

ENGLISH 254, Themes in Literature FALL 2021



Staging Revolution: Hamilton and Plays of Rebellion and Resistance

Kristina McCue Section 001, TR 9:50-11:05, CRN# (41478)

Course Description: If “all the world’s a stage,” many of the more dramatic—even theatrical—events emerge when a nation, group, or individual breaks with tradition or constraint. With *Hamilton* as a centerpiece, we will explore how playwrights have been inspired by resistance, rebellion, and revolution, and even by the transformative effect of failed insurgencies. Plays recording and reflecting some well-known or less familiar social and political insurrections include those about the American Revolution, the Irish War of Independence, South Africa’s anti-apartheid movement, the 1992 Los Angeles riots, and the Cuban revolution of 1958. Written work will be assigned as short reflections and two formal papers.

Graphic Novels and the Experience of War

Kelli MacCartey Section 002, TR 11:30-12:45, CRN# (41479)

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.

Fantastic Escapes: Historic Slave Narratives and their Contemporary Retellings

Elizabeth Gentry Section 003, MWF 11:45-12:35, CRN# (41480)

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.

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