

ENGL GU4015**Vernacular Paleography****Christopher Baswell**

This class is designed to introduce graduate students (and some advanced undergraduates) to the paleography of English vernacular manuscripts written during the period ca. 700 -1500, with brief excursions into Latin and into French as it was written on the Continent. Students interested in a broader introduction to Latin and the national hands of the Continent should also consider taking Dr. Dutschke's Latin Paleography course, which is planned to be offered in alternate years to Prof. Baswell's. The purpose of the course is fourfold: (1) to teach students how to make informed judgments with regard to the place and date of origin, (2) to provide instruction and practice in the accurate reading and transcription of medieval scripts, (3) to learn and use the basic vocabulary of the description of scripts, and (4) to examine the manuscript book as a product of the changing society that produced it and, thus, as a primary source for the study of that society and its culture. In order to localize manuscripts in time and place it is necessary to examine aspects of the written page besides the script, such as the material on which it is written, its layout and ruling, the decoration and illustration of the text, the provenance, and binding. It is also necessary to examine the process of manuscript production itself, whether institutional, commercial, or personal. The history of book production and of decoration and illumination are thus considered part of the study of paleography, as is the history of patronage and that of libraries; the German term *Handschriftenkunde* well describes the subject. Manuscripts are among the most numerous and most reliable surviving witnesses to medieval social and intellectual change, and they will be examined as such. Application instructions: E-mail Professor Christopher Baswell (cbaswell@barnard.edu) with the subject heading "Vernacular Paleography." In your message, include basic information: your name, school, major, year of study, and relevant courses taken, along with a brief statement about why you are interested in taking the course. Admitted students should register for the course; they will automatically be placed on a wait list from which the instructor will in due course admit them as spaces become available.

Advanced Old English: Anglo-Saxon Spirituality**Patricia Dailey**

The aim of this course is twofold: one, to provide an advanced-level course in Old English literature involving weekly translation; and two, to explore the shape and possibilities of what "Anglo-Saxon spirituality" might be. The primary texts we will be translating will consist in homilies, poetry, treatises, sermons, hymns, prayers, penitentials, letters, and so called "secular" poetry like riddles. We will aim at covering selected materials from the four main manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon poetry (Vercelli, Junius, Nowell, and Exeter) to examine the extent to which they celebrate or veil theological interests. Part our time will involve assessing the prevalent distinction between secular and religious cultures, the relation between materiality and the spiritual, the role of affect in cultivating belief and piety, and the relation between Christian and non-Christian cultures and beliefs. Secondary theological materials will be read in translation including Paschasius Radbertus, Ratramnus, Hincmar, Alcuin, Aldhelm, Jerome, Gregory, and Augustine. Selections of Old Norse mythology and runic texts will also be included. The class will explore the of the role of the church in Anglo-Saxon England, debates about the impact of the Benedictine Reform, and the relation between art and theology.

ENGL GU4104**Renaissance Literature and the (History) of Sexuality****Julie Crawford**

This class is an introduction both to the study of the literature of the English Renaissance or early modern period, and to the study of the history of sexuality. While we will be looking at issues of sexuality in the literary texts that are at the center of this class, we will also be thinking about the history of sexuality as a field of study in its own right, how it's been conceived of and practiced, its promises and pitfalls. We will be examining the humanist histories and methodologies that inform much Renaissance thought about human sexuality – theories about bodies, desire, relationships between and among the sexes, materialism, and spirituality – as well as more recent critical approaches. We will think closely about the genres that (we think) privilege sexuality – eclogues, plays (especially those performed by boy players), erotic verse, verse letters, utopia and creation stories.

ENGL GU4209**16th Century Poetry****Molly Murray**

This lecture class offers an introduction to the century that witnessed the flowering of vernacular poetry in English. We will read shorter poems in their cultural and historical contexts, as well as considering their formal and theoretical innovations. The first half of the course will cover a wide range of poets, both canonical and lesser-known, while the latter half will focus on the four most significant poets of the century: Marlowe, Sidney, Shakespeare, and Spenser.

ENFR UN4800**Readings in English & French 19th C Fiction****Nicholas Dames & Elisabeth Ladenson**

A study of what it meant to write— or to be a writer— at the moment when the novel began to stake its claim to be a major or high art form, seen through the lens of British and French realist novels that tell the story of a writer's personal and career development. At the center of the seminar will be the question of the novel and its relation to the worlds of journalism and art, and how novels negotiated (through the figure of the writer) their overlap with the newspaper and the lyric poem, or exterior and interior worlds. Class to be conducted in English, with readings from Balzac, Dickens, Maupassant, and Gissing, and possibly other examples.

ENGL GU4201**Early Caribbean Literature****Cristobal Silva**

This course is an introductory survey of early Caribbean Literature. Focusing primarily on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anglophone Caribbean, we will ask what the region signified for writers across the Atlantic world and how it shaped natural and political spaces in that world. Given that

the Caribbean was a rapidly shifting zone of economic, linguistic, racial, and class interests, we will consider the various ways that we might narrate a literary history of the region—either distinct from or conjoined with familiar histories of England and the United States. While working toward this goal, we will be conscious of the national, generic, and temporal frameworks that have traditionally shaped literature departments, and ask how our texts resist or reaffirm those frameworks. How and to what degree, we will ask, does the Caribbean disrupt our modes of literary analysis?

ENGL GU4300

Religion and the Novel 1660-1840

Dustin Stewart

Literary historians often insist that the novel is a secular form. Yet authors of early novels in English claimed to be motivated by religious reasons, and many defenders of these fictional works described the experience of reading them (and their affection for them) in religious terms. A whole host of English novels from the long eighteenth century also took religion as a topic, imagining religious characters and wrestling with religious subjects. In this seminar, we will read Enlightenment-era narratives that consider the problem of evil, the challenge of modern faith, the drama of conversion, the frustrations of religious history, the dangers of religious institutions, and the difficulties of interfaith exchange. We will learn about some different categories of religious identity and about the historical and political circumstances that intensified the process of religious self-definition. We will also try out some different strategies for using religion to interpret novels. But mostly we'll immerse ourselves in the rich and varied religious worlds of the novels themselves, where we will encounter devils as well as angels, the skeptical as well as the faithful, unabashed sinners as well as reluctant saints. Some figures in these books come out strongly against religion, but more of them call for new ways of defining religion or putting it into practice, sometimes for radical political ends. We will frequently see that these early novels didn't simply inherit religious sensibilities from the past; they also had to invent new forms of religious life and practice, including new ways of reading. More than a few of these patterns are still with us. Some people still agree that reading a novel can be a religious experience, even if they disagree about what that means.

ENGL GU4858

Multimedia Blake

Mark Phillipson

A close study of the historic and material conditions, readerly effects, and subsequent influence of William Blake's illuminated books. This course examines the interplay of poetry and illustration in these remarkable works, paying close attention to Blake's idiosyncratic method of self-publishing. Approaching Blake's plates through digital technology, we will be particularly attuned to the ways they seem to welcome and resist new forms of representation and engagement. Illuminated works we will study in depth include *The Book of Thel*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *America a Prophecy*, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, *Europe a Prophecy*, *The First Book of Urizen*, and extracts from *Milton a Poem* and *Jerusalem*. We will trace allusions that these works make to the Bible, Dante, Milton, and eighteenth-century mystics, writers, and artists; we will also consider later evocations of Blake by poets, filmmakers, musicians, and online communities. To facilitate close reading

and collaboration, this seminar will make use of Mediathread, a multimedia analysis platform developed at Columbia by the Center for Teaching and Learning.

CLEN GU4404

Victorian Poetry

Erik Gray

This course examines the works of the major English poets of the period 1830-1900. We will pay special attention to Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning, and their great poetic innovation, the dramatic monologue. We will also be concentrating on poems by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Christina Rossetti, Matthew Arnold, A. E. Housman, and Thomas Hardy.

CLEN GU4822

19th C. European Novel

Maire Jaanus

The 19th Century European Novel in the field of the emotions and in the cultural context of the major thinkers and the major historical events of the era. We will examine feelings, emotions, and passions in the novels from the perspectives of affective neuroscience, psychoanalysis, and philosophy in order to lay bare more clearly what is known and believed versus what is unknown, ignored or latent about human emotional reality at this time. Reading: Austen, Kleist (novella), Emily Bronte, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Hardy, D.H. Lawrence. No reading outside of the novels will be required on your part. Further, my aim is to expand our cultural knowledge of the era by including the conceptual contributions and formative ideas of major 19th century thinkers in my lectures on the novels. Optional Reading of short selections from: Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Darwin, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Freud.

ENGL GU4504

Yeats, Eliot, Auden

Many poems and a few essays by W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden.

ENGL GU4622

African American Literature II

Farah Griffin

This survey of African American literature focuses on language, history, and culture. What are the contours of African American literary history? How do race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect within the politics of African American culture? What can we expect to learn from these literary works? Why does our literature matter to student of social change? This lecture course will attempt to provide answers to these questions, as we begin with Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and end with Melvin Dixon's *Love's Instruments* (1995) with many stops along the way. We will discuss poetry, fiction, drama, and non-fictional prose. Other authors include Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Malcolm X, Ntozake Shange, Audre

Lorde, and Toni Morrison. There are no prerequisites for this course. The formal assignments are two five-page essays and a final examination. Class participation will be graded.

ENGL GU4605

Ralph Ellison

Robert O’Meally

In this seminar we will read virtually everything by Ralph Ellison—leaving aside for now the posthumous novel published as *Three Days Before the Shooting*. We will concentrate on his achievements as an essayist, short story writer, and novelist. We will explore his literary training and aesthetic values as well as his shifting political philosophies and—to use a keystone Ellisonian word—his stances. As we read Ellison’s fiction and his essays, let us be watchful for Ellison’s positions on current cultural questions: parody and pastiche; technology and the modern; the importance of place—region, city or country, nation; internationality; complex definitions of individuality and sociality; race; vernacular art and culture; and the role of the politically engaged artist.

ENGL GU4613

The 1960s

Austin Graham

This course is devoted to “literature of the 1960s,” in both senses of the phrase: in the semester ahead, we will study authors who wrote during and about that most tumultuous of decades. We will approach the period thematically, reading texts that address distinct historical topics from week to week (the civil rights movement, the war in Vietnam, drugs, environmentalism, and so on). We will also take a broad view of what constitutes the “literature of the 1960s,” reading works in familiar literary genres like poetry, drama, and the novel, but additionally making time for essays, journalism, and songs.

CLEN 84122

The Novel in Africa

Jennifer Wenzel

The main task of this course will be to read novels by African writers. But “the novel in Africa” also involves connections between the literary genre of the novel and the historical processes of colonialism, decolonization, and globalization in Africa. One important question we’ll consider is how African novels depict those historical experiences in their themes and plots—we’ll read novels that are “about” colonialism, etc. A more complex question is how these historical processes relate to the emergence of the novel as an important genre for African writers. Edward Said went so far as to say that without imperialism, there would be no European novel as we know it. How can we understand the novel in Africa (whether read or written) as a product of the colonial encounter? How did it shape the process of decolonization? What contribution to history, whether literary or political, does the novel in Africa make? We’ll undertake a historical survey of African novels from the 1930s to the present, with attention to various subgenres (village novel, war novel, urbanization novel, novel of postcolonial disillusion, Bildungsroman). We’ll attend to how African novelists blend literate and oral storytelling traditions, how they address their work to local and global audiences, and how they use scenes of

characters reading novels (whether African or European) in order to position their writing within national, continental, and world literary space.

ENGL GU4910

Metaphor and Media

Dennis Tenen

This course offers a survey of major works on metaphor, beginning with Aristotle and ending with contemporary cognitive and media theory. Appropriate for both undergraduate and graduate students, our sessions will involve weekly discussion and an occasional “lab” component, in which we will test our theoretical intuitions against case studies of literary metaphor and metaphor in the fields of law, medicine, philosophy, and design.

I am particularly interested in ways metaphors “break” or “die,” whether from disuse, overuse, or misapplication. In their classical sense, metaphors work by ferrying meaning across from one domain to another. For example, by calling a rooster “the trumpet of the morn,” Shakespeare means to suggest a structural similarity between horn instruments and birds. Note that this similarity cannot pertain to the objects in their totality. The analogy applies to the call of the bird only or perhaps to the resemblance between a beak and the flute of a trumpet. The metaphor would fail yet again if there were no perceivable analogies between birds and trumpets. Similarly, computer users who empty their virtual “trash bins,” are promised the erasure of underlying data. The course will conclude by examining the metaphors implicit such media transformations.

ENGL GU4560

Children's Literature

James Adams

This is a historical survey of literature written principally for children (primarily narrative), which will explore not only the pleasures of imagination but the varieties of narrative and lyric form, as well as the ways in which story-telling gives shape to individual and cultural identity. Drawing on anonymous folk tale from a range of cultures, as well as a variety of literary works produced from the late 17th century to the present, we'll attend to the ways in which changing forms of children's literature reflect changing understandings of children and childhood, while trying not to overlook psychological and formal structures that might persist across this history. Readings of the primary works will be supplemented by a variety of critical approaches—psychoanalytic, materialist, feminist, and structuralist—that scholars have employed to understand the variety and appeal of children's literature.

CLEN UN4199

Literature and Oil

Jennifer Wenzel

This course will investigate the connections between literary/cultural production and petroleum as the substance that makes possible the world as we know it, both as an energy source and a component in the manufacture of everything from food to plastic. Our current awareness of oil's scarcity and its

myriad costs (whether environmental, political, or social) provides a lens to read for the presence (or absence) of oil in texts in a variety of genres and national traditions. As we begin to imagine a world "beyond petroleum," this course will confront the ways in which oil shapes both the world we know and how we know and imagine the world. Oil will feature in this course in questions of theme (texts "about" oil), of literary form (are there common formal conventions of an "oil novel"?), of interpretive method (how to read for oil), of transnational circulation (how does "foreign oil" link US citizens to other spaces?), and of the materiality (or "oiliness") of literary culture (how does the production and circulation of texts, whether print or digital, rely on oil?).

CLEN GU4414

History of Literary Criticism: Plato to Kant

Kathy Eden

The principal texts of literary theory from antiquity through the 18th century, including Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, Augustine, Aquinas, Boccaccio, Sidney, and Kant.

ENGL GU4905

The Antigone Project

Colm Toibin and Lisa Dwan

Colm Toibin and the actress Lisa Dwan will be examining the various translations of Antigone and the way that this text and story have been dealt with over the centuries. The class will analyze some translations of the play and also versions by Seamus Heaney, Anne Carson, Brecht, Anouilh and Athol Fugard. We will also work with creative writing students as they make their own versions, and performance students as they work out how the play in its versions could be produced. The class will be inviting in teachers from classical studies and other disciplines, including classical studies, literary studies and law.

ENGL GR6135

Renaissance Drama – Elizabethan Theatre

Alan Stewart

This graduate seminar course focuses on the theatre of Elizabethan England, with particular emphasis on London's emergent commercial theatre from the 1560s through to the 1590s. It will introduce students to a range of plays in all genres, from *Gorboduc* to *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, with special attention to the output of John Lyly and Christopher Marlowe, and use these plays to explore aspects of Elizabeth theatre, including the playhouses, companies, repertory, playwriting, and the printing of plays. Special attention will be paid to the archival manuscript sources of theatre history and critical study, and a series of current critical debates about all aspects of this rich dramatic tradition.

ENGL GR6812

Emily Dickenson, Lyric, and the Question of the Archive

Branka Arsic

Not counting eight poems that appeared in the press, and then often anonymously, most of Emily Dickinson's almost 1900 poems that have been preserved were not published. At some point in her life she started binding them in small "booklets" that became known as "fascicles" (a word she herself never used). But later in her life she stopped binding them and started organizing them into "sets," only in order, still later, to abandon that practice also, beginning to write fragmentary poems on bits of paper, envelopes, etc. Some poems collected in the fascicles have many word-variants that Dickinson also inserted into poems, leading many researchers to wonder whether her poems are finished or not, despite the fact that they were carefully preserved and copied by her. Other poems not only have word-variants, but are themselves written in different variants, leading critics to wonder which is "the final" poem. In short, because of how she wrote and archived her poetry, Dickinson's way of writing raises the question essential to her poetics: when is a poem complete; can a poem exist in continuity with other poems, and thus be one yet not whole; what does it mean to have one poem in multiple forms; and moreover, does a poem really need a form? What are the minimal conditions for a poem to be called a poem? How does a poem know when it ends if it is lacking closure?

Additionally, Dickinson's fascicles and sets, as well as her "envelope poems" are written with a variety of idiosyncratic diacritical marks that she invented by (very long dashes, additive marks [+++]) that most often can't easily be reproduced in print, leading critics to wonder if Dickinson's poetry is beholden to its material archive – to the actual handwriting and paper on which it was written – and inseparable from the substrate on which it was traced. If so – if in her case we are presented with an object or assemblage rather than a poem that can be easily transmitted through the medium of print – then we are perhaps encountering a case of poetry that must be touched in order to be understood. All of those aspects of Dickinson's poetry raise larger questions about poems' coming-into-being: their relationship to the way they were written (even to the substances on which they were written); the ontological and aesthetic criteria by which we decide what constitutes a poem, how/when we know that we are seeing one?

This class will read Dickinson's poems by reconstructing the way in which she wrote and archived them; in looking at both archival and poetic theories, it will try to answer questions about poetic form that are both specific to Dickinson's poetry and translatable into a theory of the lyric.

ENGL GR6399

Victorian Poetry, Faith, and Form

Erik Gray

It is impossible to overstate the extent to which religious controversies defined British culture of the Victorian period. It was a time marked both by a crisis of faith and by intense religious devotion, and debates about ecclesiastical and theological issues formed a large proportion of the reading matter, as well as the everyday conversation, of Victorian men and women. These religious controversies are inseparable from the notion of form. New scientific theories about the changing forms of the earth's surface and its species, as well as ongoing scholarship on the forms of biblical texts and biblical history, called into question basic tenets of Christian faith. These intellectual developments drove some believers away from traditional forms and rituals of religious worship while leading others to embrace them all the more firmly. And this concentration on form, in turn, is inseparable from poetry. The poetry of the period does not merely reflect contemporary debates but actively participates in them. Poetry was widely understood to be a form of – perhaps even a substitute for or successor to – religious

feeling, while religion was viewed by parties on both sides of the various disputes as being essentially poetic.

In this course we will read a selection of the most influential Victorian poets, some canonical and some now overlooked (including Keble, Newman, Clough, Robert Browning, Tennyson, Swinburne, and Hopkins), in the context of the writing of contemporary scientist (Lyell, Chambers, Darwin) and theologians (Paley, Strauss, Feuerbach). At the same time we will be tracing some of the most notable recent developments in criticism of Victorian poetry, which after a considerable period of neglect has lately returned to a serious consideration of these issues.

ENGL GR6634

Canonizing African-American Poetry

Elizabeth Alexander

African-American poetry is under-studied, under-theorized, and under-archived. In this seminar we will turn the African-American verse canon with a hand to edifying its scholarly apparatus. We will continually ask questions about the politics of canon formation and anthologizing, as well as read relevant theory in the field. We will study versions of this canon by reading several important anthologies of African American poetry over the 20th century, and we will read critical editions of individual poets which are variously exemplary: Arnold Rampersad's Langston Hughes, Verner Mitchell's Helene Johnson, Rita Dove's Melvin Tolson, among others. We will consider the myriad approaches to writing and publishing on Phillis Wheatley and interrogate the idea of "foremother." We will also consider the specific work of anthologizing such as Erlene Stetson's work on African American women poets and Aldon Neilsen's work on black experimentalism. The class will also send students to archives at Columbia, Schomburg, Beinecke, Poetry Society of America, and elsewhere to write short papers and reports on their findings. The final project will be a complete critical edition of the work of a chosen poet—"lost" or "canonical"—or a blueprint for an anthology on some subset of African American poetry.

CLEN GR6565

Varieties of Enchantment

Gauri Viswanathan

This course examines how conflicting knowledges and belief-systems have been rendered occult, marginal, or repressed, and it refocuses attention on enchantment in modernity and modern disciplines as a means of their recovery. Among the questions we will explore are the following: From what place, and by what means, is the world enchanted? Is enchantment a compensation for what Freud called "the lost appeal of life on this earth"? Or is it ultimately a privileging of the irrational in a world dominated by reason? What is the place of science in enchantment? Does the decline of religion precipitate the re-enchantment of the world via art? And finally and most importantly, can we understand intellectual formations by revisiting the processes of enchantment and disenchantment? Readings will include conceptual works by Max Weber, Theodor Adorno, Marcel Gauchet, Jane Bennett, Michael Saler, Alex Owen, and Bruno Latour; and literary works by Rudyard Kipling, Rider Haggard, George du Maurier, H.G.Wells, H.P. Blavatsky, H.P. Lovecraft, and Philip Dick.

ENGL GR6631**US Higher Education****Andrew Delbanco**

The syllabus itself is still in the works. I realize that students joining this class will in many cases be doing so as a supplement to their regular course work. The idea, therefore, is not to burden participants with long reading or writing assignments, but to create a forum for discussion of issues that are--or should be--on the minds of graduate students today. There will be regular reading, but it's my intention to keep it from becoming onerous. I do ask that those who choose to take the course as auditors (formally registered, or not) commit to regular attendance and participation. "We will have a number of visiting speakers who will address such topics as academic libraries in the digital age; the place of the liberal arts college in the higher education "ecosystem"; teaching "non-traditional" students; prospects for curricular reform; among others.

CLEN GR6842**Migrant Figurations: Film, Literature, Art, and Digital Media****Sandra Ponzanesi**

Migration has always been part of human mobility and civilization. Yet migration is often perceived as a 'crisis', creating 'stranger encounters' (Ahmed, 2000) and producing 'space invaders' (Puwar, 2004). Liquid figurations that posit migration in terms of invasion, wave, flow, and tide are the order of the day. And yet in a digital age, boundaries and borders are becoming porous and virtual so that we now speak of the 'connected migrant' (Diminescu, 2008) subject to 'high tech orientalism' (Chun, 2006) rather than the displaced migrant.

How can we account for the shifts in migrant figurations across geopolitical borders, genres, and disciplines? How can we rethink migrant figurations through the voices and performances of migrants themselves?

In this seminar, we aim to investigate different theories and practices relating to migrant figurations. We will engage with theoretical texts in order to unpack the main figurations of diaspora, nomadism, and hospitality (i.e. Bauman, Derrida, Gilroy, Braidotti, Butler, and Spivak). More concretely, the focus will be on cinematic, literary, artistic, and digital practices that challenge and resignify dominant representations, from the viral image of 'Aylan Kurdi' to 'migrant selfies' debates, from Adichie's *Americanah* to Hamid's *Exit West*, from Ai Wei's exhibition in NY to Banksy's graffiti, from migrant films to documentary films (*Fire at Sea*, *The Edge of Heaven*, *Nine Muses*). Migrant figurations tend to stick to the 'other'. How can we move beyond the sticky signs without losing the material histories of disenfranchisement?

CLEN GR6820**The Novel and Feminist/Queer Literary Theory****Marianne Hirsch**

In the past decades, feminist and queer literary theorists have found in the novel a template ripe for critical reflections on key literary, cultural and theoretical questions. The seminar will revisit a number of feminist and queer classics in literature and theory as well as recent novels that have engendered new theoretical imaginings. We will grapple with debates about the crossings of affect, embodiment, difference, power, colonization, and globalization, as well as the queer and gendered inflections of narrative, performativity, reading, authorship, plot, time, and space.

ENGL GR6635

American Sophistication: Adventures of an Oxymoron

Ross Posnock

American sophistication has a vexed status in a culture shaped from the start by the severe, parsimonious economies of Puritanism and its "plain style," and capitalism and its instrumental rationality. Both are suspicious of, often hostile to, the fashioning of a personal manner, to art and artfulness, to theatricality, all elements of the sophisticated. The battle for sophisticated taste began in earnest in the 1920s, in the novels of Sinclair Lewis and F Scott Fitzgerald, both admirers of H.L. Mencken. Scourge of American Puritanism's genteel tradition and author of one of the first books (1908) in English on Nietzsche, Mencken turned the philosopher into a crucial influence in the construction of the American sophisticate as icy (even lethal) aristocrat ("to play with burdens that would crush others to death is their recreation," gushes Mencken of the ideal type). The 30s featured the cultural work of Lincoln Kirstein, the prodigious and precocious impresario of ballet, art and photography. An essayist, novelist and poet, Kirstein was a crucial catalyst in elevating American aesthetic taste. He nurtured the early career of the photographer Walker Evans, who collaborated with James Agee on *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941). At once deploying and overturning the conventions of documentary photography and journalism, Agee and Evans made uncompromising modernist art out of a genre (the documentary) and a subject (impoverished Alabama tenant farmers) hitherto defined as the antithesis of sophistication. Mary McCarthy, in her linked story collection, *The Company She Keeps* (1942), reported from inside the world of the New York intellectuals, establishing the female sophisticate as acidulous observer. Post-war American culture, in part thanks to new technologies--the long playing record, the paperback--and new forms--"black" or "sick" humor of highly literate stand up comedians of political edge--energized the project of bourgeois sophistication. But the sophisticated also remained a source of anxiety; the 1955 bestseller *Marjorie Morningstar*, for instance, warned against the sexual threat of the unmarried sophisticate. That same year appeared William Gaddis's *The Recognitions*, an immense modernist novel that takes the downtown New York art world as a comic garrulous locale, a carnival of pseudo-sophisticates, from which to explore why difficulty is itself an imperative of American high culture; he traces sophisticated art's embattled status back to the distrust of art inflicted by Calvinist repressions, dramatized by Gaddis in the childhood of the novel's protagonist, a brilliant art forger. In the first half of the 1960s, with his "love letter" to Norman Mailer and his Cambridge Union debate with Wm. F Buckley, James Baldwin fashioned a sophistication of unprecedented poise and eloquence. The course will conclude with a look at contemporary hyper-self-conscious modes of sophistication via Ben Lerner's *Leaving the Atocha Station* (2011). We will also look at the opening chapters of Joseph Litvak's *Strange Gourmets: Sophistication, Theory and the Novel* (1997), which discloses the analogously vexed place of sophistication in academic culture.

