

ENGLISH 254, Themes in Literature FALL 2020



Fantastic Escapes: Historic Slave Narratives and Their Magical Contemporary Retellings

Elizabeth Gentry Section 001, MWF 11:15-12:05 (41573)

Course Description: Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and other former slaves wrote about their remarkable escapes using the conventions of nineteenth-century autobiography; twentieth and twenty-first century novelists such as Colson Whitehead and Octavia Butler have fictionalized this time period in both realistic and fabulist fashion, creating magic in the midst of grim circumstances. Why write a fantastical fictional version of an historical nonfiction story, using super powers or time travel or a literal underground train? These action-packed and heart-wrenching stories allow us to learn more about history while also exploring questions of genre, rhetorical purpose, aesthetics, form, and audience.

Books That Shaped America

Dr. Julia McLeod Section 002, TR 2:10-3:25 (41574)

Course Description: This course features readings from the Library of Congress's list of books that "shaped Americans' views of their world and the world's views of America." Through writings by Benjamin Franklin, Washington Irving, Frederick Douglass, Louisa May Alcott, John Steinbeck, Toni Morrison, and others, we will examine continuing national debates, including: How do we define "American"? What ideals unite us? What is the role of the American citizen? How has our vision of national purpose changed, and how will it be defined in the future? The course meets WC requirements with weekly reading response journals, a short paper, two exams, and an Adobe Spark webpage.

Graphic Novels and the Experience of War

Dr. Kelli MacCartey Section 003, TR 11:10-12:25 (41575)

Course Description: This course will investigate the violence of war, as illustrated in graphic literatures, and the conflicts (personal, cultural, social) that those living in war-torn communities experience. The formal features of the genre, alongside historical context, character development, and plot will be discussed. The course aims to develop an understanding of why the graphic novel serves as such a powerful mode to communicate about human dilemmas and conflicts that arise in a war-time environment. Works may include: *Maus*, *Persepolis*, *Pride of Baghdad*, *Deogratias*, *The Arrival*, and *V for Vendetta*.

All sections of English 254 satisfy UT's General Education requirements in both Arts & Humanities (AH) and Communicating through Writing (WC).