

## Fall 2025 Graduate Seminars: MFA and PhD

### **7001.001 Creative Nonfiction**

J. Wheeler                      T 3:00-5:50                      Allen 202

Lexicographer Samuel Johnson once defined the literary essay as a *loose sally of the mind*. Indeed, the long tradition of writing essays has largely been less about making arguments and more about interrogating the messy process of thought that accompanies trying to understand anything, however seemingly simple or complex. From memoir to reportage to cultural criticism and beyond, the art of the essay is at the heart of all great contemporary creative nonfiction. In this class we'll explore all the ways the essay form lends itself to artful expression of unwieldy human consciousness. We'll read widely in the essay genre, paying particular attention to contemporary essay collections. Then you'll write and workshop several beautifully messy essays of your own.

### **7006.001 Fiction: Process and Revision**

J. Davis                      Th 12:00-2:50                      Allen 212-C

This course will focus on process and revision. In addition to workshop, we will read essays on writing and revision as well as fictions that reflect these processes and techniques. Students will interrogate their own approaches to writing and revision through a variety of exercises and student presentations. We will focus on two semester-long projects: the “resurrection” of a dead fiction and the creation of a new fiction.

### **7020.001 Proseminar**

P. Rastogi                      Th 12:00-2:50                      Allen 202

This class is not a seminar in the conventional sense of the word. Instead, we should think of ourselves as an interpretive community that has come together to understand the nature and scope of English as a scholarly discipline. We will keep that general focus in mind while learning how to:

- Familiarize ourselves with conducting and submitting research at various scholarly venues.
- Write papers for seminars that can be expanded into publishable articles or reworked for conference presentations.
- Integrate theory in our research and teaching; develop the ability to critique theory; recognize its limitations as an analytical tool.
- Practice professionalization in graduate school.

You should leave the course with a clear--or at least clearer--understanding of what graduate study in English entails, preparing yourself as a student, scholar, and teacher, and broadening your skill set for non-academic jobs.

**7107.001 Poetic Forms: First Books**

A. Francisco

T 12:00-2:50

Allen 212-C

This class will focus on reading, studying, and discussing the first books of different poets, particularly poets who have come out of MFA's or workshop spaces. The idea is to begin to learn the many different ways that a book of poems can be together: why does this book have sections? Why open the book with this poem, or end on that one? How do the poems speak to one another? How do they build themes and tones that sustain throughout? As we breakdown the structures of these books, we'll also hone in on individual poems that capture our attention and analyze and discuss them to derive writing prompts in order to write our own poems. While this is primarily a craft/forms class, you will still be writing poems every week and receiving written feedback from me (you can opt for a short reading response as well if you don't feel you have a poem in you on any given week). By the end of this course you will not only have written a new batch of poems but also have a better understanding of how a first book of poems can be put together (which will help in your thesis process).

**7109.001 Interactive Storytelling**

J. Buch

Th 3:00-5:50

Allen 113

How do you tell a story when you don't control the protagonist? This course is an examination and workshop of different forms of interactive storytelling, including interactive fiction, video games, smartphone apps, augmented and virtual reality, and more. It will cover examples from popular branching narratives like Black Mirror: Bandersnatch to virtual reality, self-guided documentaries to 360-degree video experiences, hypertext fiction to AAA video games, and, of course, AI. We'll look at how technology can merge with storytelling and the challenges that presents to the artist. The course will introduce students to the tools that are available to allow them to incorporate interactivity into their own work no matter their comfort level with technology. Students will work on a semester-long interactive project of their own creation, which will be pitched, workshopped, written, and built by the end of the course. A background in programming or graphic design is not required.

**7541.001 Rhetoric, Public Memory, and Civil Rights**

J. Osborne

M 12:30-3:20

Allen 202

The memory of the civil rights movement holds an almost sacred place within the narrative of America. Boycotts, bus rides, speeches, and sacrifice undergird the shared memory of the United States collectively held by citizens even as those who lived through the era pass away. Beyond the shared memories among the public, though, are questions of how these memories initially formed. Memories are not histories or complete recollection of events, but invented narratives constructed around an occasion designed to communicate knowledge of the past for current and future audiences. This course analyzes the rhetorical choices that inform public memories of the civil rights movement – the figures we elevate (or don't), the words we recount (or don't), the places we preserve (or don't), the politics we endorse (or don't).

**7915.001      Teaching College Composition**

J. Butts                      T/Th 10:30-11:50                      Allen 113

Course is designed for graduate teaching assistants in the First-Year Writing program. Theoretical and pedagogical issues in the teaching of college writing. Students must be graduate teaching assistants teaching ENGL 1001 in the English Department or have permission of instructor.

**7920.001      Comics Studies**

B. Costello                      F 12:30-3:20                      Allen 202

This course will introduce graduate students to the burgeoning academic field of comics studies. We will consider the formal properties of comics, the history of the medium and its most common genres (memoir, superheroes, journalism) and formats (the comic strip, the comic book, the graphic novel, the webcomic), the contexts that shape comics' production and reception of comics, and the ways in which comics studies intersects with fields such as literary studies, gender and sexuality studies, African American studies, et cetera. We will also examine how our understanding of "comics" has been shaped by the evolution of "comics studies" as a field. No prior experience as a reader of comics is necessary.

**7920.002      MFA Professionalization**

A. Clay                      M 3:30-6:20                      Allen 212-C

This course will be an opportunity for MFA students to explore various aspects of professionalization specific to the field of Creative Writing. A major part of the course will involve workshopping excerpts from students' creative theses. We will also draft and workshop professional documents, including cover letters for academic jobs in Creative Writing, careers in publishing, and writing residencies. We'll also devote time to materials for students interested in pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing. Finally, we'll spend time discussing the publication process, including Zoom visits from editors and agents where we will use their advice and insights to draft pitches and cover letters. As this course is geared toward post-MFA life, students either in their second or third year of the MFA program should enroll.

**7930.001      Dissertation Workshop**

L. Coats                      W 12:30-3:20                      Allen 113

This workshop focuses on developing your PhD dissertation project ideas, getting them in writing, and refining them. You will make progress on your dissertation, whether you are just starting your prospectus or finishing a last chapter. As a class, we will spend time examining models of academic writing in our respective fields to consider issues of writing styles, methodological models, text choices, and readers and audiences. We will also refine our own processes, including the vital step of revision in response to feedback given by colleagues. Through writing and

workshopping that writing, this course is designed to help you hone your writing skills and processes to give you a better sense of your dissertation's argument as well as of the conversation you're having via that writing with those in and beyond our class.

**7921.001      Politics and Practice of Literary Study**

A. Gourdine                      W 3:30-6:20                      Allen 212-C

The Politics and Practice of Literary Study in/for the 21st-Century This course aims to examine what we do. Literary study is broadly conceived as the production and consumption of literary products. We will read literary narratives of course, engage questions of canonization, perhaps, but we will also hear the "Other" voices that influence our work, i.e., editors, agents, etc. Social media is making an economic engine of literary study, so we will engage questions of what even counts as literature.

**7962.001      Feeling Like a Victorian: Form, Media, Affect**

J. Valdez                      T 12:00-2:50                      Allen 202

The Victorians lived in an era that juxtaposed familiar cultural modes with emergent forms of culture, new media, and communications technology, from stage melodrama and the penny dreadful to the telegraph and New Journalism. This course draws on recent work in affect, narrative, and media studies to ask how this wide-ranging landscape made Victorians *feel*. How did different media and cultural forms work on the body and the emotions? How did this multimodal environment re-shape an individual's relationship to others and transform perceptions of proximity and distance?

**7971.001      Southern Childhood**

K. Henninger                      W 12:30-3:20                      Allen 202

The figure of the child is often at the center of America's most beloved and fearful representations of "the South." This interdisciplinary course will examine the extraordinary figurative power of southern childhood in U.S. literature (including graphic novels), photography, and film with regards to constructions of race and nation, and as these intersect with region, gender, class, and sexual identity. In the process, we will bring several fields that have developed substantially in the past two decades—childhood studies, critical race studies, queer theory, and southern studies—into dialogue. Topics will include childhood as a lens for critiquing and/or perpetuating social structures, Gothic childhood, "wise cracker" orphans, the queer child and the "quare chile," animal stand-ins, and new southern pastoralism. Seminar discussion, presentation, required out-of-class film viewings, and research project.