

## Hampshire College English Courses

Fall 2019

### **HACU 139 Russian Short Prose (200+ English elective)**

TuTh 1:00-2:20

Instructor: Polina Barskova

This course will explore the lesser-known masterpieces of Russian literature. Outside of the realm of great Russian novels (poignantly described by Henry James as "loose baggy monsters,") there exists the realm of exquisite shorter works of literature: short stories, tales, sketches, and essays. Exciting formal and ideological developments took place on the margins of the literary canon. We will read these pieces, talk about them, and write and play in their light: a creative writing component will be an essential part of our work. Readings include short fictions by Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Anton Chekhov, Vladimir Nabokov, Teffi, Elena Guro, Lidiia Ginzburg, Varlam Shalamov, Josef Brodsky, and others.

### **HACU 142 What is African American literature? (American literature after 1865 or Anglophone/Ethnic American or 200+ English elective)**

MonWed 1:00-2:20

Instructor: Doctor Bynum

We will examine the very meaning of African-American literature by reading a variety of major (and not so major) writers from the revolutionary era to the present. We will explore the idea of the African-American experience(s) of citizenship, race, sexuality, gender, class, and privilege. Instead of focusing upon the ways in which this literature emerges within history, we will address (across time) the various ways in which writers, orators, poets, rappers, and authors tackle these themes within literary forms: fiction, creative non-fiction, autobiography, poems, songs, etc. We will examine the following questions: What is citizenship? What does it mean to belong to a country? How do we (as individuals and members of diverse communities) experience race? Who/what determines the meaning of race? How do we (as individuals and members of diverse communities) shape our relationship to race (our race and those of others)? How does race shape our individual and communal relationship to place, gender, and ideas of sexuality? Readings and texts (printed and visual) may include works by: Phillis Wheatley, Douglass, Marrant, Hurston, Cooper, Walker.

### **HACU 166 Urban Imagination (200+ English elective)**

TuTh 9:00-10:20

Instructor: Jennifer Bajorek

This course will interrogate images and concepts of the city through literature and film set in or featuring particular cities and urban landscapes. We will explore the city's paradoxical claims to modernity, as well as its postcolonial and postmodern transformations. Specific themes and problems will include the relationship between the city and capital, the city and multiculturalism, the city and the (post-)colony; the image of the masses and of the crowd; circulation and control; the aesthetic, psychosocial, and political significance of architectural structures; urban aesthetics, genres, media, and forms; the rise of the megacity and post-industrial dystopias. Readings will be loosely organized around three cities and three major historical periods-Paris in the 19th century, New York in the 20th century, and Johannesburg in the 21st-with some comparative reflection on other contexts/periods. Literature and non-fiction essays will include texts by Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin, Shelley Rice, Debarati Sanyal, Wong Chin Foo, Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, Giannina Braschi, Ivan Vladislavic, Phaswane Mpe, and

Susana Loza. Films by Mathieu Kassovitz (La Haine, France, 1995); Jem Cohen (Lost Book Found, USA, 1996); and Neill Blomkamp (District 9, South Africa, 2009).

**HACU 190 Reading/Writing Creative Prose (200+ English elective)(creative writing elective)**

WedFri 1:00-2:20 Instructor: Alejandro Cuellar

In the first part of the semester, we will read short fiction and narrative essays from published authors in order to better understand the decisions they made and how those decisions serve their narratives. In other words, we will read and try to understand their decisions by trying to read them as writers would. Students will then complete two short critical essays that analyze the published writing. The second half of the semester, students will write 2-3 creative pieces of writing, either non-fiction or fiction, for discussion and workshop. Students will also meet individually with the instructor. Enthusiastic participation in discussion and revision is expected.

**HACU 197 Post-1945 US Literatures (American literature after 1865 or Anglophone/ethnic American or 200+ English elective)**

TuTh 10:30-11:50 Instructor: Michele Hardesty

This course explores United States literatures from the post-World War II period to the present. We will traverse a range of literary forms (prose, poetry, essay, drama, comics), movements (e.g., postmodernism, Black Arts), and periods (e.g., the Cold War, the Vietnam era, the post-9/11 period). The course is explicitly reading focused: we will read a new piece or pieces in every class in order to expose ourselves to a broad range of literary texts and contexts. The goals of the course are 1) to familiarize students with both canonical and counter-canonical literary figures, trends, and texts; and 2) to practice skills of close reading and contextualized analysis. In addition, students will write short essays, complete a team-based primary source research project, and create an annotated bibliography project. Authors include Flannery O'Connor, James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ralph Ellison, Frank O'Hara, Thomas Pynchon, Amiri Baraka, June Jordan, Maxine Hong Kingston, Pedro Pietri, Gloria Anzaldua, Leslie Marmon Silko, Toni Morrison, David Foster Wallace, Lynda Barry, and more.

**HACU 204 Utopia (300+ English elective)**

MonWed 10:30-11:50 Instructor: Karen Koehler

This course is an examination of utopian plans in architecture and art. We will evaluate the definition of sustainability as we consider whether different projections about life in the future are also harsh criticisms of the present, which often rely upon imagined views of social organizations in times past. We will look at the works of C-N Ledoux, William Morris, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Kandinsky, Buckminster Fuller, and others. We will consider the philosophical constructs of utopia in architectural drawings, buildings, and plans in relationship to film, painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. We will examine the relationship of the individual to the community, and consider how spatial constructions - real and imagined - can affect this relationship. The course begins with an examination of significant literary utopias, including the books by Sir Thomas More, Bellamy, and Morris. We examine the tensions between theory and practice, by studying the successes and failures of actual attempts at utopian communities, including recent attempts at living off the grid or with sustainable practices. We will end with a discussion of whether utopian thinking is applicable to the 21st century.

**HACU 233 Woman & Poet (300+ English elective)**

TuTh 10:30-11:50                      Instructor: Lise Sanders

In "A Room of One's Own," Virginia Woolf observed, "[The woman] born with a gift of poetry in the sixteenth century was an unhappy woman, a woman at strife against herself." What professional and personal challenges have female poets faced throughout history? How have women reconciled societal expectations of 'proper femininity' with the desire to write and publish? How has the marketplace influenced the development of poetry by women? How does the study of gender difference influence the process of reading and analyzing poems? These are some of the many questions this course will address in a wide-ranging but by no means exhaustive examination of Anglo-American women's poetry from the sixteenth century to the present. We will study the lives and works of poets ranging from Anne Bradstreet, Phillis Wheatley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Emily Bronte and Emily Dickinson, to Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, Anne Sexton, and Sylvia Plath. The course will conclude with a discussion of contemporary poetry, paying particular attention to questions of race, ethnicity, and sexuality.

**HACU 235 Ancient Epic I (300+ English elective)**

MonWed 2:30-3:50                      Instructor: Robert Meagher

The aim of this course is the comparative study of four ancient epics from Mesopotamia, Greece, India, and Ireland. The core readings comprised: the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Iliad, the Mahabharata, and the Tain. Each text will be considered both in its own historical and cultural context and in the larger shared context of ancient epic, myth, religion, and literature.

**HACU 245 American Transcendentalist (American literature before 1865 or 300+ English elective)**

TuTh 1:00-2:20                              Instructor: Alan Hodder

Even in its heyday in the 1830's and 40's, the Transcendentalist movement never included more than a few dozen vocal supporters, but it fostered several significant cultural precedents, including a couple of America's first utopian communities (Brook Farm and Fruitlands), an early women's rights manifesto (Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century), the first enthusiastic appropriation of Asian religious ideas, and, in the travel writings of Thoreau, the nation's earliest influential environmentalism. The Transcendentalists also produced some of the richest and most original literature of the nineteenth century. The purpose of this course is two-fold: to explore in depth the principal writings of the Transcendentalists in their distinctive literary, religious, and historical settings; and to examine these texts reflexively for what they may say to us today. While sampling other writings of the period, we will read extensively in the work of three premier literary and cultural figures: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau. In addition, during the last two weeks of the semester, we will consider selected poetry and prose of the belated Transcendentalist from New York City, Walt Whitman.

**HACU 248 Shakespeare Non-Humans (early British or 300+ English elective)**

MonWed 2:30-3:50                      Instructor: Jane Degenhardt

This course explores non-human life forms in Shakespeare's plays, including "monsters," "creatures," demons, mythical figures, and hybrids. What do these figures tell us about the boundaries of what is considered human or non-human? In what ways are these beings sub- or super-human in terms of ability, moral capacity, emotion and empathy, cognition, biology, or spiritual status? For example, we may consider the creaturely status of Caliban, the diabolical nature of Macbeth, the bodily deformity of Richard III, the undead status of Hamlet Sr's ghost, the personified powers of nature and magic in A Midsummer Night's Dream, or the material

unfixedness of Hermione's statue. How do Shakespeare's non-humans provide a basis for devising emerging categories of race, gender, and sexuality? How do they protect or violate the boundaries of human norms? Assignments will include a critical piece, a creative piece, a visual catalogue, and a final project.

### **HACU 266 Russian Classics Novels (300+ English elective)**

TuTh 10:30-11:50                      Instructor: Polina Barskova

In this course, we will read works by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky among others, paying close attention not only to the context of these works' creation and their aesthetic qualities-but crucially-to how they were received by their readers and then used for shaping new literary theories in the 19th and 20th centuries. We will look at Russian Formalism, Mikhail Bakhtin's Circle, Structuralism, et al. Intended for close readers, theory fiends, connoisseurs of film adaptations, and aspiring writers alike-in this class, we'll work on all of these skills.

### **HACU 268 Intro to Literary Theory (300+ English elective)**

TuTh 2:30-3:50                      Instructor: Jennifer Bajorek

This course will provide an introduction to core debates in the theory of literature, ranging from modernism to postcoloniality. Key moments and movements will include Marxism and historical materialism; post-structuralism; feminist and gender theory; and postcolonialism and its critiques. Readings will focus on theoretical texts that invite us to explore questions that readers and writers have asked about literature from the 19th century to the present. What is literature? Whose interests does it serve? Is literature universal? What role has it played in colonial and imperial projects and in anti-colonial and liberation movements? What future do we envision, today, for literary and other textual forms of fiction and imagination? Readings will be drawn from diverse cultural and national traditions, including Anglo-American, French and German, African (Francophone and Anglophone), and the Caribbean. All readings will be made available in English.

### **HACU 273 Camus (300+ English elective)**

MonWed 10:30-11:50                      Instructor: Robert Meagher

"Kafka arouses pity and terror, Joyce admiration, Proust and Gide respect, but no modern writer that I can think of, except Camus, has aroused love. His death in 1960 was felt a personal loss by the whole literate world." (Susan Sontag) This course will address the full range of his published writings - fiction, philosophy, and drama. The focus will be on the thought and art of Camus, with particular attention to the Hellenic foundations of Camus' vision, inattention to which has contributed to the most blatant and common misreadings of his work. Students will attend one common lecture per week and either of two weekly discussion groups, one conducted in English and the other in French. Students may read Camus' work in the original or in translation and may write their independent research projects in either language.

### **HACU 274 Autobiography and Memoir (300+ English elective)**

MonWed 10:30-11:50                      Instructor: Jeffrey Wallen

Autobiography is not one literary genre among others--autobiographical writing cuts across all distinctions of genre. In the last 30 years, there has been a remarkable proliferation of life writing, and also expansion into new forms, such as on the internet and graphic novels. In this course, we will read earlier forms of confession, autobiography, and memoir, and look at a wide range of recent writings, including testimony, memoirs of illness and recovery, and coming out narratives. We will also examine theories of the self, of identity, of consciousness, and of memory.

**IA 239 Creative Prose (300+ English elective)(creative writing elective)**

Mon 2:30-5:20 Instructor: Nathalie Arnold

Essential to all reading is a sense of where a story comes from, in whose voice(s) and from what position(s) it is told. Across fiction and creative nonfiction, students will experiment with a variety of literary points of view. We acknowledge that, while 'point of view' is in part a technical matter, it by definition raises questions about vision, ethics, knowledge, and intent. We will ask: What stories and whose voices do we rarely hear? Who are our narrators and what are they uniquely placed to say? What do they fail to see? What is the value of writing about what we ourselves have lived? What are the benefits and challenges of writing what we don't know, and of writing about research? What unique freedoms and limitations are inherent to each point of view? And what does story-telling have to do with social justice? Our readings will include English-language literary prose by US and international writers, as well as literature in translation.

**IA 247 Poetic Explorations (300+ English elective)(creative writing elective)**

TuTh 2:30-3:50 Instructor: Thuy Le

In this course we will explore the potency of poetic forms, focusing on the interplay between what can be sounded out, and what can only be sensed. By reading and discussing a wide range of works-from ancient fragments to contemporary experimental poems-and through guided writing exercises-we will consider the ways a poem may serve to delineate the familiar while at the same time setting off toward stranger realms. Students will be asked to think deeply about what yet remains 'unsounded' in their own lives and writing, and encouraged to find a form through which they might summon and explore that which is most potent for them.

**IA 270 On The Long Poem (300+ English elective)**

Wed 4:00-6:50 Instructor: Nathan McClain

In this workshop, students will read, question, draft, and workshop a variety of long poems. How does the writer sustain the poem's focus and direction? How does the writer emphasize the poem's intent given the expansiveness of the poem, and how does the writer negotiate the notion of possible excess in a longer poem? More importantly, how does the long poem sustain the reader's interest and attention? And what is the payoff? Students may read and consider poems by Larry Levis, Ross Gay, Tommy Pico, John Murillo, and B.H. Fairchild, among others. This workshop requires instructor permission. Students must attend the first workshop session to secure class enrollment. Please feel free to email for additional requirements.