



Graduate Course Descriptions Spring 2026

ENGL 5680: Creative Writing Workshop—Playwriting

CRN 13953 | Mode: In-person | Mondays, 6:30-9:00 | Dr. Steve Feffer

Fulfills: Creative Writing M.F.A. or Ph.D. workshop requirement

“Unexpected Words and Falling Elephants”

“I think theatre ought to be... theatrical ... you know, shuffling the pack in different ways so that it's -- there's always some kind of ambush involved in the experience. You're being ambushed by an unexpected word, or by an elephant falling out of the cupboard, whatever it is.”

-- Tom Stoppard

This is a workshop in the writing, development, and presentation of your playwriting and performance texts. We will spend most of our time in class on the sharing and workshopping of your dramatic writing. However, we will also spend a portion of our time devoted to playwriting exercises that will help you learn and focus your stagecraft, develop your existing work, start something new, or integrate into your own writing process.

Our goal will be for you to workshop a total of 40 pages of performance texts in standard play format. This might take the form of an act of a full-length play (or a full-length, if you are so inclined or ambitious) or a combination of shorter plays, such as ten-minute plays, one acts, performance art, musicals, or solo performances, etc.

The focus of our play readings will look at contemporary playwrights that are rewriting, repurposing and repositioning the drama of the past to create a bold new theatrical language and landscape in our present. These plays include *Becky Nurse of Salem* by Sarah Ruhl, *John Proctor Is the Villain* by Kimberly Belflower, *Fat Ham* by James Ijames, *Pass Over* by Antoinette Nwandu, *Indecent* by Paul Vogel, *An Octoroon* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, *A Doll's House* by Amy Herzog, *A Doll's House, Part 2* by Lucas Hnath, and *Oedipus El Rey* by Luis Alfaro.

ENGL 5770/6970: Advanced Readings in Old Norse

CRN 15098/15101 | Mode: In-person | Thursdays, 4:00-6:20 | Dr. Jana Schulman

Fulfills: M.A., M.F.A., and Ph.D. elective; Ph.D. foreign language requirement (coupled with English 6760: Old English)

Course Description

In this class, you will review the fundamentals of Old Icelandic grammar and language learned last semester; translate *Gísla saga*; and read secondary material on the saga. Although *Gísla saga* is one of the shortest Icelandic sagas, it is jam-packed with events that allow the reader to think about law, outlawry, gender roles and societal expectations of appropriate behavior, in addition to other narrative features.

Course Goals and Outcomes

The course will be devoted to further refining a reading knowledge of Old Icelandic through reading *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. The saga asks us to think about diverse matters such as: honor and shame; blood brotherhood; family dynamics; gender roles; and the role Icelandic law plays in the saga. Students will write a research paper (involving close reading and the use of secondary sources) on *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and present their results to their colleagues.

Prerequisite: one semester of Old Norse

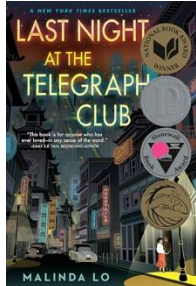
Graduate students should enroll in the 6000-level section.



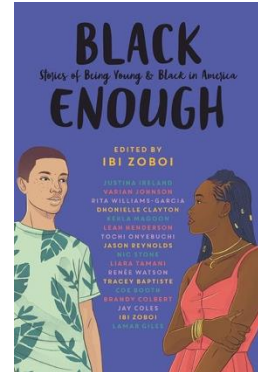
ENGL 5830: Multicultural Adolescent Literature

CRN 15099 | Mode: In-person | Mondays, 4:00-6:20 | Dr. Meghann Meeusen

Fulfills: M.A., M.F.A., or Ph.D. elective



In today's contemporary social and political environment, it has become essentially important to think critically about the ways that texts for young people shape ideologies and understanding of culture within our society. ENGL 5830, *Multicultural Adolescent Literature*, tackles this challenge by examining a range of topics speaking to current concerns of representation, inclusivity, diversity, and power in both realistic and fantasy texts marketed to teen readers. Studies in novels, poetry, short stories, and film will explore voices of those marginalized because of race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, ability, class, and gender, and in particular, the course will consider recent moves in scholarship related to representation, pairing these perspectives with a deep dive into the wider cultural discussions happening around social justice.



ENGL 5970: Analyzing, Researching, and Writing Our History, Heritage, and Inheritance

CRN 15273 | Mode: In-person | Thursdays, 6:30-9:00 | Professor Shonda Buchanan

Fulfills: M.A., M.F.A., or Ph.D. elective

What happens when the past is forgotten, and we can't remember where we came from? Then we have no origin stories. The Sankofa African proverb says, "If we can't remember our past, then how can we create a healthy future?"

Culture, cultural identity and heritage can be found in our rituals, religion and religious practices, gender roles, upbringing, sayings, in memory and nonmemory, occupations and ceremonies, in migration and land acquisition or land loss, or in the stories and narratives your family kept, or in some cases, ignored. This course will be about identifying, researching and writing our histories, heritage and cultural inheritance of your family, community and (respective) countries.

Through the study and analysis of several award-winning texts such as *Caste, 1619, A Stronger Kinship: One Town's Extraordinary Story of Hope and Faith*, and *Rites of Conquest: The History and Culture of Michigan's Native Americans*, in addition to essays about Michigan's Indigenous populations, European immigrants, Free People of Color and escaped enslaved Blacks, and watching films, this course will explore culture, cultural identity and heritage, literary tropes, placemaking theories, fallacies and new narratives, and Michigan narratives, to identify how heritage, selfhood and language were shaped, adapted and codified in our lives.

Course Objectives: This course will help participants: 1) Analyze literature and films pertaining to the class; 2) Write essays that respond to the class themes, as well as local, state and federal archives, halls of records and library databases; 3) Learn qualitative and quantitative methods and steps of interviewing and collecting data; 4) Explore and implement creative nonfiction techniques; 5) Construct, research and write a heritage story, either an argumentative essay, or a memoir excerpt, or several personal narrative essays; 6) Produce a publishable piece of nonfiction prose or article that represents you and/or for a family member and/or your town, neighborhood or city/region or country.

ENGL 5970: Climate Fiction

CRN 15274 | Mode: In-person | Wednesdays, 4:00-6:20 | Dr. Allen Webb

Fulfills: M.A., M.F.A., or Ph.D. elective

Climate Literature and Activism

Climate change is the defining crisis of our time—and its accelerating impacts are reshaping every dimension of human life. The leadership of our country is now devastating climate action, action that was already insufficient.

This course explores the growing body of “cli-fi” (climate fiction and poetry) from around the world, asking how literature can illuminate the human dimensions of climate change: migration and displacement, environmental justice and inequality, speculative technologies, and intergenerational hope. Readings will include Indigenous Pacific poetry, African and South Asian speculative fiction, and contemporary young adult novels alongside short stories from Europe, China, and the Americas. We will pair these texts with current science and political context, tracing how writers confront fossil fuel power, mass displacement, and ecological collapse.



Course work will include critical essays, creative cli-fi writing, and public-facing projects such as op-eds, podcasts, or activist zines. By the end of the semester, you will not only have a deeper understanding of climate literature as a global phenomenon, but also, drawing on your talents and interests, hands-on experience speaking out and making a difference in communities you are a part of.

ENGL 6110: Literary Forms—Fiction

CRN 13305 | Mode: In-person | Tuesdays, 4:00-6:20 | Professor Thisbe Nissen

Fulfills: *M.F.A. in-genre (Fiction) or out-of-genre (Playwriting, Poetry) Creative Writing Forms requirement; in-genre (Fiction) Ph.D. Creative Writing Forms requirement*

Flash fiction: a literature seminar/workshop on the form. We'll read a broad spectrum of flash, micro, sudden, mini, nano, quick and hint fiction, as well as theory of its history and craft. Generative prompts and exercises will be developed into texts for mini-workshops.

ENGL 6150: Literary Theory

CRN 13306 | Mode: In-person | Tuesdays, 6:30-9:00 | Dr. Christopher Nagle

Fulfills: *M.A.- and Ph.D.-level requirement; M.F.A. elective*

“There are no dangerous thoughts. Thinking itself is dangerous.” —Hannah Arendt

“The value of thought is measured by its distance from the continuity of the familiar.”
—Theodor Adorno

“To work is to undertake to think something other than what one has thought before.”
—Michel Foucault

Starting with these assumptions, the main goal of this course will be to provide a representative overview of the most important, influential, and exciting works of literary and cultural theory from the past two centuries. We will focus primarily on the second half of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, but not before laying some vital groundwork for understanding our more contemporary texts: first, by tracing briefly the shift from Enlightenment modes of thought to the shaping forces of Romanticism; then, by focusing on the modern triumvirate whose revolutionary contributions have shaped theory as we know it today—Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. All of the work that follows (and most of the media paired with these readings) will feature interdisciplinary and intersectional theory that challenges and critiques the Western canonical tradition by centering the critical innovations of women, queer and trans folk, and BIPOC voices and perspectives. No previous expertise in any of this course material is expected or required.

Requirements: weekly response posts; at least one seminar presentation, in which the student leads discussion for the session; a final, medium-length seminar paper; and (most importantly) active participation in our discussions every week.

n.b.: we will have the rare opportunity to incorporate the visit of a leading theory scholar, whose most recent, critically acclaimed book will be part of our syllabus. More details will follow, but at present we are working with another department to co-sponsor her visit in Spring, and students will have the opportunity to attend both a public talk and a smaller informal seminar with the speaker.

CRN 15100 | Mode: In-person | Wednesdays, 6:30-9:00 | Dr. Alen Hamza

A photograph showing a red ceramic mug filled with dark coffee on a rustic wooden surface. Next to the mug is a white paper napkin with a word cloud design. The central word in the cloud is "poetry" in large, bold letters. Other words scattered around it include "epic", "narrative", "metaphor", "poem", "meter", "rhyme", "verse", "lyric", "sonnet", "ballad", "haiku", "free verse", "imagery", "symbolism", "rhetoric", "figure of speech", "onomatopoeia", "personification", "alliteration", "hyperbole", "metonymy", "synecdoche", "oxymoron", "anaphora", "repetition", "enjambement", "caesura", "end rhyme", "internal rhyme", "assonance", "consonance", "onomatopoeia", "meter", "refrain", "antithesis", "line", "stanza", "couplet", "tercet", "quatrain", "pentameter", "hexameter", "septimeter", "octometer", "nonameter", "decimeter", "hendecimeter", "dodecimeter", "trimeter", "tetrameter", "pentameter", "hexameter", "septimeter", "octometer", "nonameter", "decimeter", "hendecimeter", "dodecimeter". A silver pen lies diagonally across the bottom right corner of the napkin.

ENGL 6900: Scholarship and Writing in the Profession

CRN 10713 | Mode: In-person | Mondays, 4:00-6:20 | Dr. John Saillant

A close-up photograph of a person's hands and arms. They are wearing a long-sleeved shirt with horizontal black and white stripes. Their right hand is holding a black pen and writing on a white notepad. Their left hand is resting on the keyboard of a dark-colored laptop. The laptop is open, and the keyboard is visible. In the background, there is a blurred green object, possibly a container or folder, and a blue book or folder lying flat on the desk. The overall scene suggests a student or professional working on a task.

Moreover, this seminar allows for a discussion of academic writing more broadly, for much of our class time is spent unpacking the nature of academia, academic writing, and ways to engage with research from a variety of perspectives. Thus, in addition to the tangible results of the course—production of an article and conference presentation—this class can enrich your ability to navigate your chosen field of study in an increasingly complex and challenging market.

in academic writing more broadly. ENGL 6900 provides a formal avenue to improve your research writing and pursue publication and conference presentation options, as well as build your relationship with a member of the faculty with expertise in your area of interest.

Additionally, for doctoral students considering an article for publication as the modality for one of the qualifying exams, this course is highly recommended—it can give you the chance to begin work on your exam article in a structured way, helping you move confidently toward your exams (and toward timely graduation).

Class-time will include group discussions about academic writing/publication and as well as some opportunities to engage with guest speakers. Other class periods will be reserved for individual conferencing and work in small groups. The course is pass/fail.

