

Professor: Libbie Rifkin, pronouns she/her/hers.

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Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

3:30 PM - 5:35 PM

Format & Location:

Class, [Intercultural Center](#) 213

English 092: History of Literature, Media, and Culture II

Description: This introductory course explores U.S., British, and global Anglophone literature, media, and culture from the late 18th century to the present. It is not a comprehensive chronological survey, though we will be interested in the dynamics of influence. Instead, we will organize our journey through time and place around the notion that literature and culture perform significant *acts or functions* in its historical moment, even as they participate in conversations with texts committed to similar projects at different historical and geographical junctures. Specifically, we will examine works across a range of genres (with a special emphasis on poetry) that: 1.) Make history, 2.) Fashion selfhood and 3.) Mourn losses. Throughout, we will be thinking about how cultural text instigate (or seek to instigate) political change. Our close readings will focus on how texts perform these primary functions and on the relationships among them—for instance, we'll look at the politics of mourning, or consider how writers forge subjectivity through a consideration of their place in history or within a particular political struggle. Throughout, we will interrogate the primary terms of the course, examining how the meanings of “the literary” and “history” have evolved individually and in relation to each other over the last two hundred plus years and throughout a range of cultural contexts.

Required Texts. Please make every effort to purchase the inexpensive versions listed by ISBN here. You may use e-books for accessibility, and I will link to the free Lauinger versions where possible, but I recommend hard copies to reduce screen use:

Frederick Douglass, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Dover Thrift edition paperback: ISBN: 0486284999, ISBN13: 9780486284996)

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Dover Thrift edition paperback: ISBN 0486264645, ISBN 13: 9780486264646)

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen* (any edition)

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (any edition)

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (any edition)

Poems, articles/essays, and films are available as links within course modules.

Accessibility: Universal design is an accessibility principle by which expanding access to a space (like a classroom) or a conversation (like a curriculum) benefits everyone. I am slowly and imperfectly working towards universal design in my courses, and at the same time, I understand that each student learns differently. If you are facing a barrier to access in my class, I invite you to talk with me about it by email or in my office hours. Also, if you have or think you might have a documented disability, please communicate your need for accommodations to the Academic Resource Center. Please go to <http://guarc.georgetown.edu/disability/accommodations> ([Links to](#)

[an external site.](#)) for further information. This statement was cribbed, with thanks, from the following site: start-anywhere.tumblr.com/post/108182739875/my-syllabus-accessibility-statement.

I am committed to creating a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.). If your name or pronoun needs to be corrected, please let me know early in the semester so that I can make the appropriate changes to my records.

During the first week of the semester, each student will be required to sign up for a 10 minute learning styles check-in over Zoom. We will discuss the course expectations and whether/how they may be adapted to suit individual needs (for instance alternatives to talking in class as a form of participation).

Student Note-takers: With an eye towards fulfilling one of the primary principles of universal design for learning, multiple means of representation, there will be a student note-taker for each class. A sign-up sheet will be posted on Canvas Collaborations after the first class. All students who are able should volunteer to take notes for one class during the semester. Students will take notes for the class in the Google doc entitled Class Notes found under in Collaborations.

Learning Goals: This class has three main objectives. Over the course of the semester, students should expect:

1. To gain a working knowledge of the major themes, movements, and styles in the history of U.S., British, and (limited) global Anglophone literature and culture from the Romantic period to the present.
2. To develop an understanding of the complex nature of literary/cultural history as it is constructed within and between literary/cultural texts, and across literary texts and historical contexts.
3. To fine-tune their ability to critically analyze poems, novels, plays, and films.

Course Requirements:

- reading/viewing (according to the syllabus schedule)
- participation: attendance in class, preparation, and active participation (including active listening) in class discussions; occasional quizzes and Canvas Discussion posts; other forms of participation as discussed with professor. Worth 25% of final grade.
- 2 critical essays (5-6 pages) each worth 35% of your final grade

Attendance: Your presence and availability for learning is crucial to the success of this class. Please arrive in class on time.

Honor Policy: The University has a defined honor code and policy. You can find the honor policy at: <http://www.georgetown.edu/honor/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Schedule:

Week 1: Doing Things with Words and Making History

Monday, June 5:

Read/watch in class: J.L. Austin, "[How to Do Things with Words](#)" (excerpt), Amanda Gorman, "[The Hill We Climb](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#)) Richard Blanco, "[One Today](#)," ([Links to an external site.](#)) Elizabeth Alexander, "[Praise Song for the Day](#)," ([Links to an external site.](#))

Do: Think about the following as you read/watch the poems. Be prepared to work in small groups on these prompts for 2 poems in class:

- Affective response--how does the poem make you feel?
- Voice, poetic position--how would you characterize subject or speaker?
- Address--audience (is there a "you," either explicit or implicit?)
- Image system--dominant visuals
- Space--physical page, images of space
- Time--pace of reading, relationship to history (either literary or world)
- Metapoetics--is an attitude toward poetry displayed?

Tuesday, June 6:

Read: Washington Irving, "[Rip Van Winkle](#)" Nathaniel Hawthorne, "[My Kinsman, Major Molineux](#)"

Do: Canvas Discussion Post 1

Wednesday, June 7:

Read: [Georgetown Explained: The GU272](#) ([Links to an external site.](#)), [Working Group Report](#) ([Links to an external site.](#)) (pgs. 32-9 of the pdf, pgs. 24-31 of the report) Countee Cullen, "[Heritage](#)," ([Links to an external site.](#)) Langston Hughes, "[The Negro Speaks of Rivers](#)," ([Links to an external site.](#)) Lucille Clifton, "[slaveships](#)," ([Links to an external site.](#)), "[I am accused of tending to the past](#)"

Browse: Featured Collection: [The Sale of Maryland Jesuit's Enslaved Community to Louisiana 1838](#)([Links to an external site.](#))

Do: Take notes on "Heritage," "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" and "I Am Accused of Tending to the Past," using the "aspects of poetry" rubric. Think especially about how "voice," "image system" and "time" relate to one another within those three poems and differ across them.

Optional reading: Christina Sharpe, "The Wake" ([In the Wake: On Blackness and Being](#), pgs. 9-32 ([Links to an external site.](#)))

Thursday, June 8:

Read: M. Nourbese Philip, "[A Genealogy of Resistance](#)"

Do: [CDP 2 prompt](#)

Week 2: Modernist Fragments and Romantic Subjects


Monday, June 12:


Read: T.S. Eliot, "[Tradition and the Individual Talent](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#)) "[The Burial of the Dead](#)" (Section I. of *The Waste Land*) ([Links to an external site.](#))

Do: [Post an image](#) that helps you understand Eliot's concept of "tradition." Think broadly and creatively. Feel free to take your own photo or find something online.

Optional reading: [Michael Austin article on *The Waste Land* and pandemic poetry](#) ([Links to an external site.](#))

Tuesday, June 13:


Read: William Faulkner, fr. “the Benjy section” of [The Sound and the Fury](#)  Glance through your favorite [notes \(Links to an external site.\)](#) to get a sense of where the Benjy chapter fits into the novel as a whole.

Refer to [these passages](#)  from Faulkner's introduction to the novel and from David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder's work of Disability Studies scholarship, *Narrative Prosthesis* (2000).

Please listen/view [this lecture \(Links to an external site.\)](#) before class.

Do: [CDP 3](#)

Wednesday, June 14:

Read: [Romantic Genius excerpts](#) , William Wordsworth, fr. [The Prelude](#) , "[Lines Composed](#)," Mary Shelley, "[Introduction](#)" to *Frankenstein*, Percy Shelley, "[A Defense of Poetry](#)"

Thursday, June 15:

Read: Walt Whitman, "[Preface](#)" ([Links to an external site.](#)) and selections fr. [Leaves of Grass \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (through page 19), Emily Dickinson, ([372, 1788, 1702, 466, 340, 656, 620, 788, 445 \(Links to an external site.\)](#))

Do: CDP 4


Week 3: Colonial Subjects and Changing the Subject

Sunday, June 18: PAPER 1 DUE

Monday, June 19:

Read: Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* or alternate text tba

Tuesday, June 20:

Read: Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* or alternate text tba, Chinua Achebe, "[An Image of Africa: Conrad's Heart of Darkness](#)" 

Do: CDP 5

Wednesday, June 22:

Read: Frederick Douglass, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Do: TBA


Thursday, June 23:

Read: Douglass, cont'd, Claudia Rankine, *Citizen* (sections tba)

Do: CDP 6

Week 4: Mourning, Modernity

Monday, June 26:

Read: Sigmund Freud, "[Mourning and Melancholia](#)" , Whitman, "[When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd](#)", Wilfred Owen, "[Anthem for a Doomed Youth](#)," ([Links to an external site.](#)) "[Dulce Et Decorum Est](#)," ([Links to an external site.](#)) Sylvia Plath, "[Daddy](#)"

Tuesday, June 27:

Read: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*
Do: CDP 7

Wednesday, June 28:

Read: *Mrs. Dalloway*
Do: TBA

Thursday, June 29

Read: *Mrs. Dalloway*
Do: CDP 8

Week 5: Circles of Sorrow and The Mattering of Black Lives

Monday, July 3:

Read: Toni Morrison, *Sula*
Do: CDP 9

Tuesday, July 4:

Read: *Sula*
Do:

Wednesday, July 5:

Read: *Citizen*, cont'd

Thursday, July 6:

Poetry party

PAPER 2 DUE