

Fall 2026 Course Descriptions

**ENG 8000 What's Hot? Introduction to
Literary Theory**

Dr. Michael Dowdy

ENG 8460 Serious Whimsy

Dr. Joseph Drury

ENG 8560 Victorian Publics & Populations

Dr. Mary Mullen

ENG 9720-002 Literatures of US Empire

Dr. Yumi Lee

ENG 9720-001 Climate Fiction

Dr. Heather Hicks

ENG 8000 *What's Hot? Introduction to Theory Across the
Discipline of English*

Dr. Michael Dowdy

CRN 22734

Tuesday 7:30-9:30 pm

This course will be run as a seminar in which each week, a different graduate faculty member will introduce you to a body of theory that is particularly important within current discussions in their field of specialization. What are some of the major theoretical approaches in medieval studies today? Early modern studies? What about 19th-century American literature and British literature? Modernism? Postcolonial Studies? Irish Studies? Contemporary literature? This class is an attempt to bring you immediately into dialogue with a wide variety of theories that are shaping literary study today. The course is intended to be a lively opportunity to meet most of the English faculty members who teach at the graduate level and to engage in dialogue about and analysis of the contemporary state of literary theory. Assignments will include biweekly journals and a final 15-page seminar paper.

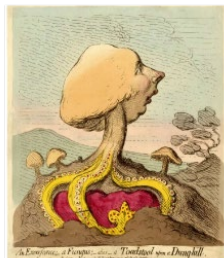
ENG 8460 *Serious Whimsy*

Dr. Joseph Drury

CRN 22735

Monday 5:20-7:20 pm

This seminar traces the emergence and development of whimsy as a distinctive literary aesthetic from the early eighteenth century through to the early twentieth century. Reading across several genres—essays, fiction, journals, poetry, and drama—we will consider how British authors used levity, eccentricity, digression, fantasy, and formal experimentation to challenge restrictive gender norms, legitimate queer or non-normative sexualities, escape the imperatives of discipline and productivity, and imagine new forms of life and belonging. Alongside works by Laurence Sterne, James Boswell, Maria Edgeworth, Oscar Wilde, and Sylvia Townsend Warner, among others, we will read psychoanalytic, queer, and play theory as well as literary scholarship that situates whimsical literature in relation to the rise of consumer capitalism, the history of sexuality, and Britain’s national consolidation and imperial expansion. This is a course about the seriousness of jokes, the unexpected weight of lightness, and the surprising importance of the trivial.



**This course fulfills the pre-1800 British/Irish literature requirement*

ENG 8560 *Victorian Publics & Populations*

Dr. Mary Mullen

CRN 22736

Thursday 5:20-7:20 pm

This course thinks about publics, populations, masses, multitudes, groups, communities, mobs, and crowds in order to consider how Victorian literature imagines collectivities. We will study Victorian reading publics and the explosion of print culture, mass movements like Chartism, the growth of democracy, the expansion of the British empire and colonial publics while interrogating how race, class, and gender shape constructions of publics and a private domestic sphere. We will focus on the rise of demographic thinking, the rapidly growing population of Britain, as well as the demographic effects of colonial catastrophes like the Irish Famine. We will read theories of the public and the public sphere, essays by Victorian writers like Margaret Oliphant, novels and poetry. We will experiment with public writing and practice academic writing.



ENG 9720-002 Literatures of US Empire

Dr. Yumi Lee

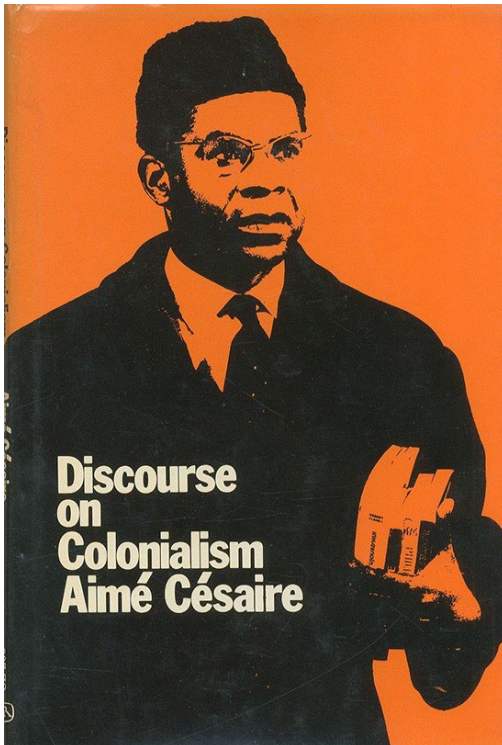
CRN 22740

Wednesday 7:30-9:30 pm

This graduate seminar explores how American literature has represented, imagined, and contested formations of US empire over time. Over three decades ago, in *Culture and Imperialism*, the critic Edward Said influentially argued that literature has been essential to the functioning of imperialism and showed how, in ways both explicit and subtle, literary works produced in imperial centers of power (such as, for example, Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*) can help us read and interpret the dynamics of that power. At the same time, literary production (such as, for example, the poetry of Aimé Césaire) has long been central to generating anticolonial thinking. What roles have American literature and culture played in the functioning of US empire? Where do we locate the boundaries of a national American literary tradition against the ever-expanding territorial and geopolitical claims of American global power – or to put it more simply, how has the spread of US empire redefined what it means to be “American” in the first place? How might we look to American literary and cultural works to help us better understand and assess how US empire has functioned over time, and to generate a critical account of the present conditions of what some have described as late-stage American empire in crisis?

In this course, we will read both canonical American works that help us understand the development and shifts in American imperial thinking over time and more contemporary works that aim to contest and challenge such thinking, particularly from indigenous and other

anticolonial perspectives. Authors may include Herman Melville, CLR James, Carlos Bulosan, Gina Apostol, and Omar El Akkad among others. Along with works of literature and literary theory, we will read works by interdisciplinary scholars who have critically analyzed the overlapping formations of settler colonialism, racial capitalism, resource extraction, and militarism that together constitute what we think of as US empire. Course requirements will include in-class discussion and presentations, short response papers, and a final seminar paper or project of similar length.



ENG 9720-001 Climate Fiction

Dr. Heather Hicks

CRN 22739

Tuesday 5:20-7:20 pm

Climate Fiction

[A]s Daniel Read and his colleagues (1994) pointed out more than a decade ago, only two simple facts are essential to understanding climate change. If significant global warming occurs, it will be the result primarily of an increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere. And the single most important source of carbon dioxide is the combustion of fossil fuels, most notably coal and oil. How can it be that people don't know these basic facts?

-Kari Marie Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* (2011)

Young people are worried about climate change. A [survey](#) by Sacred Heart University this summer found that more than half of people aged 15 to 29 agreed with this statement: "My level of concern for climate change causes psychological distress that impacts my daily life."

-*Daily Briefing, The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Nov. 25th, 2024

A baby born this year will be 60 in the 2080s, when demographers at the U.N. expect the size of humanity to peak. The Wittgenstein Center for Demography and Global Human Capital in Vienna places the peak in the 2070s. The Institute for

Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington puts it in the 2060s. All of the predictions agree on one thing: We peak soon.

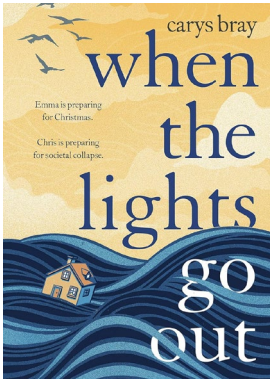
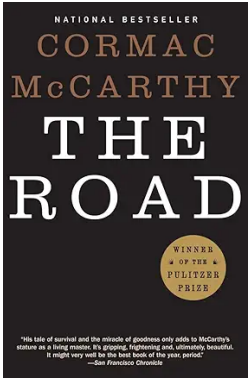
-Dean Spears, “What Happens When Global Human Population Peaks?” *The New York Times*, Sept. 18, 2023

Since 2000, a groundswell of major novels depicting human-generated climate have been published. This course will examine a selection of the most well-known and/or critically acclaimed of these works of climate fiction (“cli-fi”), noting the major threats it identifies, including extreme heat, desertification, storms, sea level rise, and the attendant social disruption that might result from these forces. We’ll investigate how this cli-fi considers the threat of climate change by calling on a range of literary, theoretical, and social forms, genres, and traditions, including the Book of Revelation, the *bildungsroman*, the Gothic tradition, adventure novels, the “cozy catastrophe,” the American Western, young adult fiction, the femme fatale, the sublime, allegory, realism, Native American imagery, religious extremism, trauma, and abjection, among others. We’ll also consider how writers have explored the impact of climate change on various regions of the U.S., as well as other parts of the world. We will consider major theorists of the Anthropocene and its fictions, including Timothy Clark, Amitav Ghosh, Timothy Morton, Adeline Johns-Putra, and Ursula Heise. Of particular interest, too, will be how male and female writers take up and use these traditions—and create new ones—similarly or differently, as well as how gender, race, class, and sexuality are imagined/reimagined in the context of environmental deterioration. We’ll consider how the

recurrent characters of this genre suggest the ways the apocalyptic tradition both reinforces and questions conventional gender roles and other stereotypes in relation to our current climate predicament. We'll also ponder the reasons so many important writers have turned to this genre in the past 20 years.

Finally, we'll consider what effects these texts may be having in a society facing a number of crises, including not only climate change, but also economic turmoil and inequality; and political strife and division. What threats do these authors identify in the face of climate change, and what social and scientific solutions do they offer? Do such novels romanticize environmental apocalypse? create a sense of hopeless resignation? Inspire positive action? Teach us how to survive? Make us feel less alone? Or perhaps make us appreciate what we have now?

Our reading list will likely include Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* (2011), Claire Vaye Watkins's *Gold Fame Citrus* (2015), Omar El Akkad's *American War* (2017), Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140* (2017), Ling Ma's *Severance* (2018), Carys Bray's *When the Lights Go Out* (2020), Nnedi Okorafor's *Noor* (2021), and Nick Fuller Googins's *The Great Transition* (2023).



ENG 8090: Thesis Direction
CRN 24556

Direction of writing of the thesis, focused research on a narrowly defined question, under supervision of an individual instructor.

ENG 8092: Field Examination
CRN 24557

A broader exploration of a theme or area of literature than a thesis. The examination comprises a comprehensive statement essay and an oral exam component.

ENG 9031: Independent Study
CRN 24527

A special project pursued under the direction of an individual professor.

ENG 9080: Thesis Continuation
CRN 22738

ENG 8093: Field Exam Continuation
CRN 24526

ENG 9035

Dr. Mary Mullen

CRN 22737

Professional Research Option (PRO)

This option for second-year graduate students is a three-credit independent study in which students identify one or a cluster of jobs or professions in which an advanced degree in literature is of benefit. In the course of the semester, students will research the career options of interest, identifying one or two fields as the focus of their work. They must generate a research paper that explores the history and future prospects of the field of interest, as well as current information about the requirements of the work, geographical information about centers of activity for the profession, and desirable employers. This research should include at least two meetings with professionals who work in the field. The paper must also analyze how advanced study of literature serves to enhance the students' desirability in the profession in question. As part of their final project, students must develop a cover letter outlining the ways their particular training makes them suitable to work in this field. Students will make their research available to other students in the program by uploading part of their final project onto a special section of the Graduate English Program blog. Potential fields of research include the following:

E-Book Industry

Teaching

Public relations

Rare book broker

Advertising

Web design

College admissions

Journalism

University administration

Arts administration

Library science

Testing industry

Tutoring industry

Technical writing

ENG 9800
CRN 22741

Internship in Teaching English

Second-year graduate students have the option to serve as an intern for a graduate faculty member in an undergraduate English course (or students who have completed nine credits may apply for special consideration). Interns will attend all class sessions, confer at least once with each student on their written work, lead two or three class sessions under the supervision of the faculty member, and complete a final project that is either (1) a substantial critical essay concerning the subject matter of the course or (2) a research project concerning trends and issues within college-level pedagogy. The aim of the program is to provide students with teaching and classroom experience. Students may apply to serve as interns by consulting with a faculty member who is teaching in an area of interest, and, if the faculty member is amenable, submitting a one-two page statement to the Graduate Director and Program Coordinator, outlining how this course addresses their larger intellectual goals, and what they hope to accomplish as an intern.