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ENGL 1604: Intro to Poetry

Why You Should Take This Course

It fulfills both practical and emotional needs. Practically, Wintermester is a great time to read poetry because we can look at many examples and styles during a short time. Also, this is a Pathways course, helping you to complete the requirements for graduation. More importantly, however, poetry is the area that most students feel nervous about. Many feel they “don’t get it” or that it is too difficult for them. However, everyone can “get” poetry and this course will show you that. Reading poems, along with commentary from me to help you understand how the poem means what it means and how it works, will show you that poetry is accessible to all readers. If you already love poetry, then this will be a great course to introduce you to a variety of poems that you might not know or maybe some that you already love. If you do not love reading poetry, maybe this class can change that and open a new area of interest for you.

ENGL 1604
CRN: 40347 with Leslie Neilan
Asynchronous Online
3 Credit Hours

Pathways Area 2: Critical Thinking in the Humanities
ENGL 1604: Intro to Poetry

Why I Am Teaching This Course
From Leslie Neilan

I love the poems themselves and meeting new poems that I have not yet discovered. However, what I like best is the feedback I have gotten through the years from students who left this class with more confidence and ability when reading poetry.

ENGL 1614: Intro to Short Fiction

Why You Should Take This Course
Comics and graphic narratives are a vital part of today’s literary landscape. In this course, you’ll learn how to read them, how to talk about them, and how to appreciate the creative work that goes into making them. The course offers footing in the history and theory of the comics medium—its cultural positioning, and how it functions on the level of form—before embarking on a tour of contemporary practice. Focusing on the heterogeneous American tradition, our survey will include a broad range of formats and their associated genres: syndicated comic strips, superhero comic books, alternative comics and graphic narratives, and more. Along the way, we’ll be testing the boundaries of “fiction” as a category: as Lynda Barry’s cartoon self asks, “Is it autobiography if parts of it are not true? Is it fiction if parts of it are?”

Comics and graphic novels today have won the Pulitzer Prize (Maus); their adaptations fill Broadway theaters (Fun Home), while their film versions represent some of our biggest box office hits; they stud the shelves of every bookstore; they hail from dedicated publishing imprints; they grace the covers of elite journals; and—yes—they populate university syllabi. Guiding questions for the class include:

- How can we understand and talk about the formal language, or “grammar,” of comics?
- What distinguishes comics from its neighboring forms in the world of film, painting, photography, prose, and poetry?
- What are the dominant genres in today’s comics/graphic narrative scene?
- How have comics borne witness to historical catastrophe? How does the hand-drawn image function as “evidence”?
- How can comics provide a medium of self-expression for a range of ethnic, racial, gendered, queer, differently abled subjectivities and identity formations?
- How can comics respond to our contemporary moment?

Pathways Area 2: Critical Thinking in the Humanities
ENGL 1614: Intro to Short Fiction

Why I Am Teaching This Course

From Emmy Waldman

I didn’t grow up reading comics. I’d never even heard of graphic novels until I got to graduate school. On a whim, I joined a “Graphic Novel” seminar taught by a visiting professor, Hillary Chute. We had to read Art Spiegelman’s Maus and Alison Bechdel’s Fun Home, alongside a range of other texts I now teach in my own classes. I was completely hooked, and it’s my hope that I can now introduce you to this versatile, subtle, supple, and so often denigrated and misunderstood storytelling medium.

ENGL 1654: Intro to Science Fiction & Fantasy

Paranormal Romance

Why You Should Take This Course

Vampires, werewolves, and valkyries? Oh my! Want to enjoy some spicy books with your cocoa this winter? Then join me for a taste of the paranormal romance genre! Paranormal romance is a young but extremely diverse subgenre — the first romance novel to feature a supernatural romantic partner was published in 1987, just one year after the first romance speculative fiction hit the mainstream. We’re now in what’s been called the “Golden Age of Paranormal Romance,” and the genre that owes more of its heritage to Ann Radcliffe than Jane Austen is rapidly overtaking the more traditional historical romance. Paranormal romance readers are rebels, rule breakers, and “wild-haired and electric-eyed eccentrics” — are you?
ENGL 1654: Intro to Science Fiction & Fantasy

Why I Am Teaching This Course
From Netta Baker

I fell in love with romance novels accidentally when, at the age of 11, I tried to order sheet music for Aladdin’s A Whole New World from the local library and instead received an inspirational series romance titled A Whole New World. Obviously, I returned it promptly.

Just kidding. I took it out to the barn, snuggled on a stack of hay bales between a horse and a goat, and got lost in the excitement of watching two characters psychologically haggle over their compatibility until, at long last, they lived happily ever after. Sadly, the book itself was eventually eaten by the goat at a later date, but my fascination with romantic relationships, with humans’ internal struggles and navigation of conflicts remained.

Romance novels carried me through the most trying times of childhood and adulthood; in high school they were a comfort through lonely awkward phases, in college they were a source of cozy relaxation after tough exams. In and after graduate school they quite literally helped pay my rent-- I worked as a ghost writer and script doctor for an erotic romance publisher for several years. Writing romances only made me love the genre more, and there is still nothing cozier than a warm cup of tea and a romance novel.

When offered the opportunity to teach Intro to Science Fiction & Fantasy, my first and only thought was: “It’s paranormal romance time!” What better way to explore the conventions of science fiction and fantasy than through their Gothic cousin: the paranormal romance.

My background is in “drumroll” popular romance, as both a researcher and writer. In addition to ghost-writing, I have read, researched, and written extensively on narrative structures in popular romance writing, feminism and sex positivity across popular romance subgenres, and the evolution of heat levels [aka: spice] in single title romances. Have questions about the course or just want to chat romance? Send me an email: nettab@vt.edu. And join me for cocoa and spicy books this winter!

ENGL 2744: Intro to Creative Writing

Why You Should Take This Course

Want to tell better lies, to turn the world new and strange on a hunch, to lay waste to enemies or bring back the dead, to wield God-like power as you conjure up people and places from thin air? All this and more is possible, at least on paper. A few things I can promise about this class: poetry really isn’t that scary; you’ll never have to discuss “theme” if you don’t want to; and unlike what standardized education may imply, there are writers alive today, writing about today things, who look and sound and act like you, who deal with the same frustrations and make the same mistakes and ask the same questions you do. You’ll read the work of those writers, and many others, and you’ll write about contemporary characters in contemporary settings dealing with contemporary conflicts, all while focusing on the craft that will help you make that writing shine brighter. You’ll do all of this and more in only three weeks!

ENGL 2744
CRN: 40352 with Sean Conaway
Asynchronous Online
3 Credit Hours

Pathways 1a: Advanced/Applied Discourse
Pathways 6a: Critique and Practice in the Arts
Pathways 6d: Critique and Practice in Design
ENGL 2744: Intro to Creative Writing

Why I Am Teaching This Course
From Sean Conway

No other class I teach exposes me to new people, places, and ideas as often or more surprisingly than Intro to Creative Writing. Students from every discipline enroll in this class, and their unique experiences, tastes, and goals create a rich and creative learning environment. This class also is a great excuse to do what I love: read, discuss, and debate complicated ideas with smart and interesting people.

Why You Should Take This Course

This course introduces two genres of creative writing: fiction and poetry. We will read exemplary short stories and poems from notable and emerging writers as students learn foundational craft techniques to employ in their own creative work. This course provides students valuable time to explore the stories and language that compel them and develop the skills to produce original literary pieces themselves. Students will be encouraged to take bold, experimental risks, and will regularly receive feedback and encouragement from the instructor as they compile their final portfolio of original work.

ENGL 2744
CRN: 40353 with Xander Gershberg
Asynchronous Online
3 Credit Hours

Pathways 1a: Advanced/Applied Discourse
Pathways 6a: Critique and Practice in the Arts
Pathways 6d: Critique and Practice in Design
Why I Am Teaching This Course
From Xander Gershberg

Writing, especially creative writing, is a form of self-discovery. Writing fiction and poetry has helped me process my own biggest and most urgent life questions, as well as find new questions to explore, all in ways that have ultimately empowered and fulfilled me. I’m excited to facilitate your own travels through literary, creative landscapes and read your writings that come from it. I can’t wait to see how you all see the world and articulate your place in it.

Why You Should Take This Course

Did you know that communication is one of the top 10 essential skills that employers look for in their potential job candidates? You should take this course because regardless of what profession you enter, communication is essential. Learning how to communicate effectively with colleagues and throughout your professional life can feel daunting, but is a skill that can absolutely be acquired through practice. This course will provide you with opportunities to practice these skills so that you feel confident in your professional communication and writing skills that will transfer into your post-graduate career.
ENGL 3764: Technical Writing

Why I Am Teaching This Course
From Marissa Buccilli

I value the impact that communication has in my everyday life. In my experience as a working professional, like many, I have held a variety of jobs with various job titles. However, one skill that I have always leaned on is my ability to communicate information, both written and verbal. Because of this, I want to encourage students to spend time developing and refining their current skills as it relates to technical writing so that they feel confident navigating a variety of communication situations that will extend into their professional life.

ENGL 3764: Technical Writing

Why You Should Take This Course
You should take this course because it will use disability studies and access as a lens for technical writing skills and genres. For three weeks, you will work diligently on a portfolio of assignments that employ concision, document design, structure, plain language, audience-centered approaches to communicating complex information. This course can ultimately help you think about the ways you understand yourself and consider others with a wide range of ability while sharpening your writing.

ENGL 3764
CRN: 40357 with Sherri Craig
Asynchronous Online
3 Credit Hours

Pathways 1a: Advanced/Applied Discourse
I am teaching this course because I know that strong writing skills take a lifetime to acquire and for a short amount of time, just three weeks, we are able to explore these skills together in the hopes that they open up deeper interests. Technical Writing also highlights many of the most common features of composing students will use inside and outside of the university. I love teaching this course, even when abbreviated, because it has so many different types of Hokies enrolled and it lets me use industry and academic experiences to guide students in their development.

Why I Am Teaching This Course
From Sherri Craig

In this course, you will learn and practice the communication skills you will need to navigate professional environments. You will learn how to create documents that are usable and useful for professionals in your workplace and various other audiences you will write for. In order to communicate effectively, you will reflect on, and demonstrate the importance of accessibility, usability, rhetorical awareness, intercultural awareness, and ethics while learning to create purposeful technical writing.

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Why You Should Take This Course

Through collaboratively exploring a number of common rhetorical contexts and challenges one might encounter in business environments, students in this course will gain the following skills: insights into the vital role communication plays within the business world, a flexible writing process that can adapt to numerous rhetorical contexts, making rhetorically-informed choices in style, syntax, tone, formatting, word choice, structure and conventions, document design and circulation, intercultural communication, familiarity with genres vital to contemporary business practices, using writing as a source of innovation, policy-building, and solution-creating, growth as a professional and human being.

ENGL 3774: Business Writing

Why I Am Teaching This Course

From Olayemi Awotayo

I enjoy teaching this course because I like to see students learn and apply communication principles that have direct impact on their professional lives. To excel in any workplace, you will need to sharpen your communication skills. Therefore, I enjoy teaching this class because it offers you a platform to develop and sharpen vital communication skills. Whether you are new to Technical Writing or have had some experience with it in your part-time jobs or internships, during our time together, you will be able to enhance your knowledge of effective document design, plain language techniques, visual design (among others) in various technical writing genres.
As someone who has a faceted background in nonprofit fundraising, intercultural communication, documentation management, and higher ed administration, I have seen firsthand the power of audience-centered writing. Having the skills to communicate effectively not only fosters strong relationships with individuals, communities, and organizations; it also ignites positive change. I cherish any opportunity to teach those skills to others.