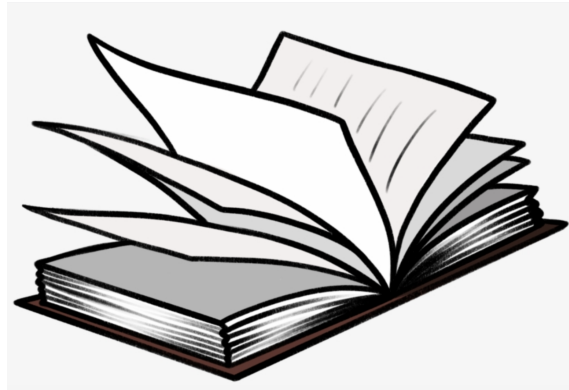


Literature Core Sections

Spring 2025



ENGL 1080.01

Literature of Service

MWF, 1

“Thank you for your service.” Through a close examination of literary works that take service as a topic, this course brings into focus the rich cultural history that lies behind the commonplace sentiment, and explores the ethical and political considerations that service implies. Some of the questions we will consider include: How does service shape the self? How do gender, class, race, and religion shape the experience of service? How does service mediate the relationship of individuals to communities—from small-scale communities of family and friendship to large-scale national and international communities? We will look at texts from various literary genres that explore service in relation to art, religion, work, war, politics, and society. Authors include Charlotte Brontë, Jamaica Kincaid, George Bernard Shaw, Ben Fountain, Phil Klay, and Kazuo Ishiguro.

Hunt

ENGL 1080.02

Sick Lit: The Culture of Contagion

TTh, 12

This course explores the complex relationships between sickness and literature. We will conduct a wide-angle survey of writings about disease, considering both how outbreaks shaped literary history and how literature shaped cultural understandings of disease. Furthermore, we ask: how has the cultural meaning of “contagion” been refracted through discourses around race, gender, sexuality, and nationalism? The focus of the class will be expansive, and some of the concerns of the class will include: the pathological metaphors used to describe literature (such as Aristotle’s *catharsis* or Artaud’s “Theater of Cruelty”), literary representations of plague, historical definitions of “health” or “capacity,” the rise of systematic governmental responses to disease, and the lessons that might be learned from a forensics of contagion. Class texts may include Susan Sontag’s *Illness as Metaphor*, Paul Lisicky’s *Later*, Margaret Edson’s *Wit*, Shakespeare’s *All’s Well That Ends Well*, and Akira Kurosawa’s *Ikiru*.

Yargo

ENGL 1080.03 ***Hidden Histories and Family Mysteries*** **TTh, 12**

Whose stories are preserved and by whom and why? What happens when stories need to be pieced together from remnants and traces, in order to be told or remembered? In this course, we will consider why some stories are told, archived, and circulated, while others are hidden away and at risk of being lost or erased. From family secrets to institutional silences, we will explore stories that are often pushed to the margins of society due to class, race, gender, sexuality and more. Sometimes these stories are hidden because of fear, shame, guilt, or other feelings on an individual or family level, while other times stories are more purposefully and systematically buried by people and institutions in power as part of a larger social or political agenda. Our goal will be to explore these contexts through various genres of writing, music, and film. Possible texts might include *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, *The Woman in Gold*, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, poetry and prose from Minne Bruce Pratt, diary entries from Anne Lister, and more.

Pauszek

ENGL 1080.04 ***Literature, Society, and the Margins*** **TTh, 1:30**

This section of Literature Core is organized around a dynamic between conceptions of collectivity or belonging and people who stand, fall, or are pushed outside them. We will ask: how do different literary works represent society, the family, the nation, or humanity? What kinds of borders are drawn around them? And how do literary works imagine the lives and thoughts of individuals with complicated relationships to these borders? As we pursue these themes, we will explore various literary genres—novels, short stories, slave narrative, poetry, drama—and techniques of literary analysis.

Howes

ENGL 1080.05 ***American Witches: In Salem & On Screen*** **TTh, 3**

This course studies the Salem Witch Trials and their many invocations in American literature, film, and popular culture. We will spend the first third of the semester in the archive, studying arrest warrants, trial transcripts, and other records from seventeenth-century Salem. Then, we will turn to literary interpretations of the trials from the twentieth century (Maryse Condé's *I, Tituba*, *Black Witch of Salem* & Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*). The final third of the course traces reincarnations of the American witch in film & pop culture. Not only will we measure our modern witches against their historical antecedents in seventeenth-century Salem, but we will also consider what *Bewitched*, *The Blair Witch Project*, and *The Craft* have to say about their own historical contexts. Drawing upon feminist, literary, and film theory, we will learn that the witch appears as an often-radical figure who possesses self-directed feminine power within a patriarchal world.

Pottroff

ENGL 1080.06 ***Pleasure Reading*** **MWF, 9**

Attitudes toward reading are full of contradictions. Reading can be considered edifying and tawdry, an essential skill and a leisure pursuit, an individual experience and a way to participate in culture and develop empathy. This section of Literature Core will explore the

concept of “pleasure reading” by thinking critically about what makes reading enjoyable from historical, theoretical, and personal perspectives. In addition to using class readings to examine literary form, we will consider questions of intersectionality, history, and culture. Texts may include works by Wilkie Collins, Zadie Smith, and Lydia Millet, films, and essays.

Wilwerding

ENGL 1080.07

Pleasure Reading

MWF, 10

Attitudes toward reading are full of contradictions. Reading can be considered edifying and tawdry, an essential skill and a leisure pursuit, an individual experience and a way to participate in culture and develop empathy. This section of Literature Core will explore the concept of “pleasure reading” by thinking critically about what makes reading enjoyable from historical, theoretical, and personal perspectives. In addition to using class readings to examine literary form, we will consider questions of intersectionality, history, and culture. Texts may include works by Wilkie Collins, Zadie Smith, and Lydia Millet, films, and essays.

Wilwerding

ENGL 1080.08

Crossing Borders

MWF, 11

In “Crossing Borders,” we will study literary texts of different genres—short fiction, novels, drama, and films— that deal with experiences of border crossing. In this course, we will take “borders” to mean not only spatial or geopolitical boundaries (e.g. between towns, states, countries, continents), but also boundaries based on social and cultural categories (gender, social class, race, ethnicity, etc.). We will be interested in the ways texts represent these borders and the people who inhabit these spaces and transgress these borders. How do literary texts and films creatively depict borders and border crossing? How do these texts imagine the way these borders shape peoples’ understanding of themselves, others, and the world? How do these texts imaginatively represent how people negotiate, transgress, and transform these borders? Since this is a literature course, we will be reading these texts primarily as literary works of art, which may be shaped by historical or sociological forces. We will pay attention to literary elements that the authors use in composing their texts and to how these elements contribute to depicting experiences of border crossing.

Puente

ENGL 1080.09

American Experiments

TTh, 9

American literature is defined by its commitment to experimentation. Walt Whitman turned his paper sideways to capture the breadth of American experience. Henry James and Edgar Allan Poe revolutionized what we think of as “ghost stories.” James Weldon Johnson questioned the line between poetry and music. And Emily Dickinson made mischief with rhymes that matched, but only on a slant. Although these authors in many ways found tradition insufficient, their work reflects intimate knowledge of and experience with older forms and with the work of their colleagues abroad. This course explores the American literary idiom as a conversation (and sometimes a debate) among passionate and informed artists, across cultures, eras, and genres. Authors include Primo Levi, Ross Gay, Nella

Larsen, Brenda Peynado, Danez Smith, Cathy Park Hong, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, William Shakespeare, and more.

Adair

ENGL 1080.10 ***Imagine Your Future*** **TTh, 10:30**

How did they once, and how do we now, imagine the world before us? It's no wonder that some of the most weird, most frightening, most awe-inspiring writing emerges from our fascination with that unanswerable question. Sci-fi, space-fiction, fantasy, utopias, dystopias...and now, AI: it's scary stuff. But we'll explore it in novels, graphic novels, poetry, and film – from the shocking imagination of Fritz Lang to the magnificent absurdity of Douglas Adams; from the utopias of Ursula K. Le Guin, to the dystopian horrors imagined by Kazuo Ishiguro and Margaret Atwood. We'll also actively try to imagine our own futures: underlying and informing our fictional readings will be the startling predictions of historian, philosopher, and futurologist Yuval Harari in *Homo Deus*. Active participation is expected.

Nugent

ENGL 1080.11 ***Gothic Literature*** **TTh, 12**

This course will study the genre from its roots in Enlightenment Rationalism through its development in tandem with Romanticism. Gothic is the first genre that is overtly psychological, imagining humans as containing two halves or parts, each in tension with the other. How this inherent split in humans works itself out in our lives is the subject of the genre and our study. Beginning with Frankenstein and Poe short stories, the course will move through Gothic's expression in detective/crime fiction and science fiction, showing its relevance to our lives via the insights provided by this dark and stormy literature.

Kaplan-Maxfield

ENGL 1080.12 ***Literature of the Fantastic*** **TTh, 12**

This course will examine literature that explores themes of "the fantastic." We'll consider that term rather generally, and use it to frame our discussions of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and other novels, plays, poems and short stories. Ultimately, this exploration will lead us to questions about why writers use invented or skewed realities to explore political, social, cultural or theological issues, and whether these texts' fantastic nature might even allow writers to reach "truths" that are otherwise unattainable.

Boucher

ENGL 1080.13 ***Gothic Literature*** **TTh, 3**

This course will study the genre from its roots in Enlightenment Rationalism through its development in tandem with Romanticism. Gothic is the first genre that is overtly psychological, imagining humans as containing two halves or parts, each in tension with the other. How this inherent split in humans works itself out in our lives is the subject of the genre and our study. Beginning with Frankenstein and Poe short stories, the course will

move through Gothic's expression in detective/crime fiction and science fiction, showing its relevance to our lives via the insights provided by this dark and stormy literature.

Kaplan-Maxfield

ENGL 1080.14 *The Lyric Impulse* TTh, 1:30

In this course we will examine two literary genres: poetry and memoir, as well as some contemporary musical artists, to understand the lyric impulse— what makes a person want to express his or her life on the page (or in the recording studio). The motives are not always clear, possibly not even relevant, but examining these texts for an understanding of the artistic, psychological, and even spiritual dimensions of the work will help us see the relevance and endurance of these forms, as well as their social and possible political implications. We'll read the work of a variety of American poets, both living and dead; books by poets Allen Ginsberg, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Matthew Olzmann, and Ocean Vuong; and memoirs by Art Spiegelman, Natasha Trethewey, and Jon Krakauer, with additional memoir excerpts by St. Augustine and American writer Ta-Nehisi Coates. Musical artists include Bruce Springsteen, Taylor Swift, Joni Mitchell, Kendrick Lamar, and The Clash.

Roberts

ENGL 1080.15 *Close Encounters* TTh, 4:30

Science fiction narratives of the past and present emphasize encounters---particularly between the human and non-human, the familiar and unfamiliar--to explore the self in an unstable new world. In this course, we will examine how sci-fi novels, films, and TV represent encounters within both technological advances and environmental apocalypses. We will consider questions of genre, asking, "What makes sci-fi?" as well as questions of purpose and audience: "What can science fiction uniquely teach us about ourselves? What makes science fiction so popular?" Texts will range from novels like H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898), Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1979), and Becky Chambers' *A Psalm for the Wild-Built* (2021) to visual media like *Star Trek* and *Arrival* (2016). In reading and watching sci-fi narratives alongside theoretical frameworks, we will see the real-world stakes of sci-fi media and tropes.

Wiegand

ENGL 1080.16 *What's the Point?: Drive, Desire, Motivation, and Lack* MWF, 10

This is the future I want. This is the experience I want. This is the person I want to be with. As strange and contradictory as some of our decisions might be, we can generally trace them back to an internal drive. If that drive is missing or incomprehensible, the results can be catastrophic—both for our sense of self and for our position in society. This course examines the ways in which literature has engaged with absences and perceived deficiencies in motivation and desire, grappling with the experiences of boredom, apathy, resistance, and asexuality. Potential texts include Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*,

Nella Larson's *Passing*, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day*.

Adler

ENGL 1080.17 ***Beyond Borders*** **MWF, 11**

In an increasingly globalized and urbanizing world, what is the role of the nation? How do authors rewrite narratives of belonging and identity? This course examines texts that make and remake the myth of the nation, interrogating the way that identity markers like race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality shape individual and collective visions of place-based identity. We will ask what is at stake in competing visions of the nation, and how discussions about nationhood are intertwined with the legacy of imperialism and with contemporary neocolonial practices. Potential texts include selected short stories by Thomas Hardy, Tommy Orange's *There There*, and Melatu Uche Okorie's *This Hostel Life*.

Mikula

ENGL 1080.18 ***Monsters and Monstrosity*** **MWF, 12**

What makes a monster? What can monstrous individuals and monstrous bodies symbolize and signify in different literary cultures? And where does monstrosity end, and humanity or animality begin? These are among the questions this class will explore when engaging with different monsters in a wide range of texts and films, including modern fiction, 19th century novels, films, and short medieval narratives. Through discussions in class about the symbolic power of monsters and the monstrous, we'll explore the ways that the fantastical and mythical can be deeply tied to very real social issues and fears. Potential assigned texts featured in the course may include Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Stephen Graham Jones' *The Only Good Indians*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the 2006 film *The Host*, and the 2022 film *NOPE*.

Alden

ENGL 1080.19 ***Burn After Reading, America!*** **MWF, 12**

Fire is a persistent theme in American media. From the flames engulfing Charlestown during the Battle of Bunker Hill, to Atlanta torched during Sherman's March to the Sea, to the Draft Card Burnings protesting the Vietnam War, to the police stations set ablaze during the Black Lives Matter protests, the United States has almost always been 'on fire.' The country's literature, poetry, nonfiction, music, and visual art is no different. In this course, we will follow America from the colonial period through to the recent past as authors, polemicists, directors, artists, and activists set fire to the status quo and, in turn, have their own work burned – literally and figuratively – in the process. Prominent texts for this course will include Phillis Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects*, David Walker's "Appeal," Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, and James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, among others. Take a tour of American history and fan the flames of controversy as you read and reflect on these incendiary multimedia mainstays.

Brown-Ramsey

ENGL 1080.20***American Kinship*****MWF, 12**

What defines a family? Is it shared blood, chosen bonds, or something deeper? In this course, we'll dive into the complexities of "kinship" and explore how connections between people – whether familial, romantic, or communal – shape both personal identity and social structures. American literature will serve as a lens to investigate how these relationships have been portrayed, challenged, and reimagined throughout history, and we will examine how kinship, in its many forms, can unite or fracture individuals and communities. Through discussions on the enduring power of family ties, friendships, romantic partnerships, and larger social bonds, we'll uncover how these relationships influence our understanding of belonging, identity, and society. Potential texts include William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, Toni Morrison's *Sula*, James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*.
Woolsey

ENGL 1080.21***Read: Dead Redemption*****MWF, 1**

What is redemption? What is justice? Revenge? How do these concepts overlap and define one another? How are any of these achieved in death or life, if at all, and who is responsible for them? From the mythology of Hercules to the 2018 game *Red Dead Redemption II*, tales of reclamation and vindication (of the self, of morality) have persisted, but has the notion of redemption changed? Are we telling the same story over and over, or can something new be offered from each text? How has Christian ideology impacted understanding of redemption, of reclamation? This section will explore how characters, form, and even settings approach the topic of redemption. In this class we will engage with a variety of works that probe questions of agency, morality, absolution at intersections of political turmoil. Potential texts include Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Alan Moore's *The Watchmen*, and James Joyce's "The Dead" among others.

Wilson**ENGL 1080.22*****The American Worker*****MWF, 3**

Workers' rights and labor organizing are at the forefront of our national consciousness these past few years, from the historic worker unionizations at Starbucks to the recent dockworkers' strike here on the East coast. At the same time, work becomes more and more invisible in a world accustomed to next-day delivery, entertainment and personal services on-demand, and now, generative AI. How did we get here and what are the stories we tell about what it means to be a worker, both then and now? What does it mean to work in a country built on enslaved and indentured labor? In this class, we will explore representations of the worker in American literature and culture, particularly those created by workers and working-class people themselves. Authors may include Harriet Jacobs, Herman Melville, Frederick Douglas, Langston Hughes, John Steinbeck, Alice Walker, and Leslie Feinberg, as well as more contemporary perspectives.

Sullivan

ENGL 1080.23 ***Love, Obsession, Delusion*** **TTh, 9**

What is love, and can it go too far? Can you love someone too much? Can artificial intelligence love, and can we be in love with artificial intelligence? This course subscribes to the idea that literature can illuminate the big questions of life and aid us in navigating the worlds we inhabit. We will explore different aspects of love—including romantic, platonic, familial, and unrequited—to investigate the thin line between love, obsession, and delusion. By studying texts from various time periods and regions, we will gain insight into the cultural and historical influences on the portrayal of love and develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of human feelings and motivations. Potential texts include Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*, and Spike Jonze's movie *Her*.

Petracca

ENGL 1080.24 ***Paths of Passage: Migration Narratives in American Literature*** **TTh, 9**

This course explores American literature through the lens of migration and the movement of bodies, focusing on how mobility—whether forced, voluntary, or contested—shapes identity and community. Through novels, essays, and poetry, we will explore themes of belonging, displacement, and transnational connections through the experiences of immigrants, migrants, and displaced individuals within and beyond US borders. Students will also examine how migrants interact with their destination, navigating various cultural, social, and political landscapes. This course invites students to think about how literature reflects the forces that drive migration and the ways bodies move through geographic, social, and cultural boundaries in pursuit of safety, opportunity, and self-determination.

Wang

ENGL 1080.25 ***Reading in Revolt*** **TTh, 4:30**

A woman eats an apple even though God tells her not to; a housewife has an affair because she is bored with her provincial middle-class life; a man is arrested one day for apparently no reason and attempts to prove himself innocent. In this class we will explore a diverse range of texts—from the Book of Genesis to Tony Morrison's 1987 novel *Beloved*—in order to think about why the theme of "revolt" has always been such a popular one in the history of literature. We will think about the internal motivations of different literary figures and what forces might cause them to oppose the social and political norms of their own time. We will also focus on the relationship between literary style and historical context in order to think about how the experimental quality of style can also be considered a form of revolt. In addition to traditional literary genres, such as fiction and poetry, we will look at a number of artistic media, such as painting, sculpture and film.

Mersky

ENGL 1080.27 ***Philosophical Novels, Plays, and Films*** **TTh, 3**

This course will focus on literary works that include a philosophical dimension. We will read mainly modern or modernist novels by authors such as Kafka, Camus, Larsen, Lispector, Kundera, Cusk, and Kang. Their complex narratives tend to contain main characters unsure of their identity and even their existence, figures who inhabit worlds in which conventionality has lost its hold on behavior. These novels pose questions such as: is life absurd or meaningful? do interrelations with others push back against the notion that life is empty? what are the conditions for actually grasping that one is having an experience? is there an immutable truth in the universe, or is truth what one creates for oneself? is human life superior to other forms of life, such as animals or even plants? which is better, lightness or weight? what is true art? does it capture reality or the unreal? We will put the novels into relation with plays, films, and philosophical as well as psychoanalytic texts that seem to complement them and illuminate their philosophical claims. Three papers will be required; writing will be one of our major emphases. Students will also be asked to visit the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston to select a painting to analyze in relation to the themes of the course.

Restuccia

ENGL 1080.28

Love and Madness

TTh, 3

Society has always tried to silence and contain “troublesome” women. Different charges have been levied against such women in order to prevent them from disrupting the normal order of things with their unruly waywardness. They have been executed as witches, hidden behind lace curtains, locked up in attics, and carted off to “insane asylums.” In this class, we will look at representations of madwomen (and some men) in literature and think about how their stories interact with the birth and evolution of the clinic (or asylum, or madhouse) in Western society. Possible texts include *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by William Shakespeare, *The Secret Scripture* by Sebastian Barry, “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gillman, *Ten Days in a Madhouse* by Nellie Bly, *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga, and *Poor Things* by Yorgos Lathimos. There may also be an opportunity to visit a local site connected to the advent of psychology right here in Massachusetts.

Crotty

ENGL 1080.31

On the Run: Refugees, Fugitives, Outlaws

TuTh 9

Outlaws, escaped slaves, refugees, and rebels are all on the run in the pages of American literature. In a nation founded in the name of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” stories of the fugitive making a break for freedom have been both troubling and enchanting. In this course, we will examine narratives of flight by American writers from the early days of the Republic through the present. We will consider how, in widely different cases, fugitivity is both an affront to the law and also a product of it. How do literary authors represent life that exists beyond, without, or against the law? Texts will include fiction, folklore, slave narratives, graphic novels, film, political writings, and memoir.

Dichter

ENGL1187.01

Narratives of Slavery

TuTh 4:30

Featuring film, visual art, and popular fiction, this course explores histories and legacies of slavery in the United States. In addition to looking at how our range of creative forms narrate US slavery, we will consider how creative depictions of the institution allow us to think differently and more critically about the racial and gendered identities defined and refined in US slavery as well as intra-/inter-racial relationships that derive from them. In *Narratives of Slavery*, students will examine how whiteness and white privilege were defined, then organized to empower and serve the master class; how whiteness as a racial/class category made blackness, and how the resulting power/privilege dynamic is visible in our primary texts, and reflected in our current social and political contexts. By the end of the semester, students will hone the following skills: read and interpret different types of creative narratives, debate and test ideas in class discussion and in written essays, make use of secondary sources to interpret primary narratives, and identify how legacies of slavery manifest in 21st century US. Assignments include short response papers, one longer essay (developed from a response paper), and a take-home midterm exam.

Frederick