmilla*, and Bram Stoker's iconic *Dracula*, to modern vampire blockbusters like *Twilight*.

2200 7 Critical Reading and Interpretation Haas 9:15AM - 10:05AM MWF
The American Politician: Film, Text and TV

The American politician has been a sizable component of our national identity since the beginning of the Union. (Remember our legends of cherry trees and log splitters and individuals who flew kites in electrical storms?) Each era in American history has had its cultural moments that have defined our collective notion of the Politician, and this course will explore the various media depictions that have given rise to our conceptions of politicians. The class will emphasize film, but we'll also study our politicians in cartoons, pamphlets, essays, popular fiction and on television. Films will include *State of the Union*, *Seven Days in May*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *The Candidate*, *Dave*, *The American President*, *Thirteen Days* and *The Ides of March*. Texts will include work from statesmen such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin, Richard

Nixon, John Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama. We'll also explore assorted political commentary, commercials, pamphlets, posters, buttons and fiction, as well as some theory to help us make sense of all this imagery. And thanks to the Internet we'll watch the legendary "Checkers" speech, as well as other political programs, speeches and events. With luck, we'll arrive at a practicable model of the politician in America before we head to the polls next fall.

2200 8 Critical Reading and Interpretation Kozma 2:40PM - 3:30PM MWF
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2200 9 Critical Reading and Interpretation Fiander 3:10PM - 4:25PM TTH
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2200 10 Critical Reading and Interpretation Fiander 8:00AM - 9:15AM TTH
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2200 11 Critical Reading and Interpretation Clements 3:55PM - 5:10PM MW
Linguistics and Literature

Starting with *Beowulf* in Old English, this class works through various texts in the English tradition while focusing on narratology—how fictional narrative represents speech and thought. Narratology blends text linguistics (linguistic structures beyond the sentence) and the literary-critical 'unreliable narrator' (where the narrative voice itself is an engaged character). Along with narratology, we will also focus on philology (the study of individual words and their history) to discuss poetic language and syntax, poetic language and meter, and literature and cognitive metaphor. The class continues with stylistics, which attempts to establish principles capable of explaining the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language, such as socialisation, the production and reception of meaning, critical discourse analysis and literary criticism. Other features of stylistics include the use of dialogue, including regional accents and people's dialects, descriptive language, the use of grammar, such as the active voice or passive voice, the distribution of sentence lengths, and the use of particular language registers.

2200 12 Critical Reading and Interpretation Clements 3:10PM - 4:25PM TTH
Jewish-American Literature

What is Jewishness? What does it mean to be Jewish in America? This course will explore the varied identities of Jewish-Americans (region, generation, gender, religious belief, national origin, immigration history, etc). By considering Jewish American (oral histories, poems, songs, novels, short stories, etc) texts, this course will examine the meaning of Jewishness in the American cultural construction by Jews and non-Jews. Students will deconstruct each text's depiction of Jews and non-Jews and evaluate their place within both the narrative of the work and the culture that produced the text to attempt to answer: What role literature plays in the production, reproduction, and transformation of Jewish cultural institutions? How do these meanings circulate and how do ordinary people engage with them? Answers to these questions should lead us toward the role of literature and culture in the construction of social meanings about American Jewish identity.

2200 13 Critical Reading and Interpretation Casey 11:45AM - 1:00PM MW
Myths and Monsters in Literature

Joseph Campbell famously suggested that myths are public dreams, and dreams are private myths. If this is true, then what do individual myths tell us about the dreams and nightmares of a particular culture at a specific historical moment? This course will examine famous myths and the monsters that inhabit them in texts such as *Beowulf*, *Frankenstein*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By considering the place of myth and monster in texts such as these, we will explore the various meanings of mythology and the cultural construction of monstrosity.

2200 14 Critical Reading and Interpretation Clements 1:20PM – 2:35PM TTH
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2200 15 Critical Reading and Interpretation Church 8:00AM - 9:15AM TTH

Writing to Change the World: A Study of Activist Literature

This course will examine the writings of authors whose work serves as a platform for expressing their political and philosophical viewpoints, in both overt and subtle ways. Together we will consider the historical context of each piece, and investigate whether or not the work made an impact on the issues being addressed. A variety of critical perspectives will be introduced and used to interpret and critique selections from several genres, including poetry, short fiction, and drama. In addition, using the works studied as models, students will produce either a poem, short story, or short creative nonfiction piece that highlights or critiques a current social issue.

2200 16 Critical Reading and Interpretation Church 8:00AM – 8:50AM MWF

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