ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Linsly-Chittenden Hall, 203.432.2233
http://english.yale.edu
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair
Jessica Brantley

Director of Graduate Studies
Catherine Nicholson (106a LC, 203.432.2226)

Professors
Jessica Brantley, Leslie Brisman, David Bromwich, Ardis Butlerfield, Jill Campbell, Joe Cleary, Michael Denning, Wai Chee Dimock, Paul Fry (Emeritus), Jacqueline Goldsby, Langdon Hammer, Margaret Homans, David Scott Kastan, Jonathan Kramnick, Lawrence Manley, Stefanie Markovits, Stephanie Newell, John Durham Peters, David Quint, Marc Robinson, Caleb Smith, Peter Stallybrass (Visiting), Robert Stepto (Emeritus), Katie Trumpener, Michael Warner, Ruth Bernard Yeazell

Associate Professors
Marta Figlerowicz, Catherine Nicholson, Emily Thornbury, R. John Williams

Assistant Professors
Anastasia Eccles, Marcel Elias, Ben Glaser, Alanna Hickey, Cajetan Iheka, Naomi Levine, Priyasha Mukhopadhyay, Joseph North, Jill Richards, Sunny Xiang

FIELDS OF STUDY
Fields include English language and literature from Old English to the present, American literature, and Anglophone world literature.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE
In order to fulfill the basic requirements for the program, a student must:

1. Complete twelve courses—six courses with at least one grade of Honors and a maximum of one grade of Pass by July 15 following the first year; at least twelve courses with grades of Honors in at least four of these courses and not more than one Pass by July 15 following the second year. One of these twelve courses must be The Teaching of English (ENGL 990). Courses selected must include one medieval, one early-modern, one eighteenth- and/or nineteenth-century, one twentieth- and/or twenty-first-century.

2. Satisfy the language requirement by the end of the second year. Two languages appropriate to the student’s field of specialization, each to be demonstrated by (a) passing a translation exam administered by a Yale language department or (for languages not tested elsewhere at Yale) by the English department; (b) passing an advanced literature course at Yale (graduate or upper-level undergraduate, with director of graduate studies [DGS] approval); or (c) passing both ENGL 500 and ENGL 501.

3. Pass the oral examination before or as early as possible in the fifth term of residence. The exam consists of questions on five topics, developed by the student in consultation with examiners and subject to approval by the DGS.

4. Submit a dissertation prospectus, normally by January 15 of the third year.

5. Teach a minimum of two terms, since the English department considers teaching an integral part of graduate education. In practice, most students teach between four and six terms.


Upon completion of all pre-dissertation requirements, including the prospectus, students are admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. Admission to candidacy must take place by the end of the third year of study.

COMBINED PH.D. PROGRAMS

English and African American Studies
The Department of English Language and Literature also offers, in conjunction with the Department of African American Studies, a combined Ph.D. degree in English Language and Literature and African American Studies. For further details, see African American Studies.

English and Film and Media Studies
The Department of English Language and Literature also offers, in conjunction with the Film and Media Studies Program, a combined Ph.D. degree in English Language and Literature and Film and Media Studies. For further details, see Film and Media Studies.

English and History of Art
The Department of English Language and Literature also offers, in conjunction with the Department of the History of Art, a combined Ph.D. degree in English Language and Literature and History of Art. The requirements are designed to emphasize the interdisciplinarity of the combined degree program.
Course work In years one and two, a student in the combined program will complete sixteen courses: ten seminars in English, including The Teaching of English (ENGL 990) and one course in each of four historical periods (Medieval, Renaissance, eighteenth–nineteenth century, twentieth–twenty-first century), and six in History of Art, including HSAR 500 and one course outside the student’s core area. Up to two cross-listed seminars may count toward the number in both units, reducing the total number of courses to fourteen.

Languages Two languages pertinent to the student’s field of study, to be determined and by agreement with the advisers and directors of graduate studies. Normally the language requirement will be satisfied by passing a translation exam administered by one of Yale’s language departments. One examination must be passed during the first year of study, the other by the end of the third year.

Qualifying paper History of Art requires a qualifying paper in the spring term of the second year. The paper must demonstrate original research, a logical conceptual structure, stylistic lucidity, and the ability to successfully complete a Ph.D. dissertation. The qualifying paper will be evaluated by two professors from History of Art and one professor from English.

Qualifying examination Written exam: addressing a question or questions having to do with a broad state-of-the-field or historiographic topic. Three hours, closed book, written by hand or on a non-networked computer. Oral exam: given one week after the written exam, covering six fields, including three in English (question periods of twenty minutes each, covering thirty texts each, representing three distinct fields of literary history) and three in History of Art (twenty-five minutes each, fields to be agreed on in advance with advisers and DGS). Exam lists will be developed by the student in consultation with faculty examiners.

Teaching Two years of teaching—one course per term in years three and four—are required: two in English and two in History of Art.

Prospectus The dissertation prospectus must be approved by both English and History of Art. The colloquium will take place in the spring term of the third year of study. The committee will include at least one faculty member from each department. As is implied by its title, the colloquium is not an examination, but a meeting during which the student can present ideas to a faculty committee and receive advice from its members. The colloquium should be jointly chaired by the directors of graduate studies of both departments.

First chapter reading Students will participate in a first chapter reading (also known as a first chapter conference) normally within a year of advancing to candidacy (spring term of year four). The dissertation committee, including faculty members from both departments, will discuss the progress of the student’s work in a seminar-style format.

Dissertation defense The hour-long defense is a serious intellectual conversation between the student and the committee. Present at the defense will be the student’s advisers, committee, and the directors of graduate studies in both English and History of Art; others may be invited to comment after the committee’s questioning is completed.

English and Renaissance Studies

The Department of English Language and Literature also offers, in conjunction with the Renaissance Studies Program, a combined Ph.D. in English Language and Literature and Renaissance Studies. For further details, see Renaissance Studies.

MASTER’S DEGREES

M.Phil. See Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations.

M.A. (en route to the Ph.D.) Students enrolled in the Ph.D. program may receive the M.A. upon completion of seven courses with at least one grade of Honors and a maximum of one grade of Pass, and the passing of one foreign language.

Terminal Master’s Degree Program Students enrolled in the master’s degree program must complete either seven term courses or six term courses and a special project within the English department (one or two of these courses may be taken in other departments with approval of the DGS). There must be at least one grade of Honors, and there may not be more than one grade of Pass. Students must also demonstrate proficiency in one foreign language (as described under Special Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree, above).

COURSES

ENGL 500a / LING 500a / MDVL 665a, Old English I  Emily Thornbury
The essentials of the language, some prose readings, and close study of several celebrated Old English poems.

ENGL 501b / LING 501b / MDVL 510b, Beowulf and the Beowulf Complex  Emily Thornbury
A close reading of Beowulf in Old English, within the modern and medieval critical landscapes. Prerequisite: a strong working knowledge of Old English (typically ENGL 500, or the equivalent).

ENGL 594b, Reading, Writing, and Printing God: The English Bible in Britain and America, 1390–1900  Peter Stallybrass
This course examines reading, writing, printing, and interpreting the Bible in Britain and America from 1390 to 1900, beginning with Wycliffite manuscripts and ending with canvassing books for marketing the Bible in a range of formats throughout the United States. The reading practices that we explore include typological interpretation, commonplacing, note-taking at sermons, and the catechizing of children; we also analyze illustrations as both interpretations and counter-narratives. The seminar meets in Beinecke Library, drawing upon its outstanding primary sources from medieval Bibles, books of hours, and children’s primers to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century translations of the Bible to texts by Julian of Norwich, John Donne, George Herbert, John Milton, and Mary Rowlandson, to the spectacular range of early modern English manuscripts in the Osborn collection.
ENGL 630b, Death to Tyrants!

“There can be slain no sacrifice to God,” Seneca’s Hercules declares, “more acceptable than an unjust and wicked king.” For Cicero, tyrants show the exact opposite of the spirit of fraternity that should govern human interactions, and so, as he puts it in De officiis, “that pestilent and abominable race should be exterminated from human society.” The Reformation’s white-hot religious controversies, and humanist reengagement of classical authors, lead the question of tyrannicide frequently to bubble to the surface of early modernity. We examine several examples of Protestant thought on tyrannicide, including that of François Hotman, John Knox, and George Buchanan, a tradition energetically taken up by John Milton. We must also recognize, however, that immediately after killing the tyrant Lycus, Seneca’s Hercules is visited by a madness that leads him to kill his wife and children. Noble and necessary as it might be, tyrannicide is also symptom and expression of a deep wrench in right order. So it is especially in early modern tragedy, that genre obsessed with ills spanning human and cosmic realms, that we see tyrannicide explored in all of its complexity. That tendency is visible in tragedies by Buchanan, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Milton. At bottom, early modern engagements of tyrannicide are also engagements of the foundations of political society, and meditations on the proper relationship between subject and sovereign. Here we find leitmotifs of early modern political thought that continue to be revolutionary in late modernity: sovereignty is delegated from the people, not transferred to the sovereign, and so can be revoked when the people so choose; citizenship must include the right of resistance—otherwise political life is a form of slavery. This course follows such ideas across English and Continental, Protestant, and Catholic thinkers, in literary and nonliterary texts. Major requirements are a conference-style seminar presentation giving rise to a brief paper of 8–10 pages; these may be used as the foundation of the final paper.

ENGL 672a / CPLT 672a, Milton David Quint

This course studies Milton’s poetry and some of his controversial prose. We investigate the relation of the poetry to its historical contexts, focusing on the literary, religious, social, and political forces that shaped Milton’s verse. We survey and assess some of the dominant issues in contemporary Milton studies, examining the types of readings that psychoanalytic, feminist, Marxist, and historicist critics have produced. A brief oral report and a term paper (as well as a prospectus and preliminary bibliography for the term paper) required.

ENGL 699a / CPLT 658a / ITAL 946a / MDVL 946a, Early Modern Ecologies: Representing Peasants, Animals, Labor, Land Jane Tylus

To what extent does writing about the land and depicting landscapes in early modern Europe reflect a new interest in engaging the boundaries between the human and nonhuman? What does it show about the commitment of artists and intellectuals to representing cultures and environments not necessarily their own? And how did writers and artists seek to legitimize their intellectual labors by invoking images of agricultural work? Since antiquity, artists have often chosen to make the countryside and its human and nonhuman denizens symbols of other things: leisure, song, exile, patriotism, erotic sensibilities, anti-urbanism. Early Christianity in turn embraced the desert—and the countryside—as a space for spirituality. We explore these origins and turn to the early modern period, when such interests exploded into poems, novels, plays, and paintings—a period that coincided with new world discoveries and new possibilities for “golden ages” abroad. We read works by Virgil, St. Jerome, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Tasso, Seamus Heaney, and others, and take at least one trip to a local gallery (in New Haven or New York). Finally, we explore recent work in ecocriticism and environmental studies in order to grapple with ancient and early modern understandings of the natural world.

ENGL 719b, Ecopoetics, Enlightenment to Romanticism Jonathan Kramnick

This is a course on poetry and ecology during the long eighteenth century and on the tools and theories of the environmental humanities. We look closely at how genres like pastoral, georgic, locodescriptive, and the greater Romantic lyric considered the countryside, the city, and imperial periphery as particular kinds of spaces and environments. We also look at how ideas of landscape, wilderness, and the garden, of stranger sociability and urban publicity, and of the exotic or oceanic or savage took shape against the backdrop of enclosure and industrialism at home and of empire and colonialism abroad. We pay particular attention to the relation between form and phenomenology in the depiction of ecological surround. Writers include Denham, Gay, Swift, Pope, Thomson, Dyer, Cowper, Smith, Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley, read alongside theory and history from Raymond Williams to reflections on the Anthropocene.

ENGL 723b / CPLT 646b, Rise of the European Novel Katie Trumpener

In the eighteenth century, the novel became a popular literary form in many parts of Europe. Yet now-standard narratives of its “rise” often offer a temporally and linguistically foreshortened view. This seminar examines key early modern novels in a range of European languages, centered on the dialogue between highly influential eighteenth-century British and French novels (Montesquieu, Defoe, Sterne, Diderot, Laclos, Edgeworth). We begin by considering a sixteenth-century Spanish picaresque life history (Lazarillo de Tormes) and Madame de Lafayette’s seventeenth-century secret history of French court intrigue; contemplate a key sentimental Goethe novella; and end with Romantic fiction (an Austen novel, a Kleist novella, Pushkin’s historical novel fragment). These works raise important issues about cultural identity and historical experience, the status of women (including as readers and writers), the nature of society, the vicissitudes of knowledge—and novelistic form. We also examine several major literary-historical accounts of the novel’s generic evolution, audiences, timing, and social function, and historiographical debates about the novel’s rise (contrasting English-language accounts stressing the novel’s putatively British genesis, and alternative accounts sketching a larger European perspective). The course gives special emphasis to the improvisatory, experimental character of early modern novels, as they work to reground fiction in the details and reality of contemporary life. Many epistolary, philosophical, sentimental, and Gothic novels present themselves as collections of “documents”—letters, diaries, travelogues, confessions—carefully assembled, impartially edited, and only incidentally conveying stories as well as information. The seminar explores these novels’ documentary ambitions; their attempt to touch, challenge, and change their readers; and their paradoxical influence on “realist” conventions (from the emergence of omniscient, impersonal narrators to techniques for describing time and place).
ENGL 742a / WGSS 769a, Fiction, Didacticism, and Political Critique: 1789–1818  Jill Campbell
A study of writings that seek a specific effect in their reader—whether didactic instruction and moral formation, or an instigation to take action toward political change—and their uneasy alliance in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the literary genre of prose fiction. How do writings that seek to inform or reform the real person or the real world put fictional narratives to use? How is the genre of the novel shaped, explicitly or implicitly, by writing to a specific "end"? Texts include novels, tales for children, life-writing, poetry with a "cause," polemical essays; possible authors include Olaudah Equiano, Edmund Burke, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Inchbald, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Anna Barbauld, and Mary Shelley.

ENGL 769b, Wordsworth and Coleridge  Paul Fry
A thoroughgoing reading of Wordsworth's poetry and prose from 1796 to 1815, with some consideration of his earlier poetry and selected later poems. Emphasis falls on those qualities that justify the traditional view—perhaps never yet satisfactorily explained—that he is an original poet. Thus he is viewed against the backdrop of the literary tendencies from which he emerges. Even more importantly, he is read not so much in collaboration with as in opposition to Coleridge, to the reading of whose poetry and prose no more than three weeks are devoted. Considerable attention is also devoted to the important history of Wordsworthian criticism.

ENGL 774a, Romantic Poetry  Leslie Brisman
An introduction to the work of Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, with some attention to Byron and the minor poets of this rich period of poetic innovation and revolutionary spirit.

ENGL 830a / HSR 678a, Portraiture and Character from Hogarth to Woolf  Ruth Yeazell
Case studies in the visual and verbal representation of persons in Anglo-American painting and fiction, with particular attention to novels that themselves include portraits or address relations between the two media. Novelists tentatively include Henry Fielding, Jane Austen, Henry James, Edith Wharton, Oscar Wilde, and Virginia Woolf. Painters include William Hogarth, Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Lawrence, James McNeill Whistler, John Singer Sargent, and Vanessa Bell. Selected readings in recent theories of fictional character and in the history and theory of portraiture. Whenever possible, we draw on paintings in Yale's collections.

ENGL 832b / AMST 888b, Food in Literature, Culture, and Science  Wai Chee Dimock
From the global histories of sugar and salt to the latest research on chicken and antibiotics, this course explores some key texts—by Gabriel García Márquez, Sinclair Lewis, Ruth Ozeki, Monique Truong, Jonathan Safran Foer, Octavia Butler, and Margaret Atwood—both as works of luminous imagination and as entry points to deeper scientific knowledge, encouraging cross-pollination among disciplines.

ENGL 853b / AMST 848b, Inventing the Environment in the Anthropocene  Michael Warner
Although the concept of the Anthropocene can be dated in various ways, two of the most important benchmarks seem to be the beginning of industrial production in the late eighteenth century and the uptick in carbon dioxide emissions from the mid-nineteenth century (petroleum came into use during the Civil War). The period between these two moments is also that in which the modern language of the environment took shape, from Cuvier’s discovery of extinction and Humboldt’s holistic earth science to the transformative work of Thoreau and George P. Marsh. This course shuttles between the contemporary debate about the significance and consequences of the Anthropocene and a reexamination of that environmental legacy. We look at the complexity of “nature,” beginning with the Bartrams, Jefferson, Cuvier, and the transatlantic literatures of natural history; georgics and other genres of nature writing; natural theology; ambiguities of pastoral in American romantic writing (Bryant, mainly); the impact of Humboldt (Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman); westward expansion and Native American writing about land; Hudson School painting and landscape architecture. We also think about the country/city polarity and the development of “grid” consciousness in places like New York City. One aim is to assess the formation and legacy of key ideas in environmentalism, some of which may now be a hindrance as much as a foundation. Secondary readings from Leo Marx, Henry Nash Smith, and William Cronon, as well as more recent attempts to reconceive environmental history (Joachim Radkau), ecocriticism (Lawrence Buell), and related fields, as well as science journalism (Elizabeth Kolbert). Students are invited to explore a wide range of research projects; and one assignment is to devise a teaching unit for an undergraduate class on the same topic.

ENGL 879b / CPLT 512b, Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary  David Bromwich
The course surveys the essay as a genre of writing and thinking, from Montaigne to Virginia Woolf. Among the authors are Bacon, Hume, Johnson, Hazlitt, Emerson, Shaw, Gandhi, Sartre. This is a cross-listed graduate seminar in English and Comparative Literature in the Ivy Consortium, taught in alternate weeks at Columbia University and Yale. We test Adorno’s thesis that the essay is the distinctively modern and emancipatory form of writing.

ENGL 902b, Elizabeth Bishop  Langdon Hammer
An experiment in intensive author-centered reading, this course studies the life, writing, and visual art of Elizabeth Bishop using tools from biography, gender studies, queer theory, object relations psychoanalysis, and phenomenology. We read against chronology and the focus on single poems in conventional close reading. Topics for discussion include the pressures on and possibilities for a woman poet’s career in the mid-twentieth-century United States; the relations between poetry and painting, verse and prose, and private and public writing; the idea of minor literature, and the figure of the minor; Bishop in Brazil and as a hemispheric poet; houses; epistololarity; secularity and religion; the role of objects and the senses in subject formation; the ordinary, perverse, and fantastic; tourism, cosmopolitanism, and the local; the poetics of description. We use archives in the Yale Collection of American Literature at Beinecke Library and in Special Collections, Vassar College Library. In addition to Bishop, readings include, among others, Christopher Bollas, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, Melanie Klein, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Marion Milner, and D.W. Winnicott.
ENGL 912a, Formalism and Lyric Theory  Benjamin Glaser
This course asks how contemporary approaches to formalism and formalist reading enhance our understanding of poetics and poetic genre, and vice versa. From a survey of twenty-first-century formalisms (Russian, New Critical, Frankfurt School), the course builds to very recent reinvestments in formalism including materialist approaches. We consider, in parallel, debates surrounding lyric, including historicist accounts of how forms (rhetorical, prosodic, media) circulate and gain currency. Finally, we ask how new genealogies and disciplines of poetic form expand and deform the anglophone canon. In particular, how can form be recognized as at once racialized and necessary to the analysis of race (i.e., through the concept of racial form)?

ENGL 923a / FILM 652a, Media Theory  John Peters
This course provides an intensive introduction to foundational texts in media theory from the early to the later twentieth century. The course makes no effort to cover the current array of media theories. Rather, it brings current concerns to spectacularly rich historical sources. We study intellectual traditions from the United States, Canada, UK, France, and Germany in particular, though students with interests in other traditions—such as Latin America, Japan, Eastern Europe—are welcome. Authors may include Adorno, Arendt, Benjamin, Dewey, Du Bois, Heidegger, Horkheimer, Innis, Kittler, Leroi-Gourhan, Lippmann, McLuhan, Mumford, Simondon, Wiener, Raymond Williams, and others. Ongoing questions include community, democracy, power, race, gender, ideology, culture, industry, technics, cybernetics, embodiment, modernity, and space and time.

ENGL 936b, Modern European Drama  Marc Robinson
The major European playwrights active from 1879 (the premiere of Ibsen’s Doll’s House) to 1989 (the death of Beckett) were responsible for theatrical advances of continuing influence and importance. This seminar traces the advent of dramatic naturalism and realism (early Ibsen and Strindberg, the major plays of Chekhov); the contrary movement toward symbolist subtlety and expressionist urgency (late Strindberg and Ibsen, early Brecht); the effort to shoulder the burden of history and engage contemporary politics (Shaw, middle- and late-period Brecht); and the opening of drama to the ambiguities of religion and philosophy (Beckett). The seminar is grounded in close readings of representative plays but also considers how dramas change under the pressures of performance. Readings in theater theory, manifestos, and criticism supplement the primary texts.

ENGL 973a / FILM 973a, Modernity and the Time of Literature  John Williams
This course examines transformations in temporality that occurred in the sciences and arts during the twentieth century. From the arrival of Einsteinian relativity to more contemporary proofs on quantum nonlocality, the question of time in the twentieth century threatened to overturn some of our oldest assumptions about cause and effect, duration, history, presentness, and futurity. These new temporalities were as scientifically and philosophically vexing as they were rife with spiritual and aesthetic possibility—a dynamic reflected in the literary and artistic forms that were central to these transformations. Our reading reflects this deeply cross-cultural and interdisciplinary trajectory, including histories of science and technology (Peter Galison, N. Katherine Hayles, David Kaiser), philosophies of time (Heidegger, Bruno Latour, Bernard Stiegler, McLuhan, Luhmann), critical theories of temporal form (Derrida, Adorno, Jameson, Pamela Lee, Kojin Karatani), a wide array of literary texts (William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, Ursula K. Le Guin, Tom McCarthy, and others), as well as important cinematic innovations (Jodorowsky, Godard, Kubrick). What is the “time” of literature? of film? How does art transform or reinforce theories of temporal flow? How do new technologies of composition and circulation alter the temporal effects of a given work? What was the “End of History”?

ENGL 990b, The Teaching of English  Benjamin Glaser and Rasheed Tazudeen
An introduction to the teaching of literature and of writing with attention to the history of the profession and to current issues in higher education such as the corporatization of the university, the role of the state in higher education, and the precarity of the humanities at the present time. Weekly seminars address a series of issues about teaching: guiding classroom discussion; introducing students to various literary genres; addressing race, class, and gender in the teaching of literature; formulating aims and assignments; grading and commenting on written work; lecturing and serving as a teaching assistant; preparing syllabuses and lesson plans.

ENGL 992a, Advanced Pedagogy  Heather Kleemann
Training for graduate students teaching introductory expository writing. Students plan a course of their own design on a topic of their own choosing, and they then put theories of writing instruction into practice by teaching a writing seminar. Prerequisite: open only to graduate students teaching ENGL 114.

ENGL 993a and ENGL 994b, Prospectus Workshop  Catherine Nicholson
A two-term workshop in which students develop, draft, revise, and present their dissertation prospectuses, open to all third-year Ph.D. students in English.

ENGL 995a or b, Directed Reading  Staff
Designed to help fill gaps in students’ programs when there are corresponding gaps in the department’s offerings. By arrangement with faculty and with the approval of the DGS.

ENGL 996b, Journal Article Workshop  Marta Figlerowicz and Caleb Smith
A workshop for graduate students revising a seminar paper, dissertation chapter, or other draft for publication in an academic journal. Topics of discussion include the genres and forms of critical writing; mechanics and diplomacy of peer review; techniques and ethics of
citation; and how to be a helpful reader of others’ work in progress. Applications, including article drafts, to be reviewed in fall 2020 for participation in the spring 2021 workshop. Assignments include weekly readers’ reports on others’ drafts.  

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