

YC Department of English

Spring 2023 Course Offerings

Our courses invite students to deepen their writing, reading, and critical thinking skills. We welcome interested students from all majors to join our community. Majors may choose between the Creative Writing and Literary Studies tracks.

If you're wondering which Spring 2023 English courses are right for you or have questions about the English major or minor or the Writing minor, contact the Chair of the English Department, Professor Rachel Mesch: rachel.mesch@yu.edu. For information about the Media Studies minor, contact Professor Elizabeth Stewart: estewart@yu.edu.

Course requirements for the major and our minors can be found on the YC [English website](#).

Creative Writing

These classes count towards the Creative Writing concentration and the Creative Writing minor. English majors in the Literary Studies concentration may count as many as two of these courses, and English minors may count one. The prerequisite for these classes is FYWR 1020.

ENG 1740 Writing Across Genres: A Fiction and Creative Nonfiction Craft Workshop
T/R 6:45 - 8:00
Professor David Puretz



This course is designed for students who wish to stretch the boundaries of their own writing in fiction, nonfiction, and blurred modes of storytelling. We will explore the mutual influence of fiction and nonfiction and make use of aspects from both genres as we craft our own original stories. We will be studying various works in long and short form that span the fiction↔nonfiction continuum, including hybrids that have defied or subverted genre conventions, such as Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Dave Egger's *What is the What*, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, and Junot Diaz's *Drown*. We will use our readings to study voice, point of view, structure, and use of language, but also how ethical, technical, and emotional boundaries inform modes of storytelling and style. Students will discover how they can use literary writing techniques to create compelling creative nonfiction and how they can transform personal experience and true events into compelling fiction. Students will be responsible for submitting two substantial stories for workshop critique and for extensive revision.

ENG 1895 Screenwriting

M/W 4:30 - 5:45

Professor Brian Trimboli

Writing narratives for the screen or stage can be a precarious balance between what words are used and how they are meant. Writers in screenwriting will prepare the different documents that eventually add up to a screenplay and will be responsible for directing scenes throughout the course to demonstrate progress. We will read transcripts of successful television shows, as well as pilots and pitch documents, and create replicable processes for generating and revising our work.



In class, we will focus on exercises of dialogue and exposition, setting, and general lessons on developing an original idea for mass media. The goal will be to create a process that doesn't just yield one screenplay, but the ability for you to write many. Because of this, writers should

expect to begin with a new idea that they haven't yet tried to develop. This course is meant for beginners through advanced writers and will encourage you regardless of your level.

This writing-intensive course will challenge students to think about the dimensionality of their stories and the different ways they can adapt their writing for the screen or stage. This is an opportunity to develop a script through workshopping with peers, and to see parts of that script come to life.

LITERATURE & FILM Electives

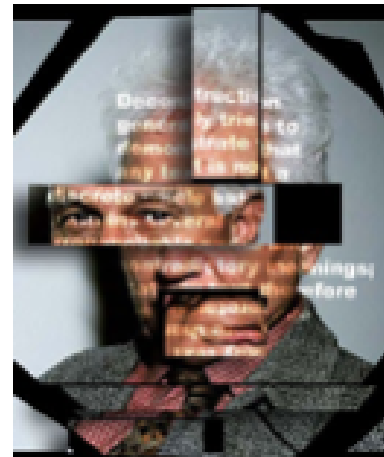
Pre-requisite: FYWR or FYWR (H). Literary Studies students take eight of these electives, and Creative Writing students take at least three, in addition to the Advanced Seminar (Fall) and Colloquium (Spring).

ENG 2010 Interpreting Texts (WRIN)

Professor David Lavinsky

T/R 3:00 - 4:15

This “gateway” course to the English major is an introduction to critical issues in the discipline of literary studies. It is not, strictly speaking, an introduction to the *history* of literary criticism or a survey of different theoretical *methods*, though of course we will develop an awareness of both throughout the term. Our mandate instead is to explore what it means to read; to understand what a text “is” and how it “works”; and to generate interpretive approaches adequate to the sophisticated critical and theoretical concerns such questions imply. Because these topics are relevant to a wide range of majors within the humanities,



students from different academic backgrounds are welcome to enroll. Readings will be similarly diverse: philosophy and literary criticism; prose, poetry, and drama from different times and places; film, visual art, or architecture; music, new media, or digital media; and perhaps also one or more excursions within New York City. Requirements include informed class participation, ungraded response papers, regular postings to an online discussion forum, a short critical essay, and a final project.

Required for all English majors and minors

ENG 2920 Literary Hauntings: *Hamlet* to Henry James

T/R 4:30 - 5:45

Professor Lauren Fitzgerald



Hauntings have long been part of the British and American literary traditions. By examining depictions of apparitions in drama, novels, poetry, and short stories from roughly 1600 to 1900, we will explore why and how well-known British and American authors used them and what we, as readers, can learn from them. Of course, ghosts appeal to audiences eager for a thrill, what Edith Wharton called “the fun of the shudder.” But they

also operate on a deeper level; as a character from Charles Dickens’ story “The Signalman” asks, “What does the spectre mean?”

We will analyze ghostly appearances as evidence not of belief in the supernatural but the literary imagination at work. For example, ghosts can advance the plot by foretelling the future or bringing to light buried mysteries from the past, and hauntings can offer incisive political and cultural critiques. Spectral manifestations in literary works are therefore often solutions to narrative problems and devices for generating meaning. Beginning with Shakespeare’s use of the ghost of Hamlet’s father, we’ll survey over 300 years of this literary

tradition, including in shorter works by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Byron, Dickens, Wilde, Poe, Dickinson, Wharton, and Woolf as well as Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and James' *The Turn of the Screw*, all in the context of their historical periods.

Fulfills the 1700-1900 requirement of the English major.

ENG 3575 Approaches to Film (1896-1968)

M/W 3:00 - 4:30

Professor Paula Geyh

For over a century, movies have captivated us and shaped our expectations and understanding of the world. This course will introduce students to the basics of analyzing and writing about film. We'll

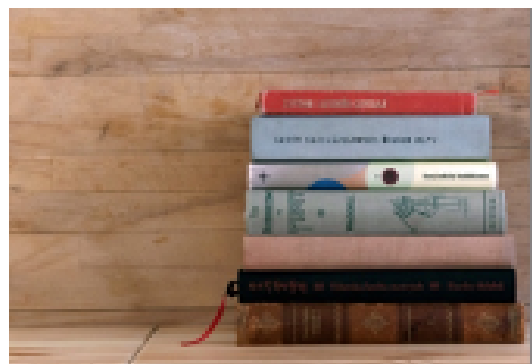
focus primarily on the close reading of elements of *mise-en-scène* (everything up there on the screen) and montage (film editing), paying particular attention to how they come together to produce meaning. We'll explore the conventions of various film genres, including screwball comedy, the Hitchcock mystery, the Western, the musical, horror, and sci-fi. Although not a "history of film," the course is organized chronologically, and it examines key movements in film history, including early silent film, classic Hollywood film, Soviet montage, German Expressionism, experimental film, and the French New Wave. Among the films we'll study are *Citizen Kane*, *It Happened One Night*, *Rear Window*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Man with a Movie Camera*, *Vertigo*, *Breathless*, *The Searchers*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Texts include Kavin, *How Movies Work* and Elsaesser and Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses*.



ENG 4001 Senior Colloquium

M 6:00-8:30

Professor Rachel Mesch



This course provides students majoring in English with a culminating, “capstone” experience, which forges links between your previous courses while directing you towards new paths of inquiry. Concluding with a Senior Final Paper and Oral Presentation, this semester-long course explicitly links the gateway course (English 2010, Interpreting Texts) with other courses in the major by creating and following connections among texts, genres, cultural contexts, and critical perspectives. In this way, we hope you will consider your own stake in the ongoing conversation of literary studies, the questions that drive your interest in the field, and the ways in which you might carry your intellectual pursuits into the future. The course joins students and faculty in dialogue around texts and the interpretive practices that contextualize them, while enhancing community among English majors through its collaborative nature. Building on the work of the Advanced Seminar, students will consult with members of the English department faculty to prepare for leading their own sessions of the course.

Required for all Creative Writing and Literary Studies students in their final Spring semester.

CORE COURSES

English majors and minors may count up to two Core courses towards their requirements.

[INTC \(Interpreting the Creative\)](#)

ENG 1001 Books on Books, Films on Film

Professor Paula Geyh

M/W 6:45-8:00

What do literature and film tell us about themselves and each other? What are the elemental forms and structures



of literary and filmic narrative? What approaches might one use for the analysis of literature and film? How is reading a novel or short story different from “reading” a film? By addressing these questions, this course will help students to develop a deeper understanding of how narrative literature and film work and how they’re related (or aren’t).

The course will begin by considering the relationship between truth and fiction, and some ideas about what “art” is and does. We’ll examine the roles of readers, film viewers, authors, directors, and critics. We’ll explore the forms and structures of literary and cinematic storytelling, and how these elements come together to produce meaning. Finally, we’ll briefly survey various approaches used by scholars and critics to analyze literature and film.

Course texts will include Zusak, *The Book Thief* and short stories by O’Brien, Lodge, and Cortázar. Films will include *The Wizard of Oz*, *Sherlock Jr.*, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, *Stranger than Fiction*, *Singin’ in the Rain*, and *Cinema Paradiso*. Critical texts will include Plato, Books VII and X of *The Republic*; Wilde, “The Decay of Lying”; Wellek & Warren, “The Nature and Modes of Narrative Fiction”; Lynn, *Texts and Contexts*; Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*; and Spadoni, *A Pocket Guide to Analyzing Film*.

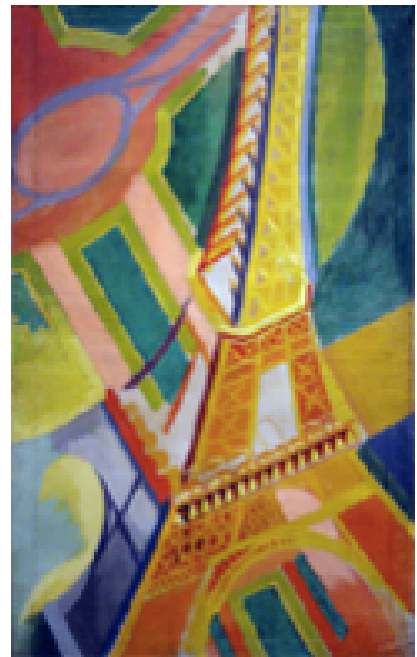
Counts towards the Media Studies Minor

ENG 1005H Parisian Views (WRIN)

T/R 4:30 - 5:45

Professor Rachel Mesch

This course explores the ways that nineteenth-century Paris inspired artistic creation through its cultivation of a variety of new ways of *seeing*, which led in turn to new forms of entertainment. The artistic products of this rich and imaginative time were in many ways responsible for contemporary mass culture and our lingering fascination with the real. Thus, as we consider the wide variety of new desires and fascinations for which Paris itself seemed wholly responsible, we will also not fail to notice the deep and lasting impact of those practices on our current modes of



entertainment and pleasure... from cinema to celebrity culture to reality TV.

We explore this fascinating history to our own cultural tastes through novels and poetry but also through the impressionist paintings that vividly documented urban change. In addition, we consider the overlapping ways through which innovations in photography, early cinema, architecture and various kinds of public exhibits (from the wax museum to the Paris morgue) addressed and channeled the feelings of excitement and anxiety around the new points of contact that the modern French city offered. Juxtaposing poems with paintings, novels with maps and photographs, we compare the different idioms through which these forms of expression attempted to respond to a shared set of questions about how to interpret the rapidly changing urban landscape. In the process, students come to understand their own city in a new way, with assignments that ask them to explore New York itself as an urban spectacle which offers, as did nineteenth-century Paris, a daily feast for the eyes. Requirements: class participation; weekly blog posts; mid-term paper; group presentation; final paper.

Counts towards the Media Studies Minor

ENG 1041 Spoiler Alert: Modern Storytelling

Across Genre

T/R 3:00 - 4:15

Professor Rachel Mesch



This class will explore modern storytelling across genres, from the novel, short story, and graphic novel to film, television, podcasts and beyond. Students will learn to engage deeply with these diverse forms as texts to be critically analyzed, and we will study the way that stories are both products of culture and determined by them. Some of the questions we'll consider: What kinds of stories are we allowed to tell in a given historical moment, and who is allowed to tell them? What determines a "happy ending" and why are certain stories controversial? How do stories help us to see ourselves? How have we moved away from endings, as a culture, and towards the serial, and what is lost and gained in this movement? What new genres of

storytelling have emerged in recent decades, and how can we understand their relationship to traditional literary forms? This class is about the need for stories and how texts—literary and otherwise—generate meaning. In addition to studying the underpinnings of narrative, we'll pay attention to the ways we consume stories: whether by reading, watching episode by episode, or binging in one gluttonous Netflix weekend. Becoming aware of our own practices will help us think about our relationships with the stories we most connect to. The class thus aims to be as much an introduction to literary and textual study as an exploration of what it means to be human in an ever-changing world.

Writings by William Goldman, Jonathan Safran Foer, Margaret Atwood, Edgar Allan Poe, Toni Morrison; numerous films, television shows, and podcasts. *Assessments:* discussion forum and viewing journals, two short essays and a final project.

[COWC \(Contemporary World Cultures\)](#)

ENG 1002 Diaspora Literature

M/W 6:45-8:00

Professor Elizabeth Stewart

This course explores literature about diaspora: “diaspora” as the abandonment of home, whether voluntary or enforced, and a search for a new home, new opportunities, and new beginnings, even as the home of the past lingers in the imagination, in memory, and in desire.

The massive and often chaotic displacements of peoples seeking refuge from violence, famine, and persecution in their homelands or opportunities for economic survival in an increasingly globalized and politically turbulent world. The twentieth century, the century of totalitarianism and genocide, had already seen seismic shifts in populations fleeing ethnic cleansing, political persecution, and specific events such as WWI and WWII, the Holocaust, African decolonization, the Indian partition, various regime changes, and nation-building.



Literature and film in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have recorded the histories and fictionalizations of such diasporic experiences. The two oldest and far-reaching global diasporas have been the Jewish and the African diasporas. Both were painful, both produced flowering cultural expression, and both continue to develop, centuries later, to this day.

Texts: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Henry Louis Gates, *Black in Latin America* (documentary); Christopher Guldbrandsen, *Stealing Africa: Why Poverty?* (documentary), Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck, *Lumumba* (film), *Sometimes in April* (film) and *I Am Not Your Negro* (documentary), Australia's Peter Weir, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (film), W. G. Sebald, *The Emigrants* (Germans, Jews, US), Austrian Jewish writer and journalist Joseph Roth, *The Wandering Jews* and selections from *The End of the World*, Czech Jewish writer Franz Kafka, "Josephine, the Singer, or: the Mouse Folk," Israeli Kafkaesque writer S.Y. Agnon, *The Parable and Its Lesson*.

ENG 1026 Face-to-Face: Complex Modern Identities in Contemporary Film
M/W 4:30-5:45
Professor Elizabeth Stewart



The basis of identity is to a large extent visual, and images are the bricks and mortar of what we eventually come to think of as cultural identity. As Aristotle claimed, we learn to become ourselves by imitating what we see (on the stage) in front of us—for us, the film screen—and we become ourselves by imitating our cultural ideals. This course explores the role cinematic images play in creating narratives about a multiplicity of cultural identities. Aristotle also insisted that it is the “ideal” character created on the stage who will aid in creating “ideal” citizens. In other words, Aristotle knew that the visual/verbal arts—in his case, theater, in our case film—have not only a representative function, but an ideological one as well. But cinematic images, like images in the other arts, have also held the function of “naturalizing” certain structures of oppression and domination as well as challenging them. This course will explore how American and

foreign film represents various racial, class, gender, ethnic, and national identities, and how they reproduce and challenge those representations at the same time. While the course pays attention to both cognition and affect in our reception of film, it will emphasize the study of affect in cinematic identification, projection, and enjoyment. FILMS: *Zelig*, *Birth of a Nation*, *Moonlight*, *Fight Club*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Rear Window*, *Caché*, *Force Majeure*, *Beasts of No Nation*.

Requirements: class participation, short responses, 2 critical essays.

Counts towards the Media Studies minor

CUOT (Cultures Over Time)

ENG 1006 The Monstrous

T/R 1:30-2:45

Professor David Lavinsky



A monster is a person who has stopped pretending. In a zombie apocalypse (“Night of the Living Dead”) or a secret alien takeover (“Invasion of the Body Snatchers”), you fall asleep one evening and when you wake up in the morning the world has changed. Your relatives and your friends, your neighbors and the friendly folks who run the dry cleaners reveal themselves as the monsters they’ve always been, beneath the lie of civilization, of affection. They look the same, but now they want to destroy you, to consume you. And you have to keep running.
-Colson Whitehead, “A Psychotronic Childhood”

Werewolves, dragons, giants, witches, demons, lepers, anthropophagi (a race of cannibals with eyes in their chests)—the Middle Ages were awash in tales of the monstrous. In this class, we will consider monsters and the monstrous from the perspectives afforded by history writing, travel accounts, early maps of the world, folklore,

drama, and literary texts. Though sometimes dismissed as the imaginings of a more credulous era, such material not only drew on classical authors but also continued to have wide currency in early modern England, persisting through the change in religious culture known as the Reformation. Indeed, as the word “monster” (derived from the Latin verb *monstrare*, or “to show”) suggests, stories of the monstrous reveal much about the cultures in which they circulated. Our readings will track medieval and early modern attitudes toward religious identity, birth and reproductive practices, gender, personhood, animality, and the supernatural. Throughout the term, we will make sense of these topics by employing methods, questions, and theoretical propositions from different academic disciplines in the humanities. Requirements include short critical essays, response papers, and regular postings to an online discussion forum.

Visit <http://www.yu.edu/yeshiva-college/ug/english/> to find out more about the YC English Department and its faculty and the English major and minor. Visit <https://www.yu.edu/yeshiva-college/ug/writing> to learn about the Creative Writing minor—and for links to the Creative Writing minor and the Media Studies minors’ webpages.