ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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

Chair
Langdon Hammer

Director of Graduate Studies
Caleb Smith (106a LC, 203.432.2226)


Associate Professors Catherine Nicholson, Anthony Reed, Emily Thornbury, R. John Williams

Assistant Professors Anastasia Eccles, Marta Figlerowicz, Ben Glaser, Alanna Hickey, 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 ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS
Application should be accompanied by scores from the GRE and the GRE “Literature in English” subject test, a personal statement of purpose, and a writing sample of up to twenty pages.

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.


Upon completion of all predissertation 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 (up to two sections per course) 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 programs, 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 History of Art

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 Ph.D. Requirements, above).

COURSES

For expanded course descriptions, please visit the English department website: http://english.yale.edu/courses.

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

ENGL 502b / MDVL 666b, Old English II Emily Thornbury
Readings in a variety of pre-Conquest vernacular genres, varying regularly, with supplementary reading in current scholarship. Current topic: late antique romance in Anglo-Saxon England, with readings including Apollonius of Tyre, Legend of the Seven Sleepers, and Andreas.
ENGL 534b, Piers Plowman  Traugott Lawler
A study of Piers Plowman, William Langland’s restless and wide-ranging poem, produced in three versions between the 1360s and about 1390. We read the C text, slowly and carefully, and a number of critical and interpretative essays as well.

ENGL 537a, The Gawain Poet  Jessica Brandley
The course offers a contextual study of four of the greatest (and most enigmatic) Middle English poems—Pearl, Patience, Cleanness, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. At its center is British Library MS Cotton Nero A.Ⅹ, the single medieval book that contains them all. In addition to reading the poems closely in their manuscript context, we examine associated artworks, from the twelve illustrations in the Cotton MS that constitute a medieval reading of the poems, to St. Erkenwald, a poem preserved elsewhere that some argue was written by the same author. Finally, we think about the modern reception of the poems through a serious engagement with scholarly debate surrounding them, and also through comparative work with translations.

ENGL 574a / CPLT 684a / ITAL 720a / RNST 684a, Renaissance Epic  Jane Tylus and David Quint
This course looks at Renaissance epic poetry in relationship to classical models and as a continuing generic tradition. It examines epic type scenes, formal strategies, and poetic architecture. It looks at themes of exile and imperial foundations, aristocratic ideology, and the role of gender. The main readings are drawn from Vergil’s Aeneid, Lucan’s De bello civili, Dante’s Purgatorio, Tasso’s Gerusalemme liberata, Camões’s Os Lusíadas, and Spenser’s Faerie Queene.

ENGL 592a / HIST 613a, English Paleography and Manuscript Culture, 1500–1750  Kathryn James
This course provides a detailed introduction to early modern English paleography and manuscript cultures. The primary objective is for students to acquire fluency in reading the main English hands encountered in the early modern archive. Students become familiar with the documentary forms and methods of production of early modern British manuscripts and with the techniques and terms by which these are understood and described. Topics include Anglicana, secretary, chancery, and italic hands; alphabets; writing techniques; abbreviations; numbers; shorthand and cipher; transcription; the forms and vocabulary associated with early modern letters, sermon-notes, diaries, annotations, inventories, and other documentary forms. The course meets in the Beinecke Library and is based on the library’s early modern English manuscript collections.

ENGL 593b, Printing for Manuscript  Peter Stallybrass
The concept of “manuscript” is a back formation, dependent upon the prior concept of printing. This course uses the Beinecke’s collections to explore how, from Gutenberg to the signatures on credit cards, printing has revolutionized writing by hand. We then turn to the problem of the belated fetishizing of literary manuscripts. For it was only in the eighteenth century that significant numbers of these manuscripts began to be collected. To what extent did the literary archives that began to preserve these manuscripts transform authorship and the very concept of “literature”? And how does printing stimulate our desire for the manuscript traces of the hands of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson—and of earlier writers like Shakespeare?

ENGL 603b, Shakespeare and Religion  David Kastan
This course is about how various understandings of religion (and religions) circulate through Shakespeare’s plays, as they were written, performed, and read, and as they have continued to be sometimes rewritten, performed, and read. We are not much interested in biography (there isn’t much biography to be interested in), and the course is not much interested in Shakespeare’s own religious beliefs (which seem to us unknowable). What is clear however is that religion is central in the plays; it haunts them (think Hamlet) and was in so many ways inescapable in Shakespeare’s England. Sometimes the plays register this fact in fundamental encounters of characters and ideas and sometimes in the sheer ordinariness in the dialogue (for example, the reflexive “God b’wi’ you” in leave taking). We read a number of plays (including Hamlet, Measure for Measure, and Othello), various historical sources, and theological and philosophical texts, as we try to understand how religion functions in these plays as an essential, but often perplexing dimension of early modern identity (and perhaps of our own).

ENGL 606a, History and Historical Drama in the Age of Shakespeare  Lawrence Manley
A study of the representation of history in the English stage in the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. Plays by Shakespeare, Marlowe, Peele, Heywood, Ford, and others in relation to both nondramatic forms of historical writing and contemporary affairs.

ENGL 670b, Religion, Literature, and Politics in Early Modern Britain  Bruce Gordon and John Rogers
This course explores the protean expressions of religious belief, satire, and polemic in the literary cultures of early modern Britain by attending to the contested political and physical cultures in which they flourished. Through engagement with prose, theater, and music, students explore the diverse interrelationships of texts, images, and sacred architecture. On our visits to significant sites, we consider the ways in which literary and religious imaginings were woven together. We engage with and learn from some of the most creative and thoughtful literary, historical, and cultural scholars working on early modern Britain, who will help us to think in expansive and interdisciplinary ways about language, faith, and authority.

ENGL 672b / CPLT 672b, 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 7744, 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 827b / CPLT 554b, Novel Minds: The Representation of Consciousness from Austen to Woolf  Ruth Yezell
Close study of selected novels by Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, and Virginia Woolf, with particular attention to the representation of consciousness and the development of the free indirect style. Our reading of fiction is supplemented by narrative theory drawn from James, Wayne Booth, Káitě Hamburger, Ann Banfield, Gérard Genette, Dorrit Cohn, and others.

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), eco-criticism (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 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. Topics for discussion include the shape of 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 as a hemispheric poet; epistolarity; the role of objects and the senses in subject formation; the ordinary, perverse, and fantastic; tourism, cosmopolitanism, and the local; the place of literature in the postwar world order; the poetics of description. In addition to Bishop, readings include, among others, Svetlana Alpers, Christopher Bollas, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, Melanie Klein, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Marion Milner, and D.W. Winnicott.

ENGL 918b / AFAM 649b / AMST 624b / WGSS 624b, Psychoanalysis and the Critical Tradition in the Humanities  Greta LaFleur
This seminar introduces students to major works in the psychoanalytic tradition, including but not limited to works by Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, and Jacques Lacan. It is designed to allow graduate students to develop better fluency in psychoanalytic vernaculars, frameworks, and large-scale theories in order to gain a deeper and more nuanced appreciation of the persistence of psychoanalytic ways of thinking in the broader critical tradition in the humanities. Importantly, this is not a seminar dedicated solely to the psychoanalytic tradition; rather, it introduces students to seminal works by some of the major thinkers of early twentieth-century psychoanalytic thought in order to build a basis from which to understand the impact of psychoanalysis on the development of later twentieth-century critical movements, including woman-of-color feminist theory, queer theory, postcolonial studies, and black studies. In other words, the course provides a graduate-level introduction to the intellectual history and critical aftermath of psychoanalysis as a field of thought. It pays special attention to understanding psychoanalytic theories of the self, the subject, and the abject (among others), and putting these modes of conceptualizing the subject into conversation with both contemporaneous and later theories of subjectivity (materialist, Foucauldian, etc.). Readings include works by Freud, Klein, Winnicott, Lacan, Jean Laplanche, Frantz Fanon, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Kaja Silverman, Hortense Spillers, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Lee Edelman, Leo Bersani, Elizabeth Grosz, and others. Assignments include a midterm annotated bibliography and a 20–25-page final research paper. This course satisfies the “theory” course requirement for the Certificate in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

ENGL 948b / AFAM 588b / AMST 710b, Autobiography in America  Robert Stepto
A study of autobiographical writings from Mary Rowlandson’s Indian captivity narrative (1682) to the present. Classic forms such as immigrant, education, and cause narratives; prevailing autobiographical strategies involving place, work, and photographs. Authors include Franklin, Douglass, Jacobs, Antin, Kingston, Uchida, Balakian, Als, and Karr.

ENGL 958b / AFAM 612b, James Baldwin, On Stage  Staff
Using Baldwin’s years in the theater as a timeline, we read black and queer playwrights who came out of the postwar naturalistic tradition that the author upheld in his scripts, while moving on to various traditions—the Black Arts Movement, Queer Theater, Black Surrealism, and so on—that Baldwin did not embrace but that served to enrich the scene. In addition to reading Baldwin’s essays and published thoughts about the theater and film, we analyze his plays, including his unpublished stage adaptation of his 1935 novel Giovanni’s Room. Also subject to discussion are his brilliant contemporaries, whom we read for context, including Langston Hughes, Tennessee Williams, Lorraine Hansberry, Alice Childress, Ed Bullins, Adrienne Kennedy, Derek Walcott, Wole Soyinka, Charles Gordone, Hanif Kureishi, Caryl Phillips, Ntozake Shange. The class concludes with plays written by Baldwin’s former student Suzan-Lori Parks.
ENGL 959b / RLST 892b, Interdisciplinary Philosophy  Noreen Khawaja
Seminar for humanities doctoral students who have theoretical interests and who are seeking to explore and strengthen the philosophical dimension of their work. Part I of the course is reading and discussion, including philosophical works and works of recent scholarship across disciplines which have something to teach scholars in literary studies, cultural studies, religious studies, and science studies about how to link, for example, the ethnographic and ontological, history and theory of mind, close reading and phenomenology, affect and aesthetics. Part II centers on students’ own research projects. Collaborative development, discussion, critique.

ENGL 960a / CPLT 881a / WGSS 960a, Literary Theory  Marta Figlerowicz and Jonathan Kramnick
What is literary theory today, and what is its history? The aim of the course is to introduce students to central concepts in theory and explore their relation to method. We examine the variety of approaches available within the field of literary studies, including older ones such as Russian formalism, New Criticism, deconstruction, Marxism, and psychoanalysis, as well as newer ones like actor-network theory and digital humanities research. We explore the basic tenets and histories of these theories in a way that is both critical and open-minded, and discuss their comparative advantages and pitfalls. The focus is on recurrent paradigms, arguments, and topics, and on transhistorical relations among our various schools of literary-theoretical thought. Readings might include work by René Wellek, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Spivak, Bruno Latour, Judith Butler, Northrop Frye, Fred Moten, and many others.

ENGL 961b, Transformations of the Confession: Secularism, Slavery, Sexuality  Caleb Smith
The confession is a paradoxical speech act. Confessors are supposed to reveal the inmost secrets of themselves, but at the same time they are known to be performing, according to an established script, for an audience endowed with the capacity to judge and punish them. This seminar takes up the genre of the public confession. We sketch its genealogy from ancient religious styles of truth-telling (The Confessions of St. Augustine) to modern forms of evidence in criminal justice (The Confessions of Nat Turner) while giving special attention to its literary adaptations (The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater). We then explore the transformation of the confession during the nineteenth century under the pressures of secularization, the slavery crisis, and the emerging science of sexuality. Readings may include works by Augustine, Rousseau, De Quincey, Hogg, Poe, Jacobs, Douglass, Plath, Lorde, and Nabokov. Critical and theoretical sources include Nietzsche, Freud, Foucault, Butler, Brooks, Hartman, and Felski. We pursue some of the themes introduced during the annual conference of the English Institute at Yale in 2018, on the theme of “truth-telling.”

ENGL 972a, Modern Poetry and Poetics  Benjamin Glaser
This course explores current debates in poetics, historicism, and formalism through study of the poetry and criticism of the past century. We trace a history of the discipline by way of the poets and readers who helped make literary study what it is and isn’t. Special attention is paid to contemporary debates surrounding lyric theory, historical poetics, and recent models of “New Formalism” as they each converge with and diverge from earlier formalisms (e.g., New Criticism) and react against historicisms (e.g., cultural studies). We also explore the racial formations at work within the logic of poetic genres and the canons of twentieth-century poetry.

ENGL 976a / AMST 840a, Asian Inhumanities  Sunny Xiang
What might it mean to think from a position other to the “Western humanities”? This course takes the “Asian inhumanities” as neither a direct opposite nor even a direct challenge to the “Western humanities,” but as a heuristic device for self-conscious reflection about critical method, racial formation, knowledge production, and political action. The aim is not necessarily to decenter the human or the humanities — I suspect that we will talk a good deal about both. Rather, we juxtapose “Asia” to “human” with an openness to contemplating the idiosyncrasies that each reveals about the other. We start by surveying how scholars have posited “Asia as method” (to borrow Kuan-Hsing Chen’s formulation). From there, we pursue the “Asian inhumanities” in two movements. The first examines historically specific “inhuman” typologies (that is, stereotypes) arising from U.S.-Asian encounters: the yellow peril during the era of Asian exclusion, the model minority during the era of Asian inclusion, and the flexible citizen during the era of Asian globalization. The second tracks the relation between “Asian” and “human” at especially fraught scenes of contact: law, war, gender, biology, and technology. Finally, we approach the “Asian inhumanities” as a question of race-based politics, both within and beyond the university. What is at stake in taking the human as a political, ethical, and literary reference point — for example, in desiring well developed and emotionally nuanced characters or even in reading for character at all? How does race figure into alternative critical approaches circulating within the humanities — for example, surface reading, distant reading, new formalism, and weak theory? How does an attention to what is “Asian” impact our received critical frameworks for analyzing race?

ENGL 990b, The Teaching of English  Jill Campbell and Margaret Homans
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 Klemann
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 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.