

Arts of Expression Course Descriptions by faculty name – Department of English

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Writing About The Disciplines

General Description:

The course emphasizes writing practices within or across disciplines, recognizing the role writing plays in the formation of knowledge and the framing of academic specializations. This course highlights the processes and practices of written expression and the production of research, whether in the sciences or the arts or the humanities. Faculty design specific approaches to the study of literature of a discipline, field, or program. Students have the opportunity to develop a critical understanding of important conversations within a particular area of study. Faculty also highlight how a field or discipline is located within a larger culturally-diverse context. Depending on the focus of the instructor, the course will engage one or more modes of disciplinary expression(s) such as films, written texts, photographs and other images, oral history, and ethnography.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: What's the Rap?

Instructor: Professor Sharon Morgan Beckford

What do the blues, jazz, Hip Hop, Mardi Gras, Caribana, reggae, and calypso have in common, and how have these cultural expressions been portrayed in literature, film, and the visual arts? How do popular art forms help us to understand the lived experiences of an ethnic group called black, or African American? And how do these lived experiences in turn influence and change popular cultural expressions in the mainstream? Indeed, what does it mean to be black, and is it the same as African (Barack Obama are you listening)? Who can be black? What is the black in black culture and does it change from country to country, or even within regions of a country? These are some of the questions we will explore as we read literature and poetry, observe films and visual arts, and listen to music and slam poetry. We will be trying to get a sense of how peoples of African descent living in the Americas have created narratives of their experiences, and we will consider the ways in which the productions and performances of these experiences are being taken up in ways that extend the meaning of blackness and whiteness beyond traditional ethnic terms. This is what we mean when we will be talking—or is it rapping?—about the dialectics of blackness, or the dialogics within black culture. To this end, we will also engage important conversations in the field of Black Studies to help us to think critically about received knowledge, while coming to terms with our own subject positions. Assignments will include a journal/learning portfolio; an annotated bibliography, which will culminate in a final research essay; and a short oral presentation.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Responding to Contemporary Art

Instructor: Professor Belinda Bryce

This course emphasizes writing in the discipline of responding to contemporary visual art. After a brief overview of 20th century Modernism and the various post-modern reactions that followed, the focus will shift to contemporary artists and how they explore themes such as identity, consumption, and power. Through reading, writing, and viewing artwork, students will become familiar with formal elements and explore ideas, context, and range of media to develop a critical understanding of artists' works. Assignments include a research paper and presentation, and a collaborative creativity project.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Expressing Art**Instructor: Professor A.J. Caschetta**

These sections will approach the “Arts of Disciplined Expression” by examining ways that art, both literal and visual, is used to express meaning. The course will focus on historical examples of the ways that art has been appropriated for purpose: literary, economic, and political. Students will read a variety of brief texts and will be required to read John Berger’s Ways of Seeing and Terry Eagleton’s Literary Theory: An Introduction in their entirety. Students will give presentations and write on a variety of topics including, though not restricted to, art as propaganda, art as market-place, and art as artifact.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Public and Private**Instructor: Professor Gail Gilberg**

Have you ever wondered about the people behind the global politics and the historical scene? Have you imagined their struggles to be different from ours? How do human beings deal with ethical, political, historical, and/or psychological issues contained in their work or passions? In this quarter we will experience brief encounters with those involved with such things as the atom bomb, the social upheaval of Haiti, the benighted landscapes of the Third World, the genius and madness of the world of mathematics, and the romanticized philosopher-warrior, Che Guevara. We will explore the intimate connection between the foreign, the familiar and the inescapably human. Ultimately, we will study people with the help of plays and short stories. Come ready to read, to think, to explore, and to share adventures.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: The Psychology and Identity of Games**Instructor: Professor Julie Johannes**

In this course, we examine some of the current trends in gaming, both electronic and otherwise, concentrating most heavily on RPGs (role-playing games). We will examine how knowledge is framed and expressed in this discipline, especially concentrating on the continuing effort to legitimize and gain acceptance for game studies as an area of academic inquiry. We will utilize a variety of texts, which include critical scholarly essays, popular periodical articles, film excerpts, and actual RPGs.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: The Future of Neo/Neuro**Instructor: Professor Lisa Hermsen**

The course examines the intersections between recent work in the humanities and neurosciences. This includes ethical problems raised by advances in functional neuroimaging, brain implants and brain-machine interfaces and psychopharmacology as well as by our growing understanding of the neural bases of behavior, personality, and consciousness. Scholars working in these areas have coined new subdisciplinary fields such as neuroethics, and neuroaesthetics. Participants from across the whole range of both the humanities (art, religion, literature, philosophy, film studies, history, languages, etc.) and neuroscience and its related fields (psychology, cognitive science, physiology, animal behavior, organismal and evolutionary biology, etc.) will find intrigue. Among the possible themes for class discussions and final projects are: How are questions of culture (human activity in the world) being related to the activities of the mind and brain in new and productive ways? How does neuroscientific study affect the way we understand the

reception of books, films, and digital media? How are rationality and emotion seen as part of human decision making process by humanists and neuroscientists? Don't forget to bring your Brain!

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Popular Culture, Philosophy and Film

Instructor: Professor Rebecca Housel

The Popular Culture, Philosophy, and Film course will read critically the literature of philosophy -- Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, as well as Sun Tzu, Kant, Nietzsche, and others, through texts like Superheroes and Philosophy, Monty Python and Philosophy, Poker and Philosophy. By combining philosophy literature with popular culture, students will gain a deepened knowledge of philosophical practice in everyday life, from film to poker. Students will develop writing skills through (2) research essays and (1) narrative non-fiction piece. Students will also recognize the role of writing in and across disciplines through weekly reflective and analytical journal assignments, and will ultimately come to a more complete understanding of written expression and production of research in philosophy, film adaptation and popular culture.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Alternative Textualities

Instructor: Professor Pamela Kincheloe

Why are some forms of text more privileged than others? Why, for example, are we taught to nod reverently when Shakespeare is mentioned, but are supposed to look vaguely disgusted at those who read graphic novels or comics? Why are some people tearing their hair out over the fate of the book and the demise of the independent bookstore?

This course will begin as a "history of the book" course, with a discussion of the history and technological development of the traditional text, ie, the book. The course will then explore how the definition of "text" is changing, and how our ways of "reading" are changing. We will examine some of these "alternative texts," or "spin offs" of the traditional book, such as: hypertext, e-books, website phenomena (such as blogs, youtube, facebook), graphic novels/manga, mystical texts (runes, tarot, kabbalah, etc), scrapbooks, pastiche/assemblages, and film. Aside from examining these primary sources, we will also read the current "cultural conversation" about these emerging types of text. In examining the traditional and nontraditional, students will be challenging their notions of what a text is and how it is a text may be created and interpreted. The course will culminate in a student-created alternative text.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: The Diasporic Imagination

Instructor: Professor Sharon Lewis

This course explores the multiple ways the concept of diaspora is represented and articulated in a selection of literature written by men and women. The course examines theories of exile, dislocation, displacement, dispossession, and borderlands to come to an understanding of distinctive ways of living that can be termed diasporic. The course attends to both the aesthetics and politics of writing diaspora.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Expressing Nature

Instructor: Professor Barbara MacCameron

This class examines traditional and nontraditional texts, which express ideas about natural elements, including the role of human beings in altering nature. Students will survey religious, scientific, economic and aesthetic values ascribed to concepts of nature and wilderness. They will have ample opportunity to express their own environmental imaginations in a variety of forms. Past writing options have included eco-biography, creation myths, analyses of literature or art work, and research papers on some aspect of the current ecological crisis. Presentations have covered topics such as the history of the American Conservation Movement, Eco-Architecture and Expressions of nature in music. Students are invited, but not required, to attend one event off campus in the Bristol Hills at the home of the instructor.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Writing about the Arts

Instructor: Professor Lloyd Milburn

The Central theme of this course is exploration. Students will choose relevant themes that creatively express their individual goals as they prepare presentations, lead discussions, write a critical review of the arts, and write a research paper. They will explore the conflict between artists/visionaries who struggle to express themselves in proletarian societies. Artistic movements often change organically as a result of visionaries conflicting with societies. We will explore the reasons for that conflict, why societies often undervalue their artists, and how conflict can hinder and, paradoxically, hone art. This course focuses on some of the artists who create original works despite anti-art conventions of society. Students will also consider the possibility of aesthetics in postmodern cultures. Critical theory will be applied to music, visual arts, and to selected literary works of Thoreau, Wallace Stevens, and Frost. We will also consider if hybridization of paradigms is a universal construct as we read the new book Musicophilia by Dr. Oliver Sacks.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Writing for Social Awareness

Instructor: Professor Melissa Nicolas

This class is based on the adage that the “pen is mightier than the sword.” In this section, we will explore the ways writing is used to bring attention to important social issues. Students will be encouraged to construct their own research agenda based on a social issue they are particularly concerned about. In addition to exploring the rhetoric of writing for social purposes, we will discuss multiple ways of conducting research in this class based on the adage that the “pen is mightier than the sword.” We will also discuss multiple ways of conducting research including interviews, observations, and surveys.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: The Languages of Fiction, Poetry and Film

Instructor: Professor Mark Price

This course examines the language systems of fiction, poetry, and film, and will introduce students to disciplinary approaches that will enable them to successfully write about these three forms of artistic expression. Through a close study of short stories, assigned films (to be seen off campus) and assigned poems, students will consider the place of these literary forms within contemporary concepts of “art” as interdisciplinary expression. Students will learn how to analyze, interpret, and critically

assess, primarily in written form, but with some emphasis on spoken communication as well. Assignments will be drawn from all three of the above mentioned areas, and students will also have an opportunity to engage in an extended piece of written research in one of the three artistic areas of their choice.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: The Networked Self

Instructor: Professor Amit Ray

It is commonplace to consider how much more we have become connected by recent technologies. This course will place such an assumption into a historical context by considering the development of a modern individualized ‘self’ as it emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Notions of this ‘romantic’ self continue to permeate our culture and deeply inform concepts such as art, creativity, originality, innovation and property. We will, through such a historical framework, query what it means to “express yourself” in light of our “new” media circumstances. As students and scholars, we face the challenge of defining our disciplines in relation to these new media. Our class will explore our specific disciplinary challenges and report back on how we—both as individuals and as scholars who are being asked to learn a discipline—negotiate a world mediated by code and computing. Requirements include one public presentation, one formal paper and one creative work in a medium of your choice.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Experiments and Explorations

Instructor: Professor Linda Reinfeld

This is a nontraditional writing class structured around a series of multi-disciplinary "reading" experiments: students will explore the possibilities of creative work in transforming, deforming, reforming and free-forming texts in various disciplines, including literary (and not-so-literary) texts. We'll examine the way the concept of experimentation in language has been constitutive of interdisciplinarity; we'll investigate the significance of "language games" in such fields as philosophical inquiry, critical analysis, poetic theory, technological documentation, political activism, and articulations of protest. Our starting point will be Hazel Smith's *The Writing Experiment*, a source of theory as well as practice for innovative writing. Each student will be required to share one to two pages of weekly writing experiment or response with the class each week. Visual text, performance, and work in new media may be included as appropriate. At the end of the quarter, each student will submit a completed manuscript, sufficient in length for a short chapbook, of his or her own most successful experimental writing.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Performance Poetry/Slam/Spoken Word

Instructor: Professor John Roche

This course is intended to be a hands-on introduction to one of the most exciting and innovative directions in contemporary poetry, featured in countless open mics and slams or competitions, and also popularized by Russell Simmons' HBO *Def Poetry* show. Few realize that these contemporary performances actually have a long disciplinary foreground that goes back to the oral roots of ancient Greek lyric poetry, the Celtic bardic tradition, and Renaissance troubadour verse, as well as West African griot traditions. Modern examples of performance poetry include Dada cabaret, Beat poetry readings, scat singing and jazz spoken word, as well as more recent developments like hip-hop poetry, rock poetry, multimedia poetry, and ASL/signed poetry. As well as reinvigorating poetry

through a return to its musical beginnings, today's performance poetry is also helping to widen its focus through inclusion of varied multicultural emphases and is also taking advantage of new technologies, new media, and new venues to spread the word.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Travel and the Imagination (NTID)

Instructor: Professor Linda Rubel

The metaphor of life as a journey runs through the world's literature from Ulysses sailing beyond the known world to Frodo traveling through Middle Earth. Travel writers, however, provide us with a glimpse not of worlds of fantasy and fiction but of our inhabited world. Through them we encounter people we might never meet and places we might never go. This course will examine the literature of travel and the ways in which it documents intellectual, psychological, and spiritual growth. We will engage with various disciplines (history, literary theory, the visual arts, film), in order to establish a historical and theoretical context. We will also analyze the ways in which the people(s), cultures, and political histories of various sites are represented. Finally, comparisons will be made between written and visual texts, including travel magazines, photographs, Web sites, and film.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Writing Renaissance Culture

Instructor: Professor Richard Santana

In 1585, Shakespeare (it is rumored) was forced to leave his hometown of Stratford after a "deer-stealing" incident. There are no records of his existence for the next eight years until he appears in London as an actor in 1592. His contemporary Christopher Marlowe has often been regarded as a spy, a brawler, a heretic, and a homosexual, as well as a "magician," "duelist," "tobacco-user," "counterfeiter," and "rakehell." The circumstances under which he met his untimely death in 1593 are murky and more resemble a John Grisham novel than the life of an Elizabethan playwright, including an ongoing conspiracy theory surrounding the notion that Marlowe faked his own death and then continued to write under the assumed name William Shakespeare. These and other similar stories of the British renaissance reveal to us that the day-to-day lives of authors of the period were not terribly different from ours, and were engaged in part of a culture that included a range of activities not often thought about. In this course we will attempt to read through some of the literature as well as contemporary documents to get a sense of the full culture, and we will write cultural studies of the period from imaginative perspectives.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: The Censorship Experience

Instructor: Professor Elena Sommers

Was there a time or place in history in which censorship did not exist? Was there ever a group of human beings that was able to survive without censure? This class will examine how suppression of information has been orchestrated throughout history in different contexts. We must recognize acts of censorship in relation to their social settings, political movements, religious beliefs, economic conditions, cultural expressions and/or personal identities. The course is structured around a series of multidisciplinary readings which (in addition to the novels) include a vast variety of sources -- original government documents, speeches, press reports, historical and critical writings, and film. Students

will be expected to write two papers. Students will also deliver one presentation based on the individual pre-approved research.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Advocacy, Commitment, Empowerment, Justice

Instructor: Professor Jack Bradigan Spula

By rediscovering the underappreciated literature of social activism, students will sharpen their critical awareness and strengthen their own writing. They will navigate the countercurrents of nonfiction - the work of pamphleteers, alternative journalists, environmentalists, muckrakers, trade unionists, feminists, gay-lesbian-bisexual transgender activists, and others - and then write with passion about their own causes and concerns. The readings will include essays and other works by Thomas Paine, Frederick Douglass, Emma Goldman, June Jordan, Eduardo Galeano, Katha Pollitt, Alexander Cockburn, Gore Vidal, Howard Zinn, et al. All points of view are welcome - indeed, they're eagerly sought - and class discussions will be wide-ranging, with occasional forays into relevant sociological, technological, and political matters.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Storytelling

Instructor: Professor Thomas Stone

This class will examine a fundamental form of expression: storytelling. An activity that far transcends the borders of English class, we tell stories to make sense of things from relatively private moments like a car wreck to grander questions like the fate of the universe. This is thus a truly multidisciplinary enterprise, and we are going to examine narratives from a variety of fields from myth and folktale to astronomy, and psychotherapy, among others, to consider the way these stories work in their different disciplinary settings. Jerome McGann has argued that being human necessarily means being mired in what he has famously termed “the textual condition,” and so we would do well to recognize and appreciate the stories we tell ourselves. To aid us in this exploration, students will be expected to give presentations as well as write papers both in response to the reading material and develop their own independent argument.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Exploring the Mississippi River

Instructor: Professor Paulette Swartzfager

Arts of Expression: writing about the disciplines: exploring the Mississippi River: Writing about America from the river’s view. This course is about writing about place, specifically how the geography of one of the great rivers of the world has influenced the history, society, economics, and culture of the people who live along its banks from the origin of the “Father of Waters” to where the great river empties in the Gulf of Mexico.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Essay As Disciplinary Genre

Instructor: Professor Robb Tillett

This course emphasizes the essay as genre within and across the disciplines, recognizing the role the essay plays in the formation of knowledge and the framing of academic debate. This course highlights the processes and practices of the essay as a genre unto itself and the production of research across the academic disciplines. Students will read professional essays and endeavor to develop their own voice within the context of their disciplines, broadening their critical understanding of the important debates within their

field of study. Students will also recognize how their discipline is located within a larger culturally-diverse context.

0504-319 Arts of Expression: Photography and Writing

Instructor: Professor Janet Zandy

The relationship of photographic images to words is as old as photography itself. The Chinese proverb, “A Picture is Worth One Thousand Words,” is actually a mistranslation. The literal meaning is “A Picture’s Meaning Can Express Ten Thousand Words.” In this course you will not be asked to write ten thousand words. But we will explore through a series of writing and reading assignments the many meanings of photographs. We begin with snapshots and self-images. Each week we view iconic, evocative, familiar, and unfamiliar images by known photographers such as Walker Evans, Lewis Hine, Tina Modotti, Robert Frank, Milton Rogovin, and others. Readings will include classic essays on photography, ways of reading and looking at photographs, and commentary from photographers about their art and craft. Through photographs, students will compare “unseen” America to “seen” America. Students are encouraged to explore images through the Library of Congress collection and by visiting the George Eastman House on East Avenue in Rochester. This course has a particular emphasis on the documentary tradition and requires weekly writing (graded and ungraded) and a final writing project. Students will give presentations on a collection or a photographer of their choice.