BROWN
Department of English

# 2025-2026 GRADUATE COURSE PROSPECTUS

The Department of English offers a wide variety of courses appropriate for concentrators as well as for others who wish to write, read, and critically assess literature. Seminars and special topics offerings intensely explore literary-historical fields through the study of theory and literary forms and often intersect with literatures in other fields.

## Fall 2025

**ENGL 2210 | Proseminar**
*Olakunle George*
This seminar, required for *first-year graduate students in English*, considers the state and stakes of literary studies today. The course aims to familiarize students with contemporary critical debates and stances in the wider discipline and to engage with current methodologies, theories, and analytical tensions. We also address issues of professionalization as they relate to the first years of graduate work.

**ENGL 2561Z | Adorations: Keats and Shelley**
*Jacques Khalip*
This course works as an intensive close reading of a substantial amount of poetic and prose texts by Keats and Shelley, paying particular attention not only to their singular concerns and preoccupations but also to the "and" in that classic conjunction: the particular kind of ideological late romanticism that emerges out of the historic convergence of these two young poets. Particular attention will be paid to the following concepts: posthumously, political radicalism, formal innovation, and meditations on the "contemporary." We will also read theorists and present-day writers who engage with and reflect on the romantic prehistory afforded by Keats and Shelley.

**ENGL 2761T | Race and The Gothic**
*Ramirez-D'Oleo*
In this graduate seminar, we muse on the aesthetic, formal, and thematic relationship between race (especially blackness and whiteness) and gothic literature and film, as well as theories of the gothic. Motifs in the genre include: death, the racialized Other, the unseen realms, the sublimated inner self, the void, shadows, blackness, the sublime, nightmares, and more. Spanning from the early 19th century to the present, we read fiction and watch films of the various subgenres of the gothic, such as the Arctic Gothic and U.S. Southern Gothic.

**ENGL 2761X | The Blue of the Plums is the Memory of the Sea: Poetic Ecologies of Displacement**
*Ada Smailbegovic*
This seminar takes up the concept of displacement from two different vantage points. One is a consideration of how anthropogenically generated processes of environmental change can lead to displacements alongside ecological edges at which different organisms meet one another. The other is a consideration of human migration. In assuming what the theorist Sara Ahmed has called migrant orientation, the seminar resists the discourses which have attempted to

ground the ecological dimensions of place in an essentialist sense of biological stability, which often obfuscates settler-colonial discourses. Readings by Etel Adnan, Yên Lê Espiritu, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, and others.

**ENGL 2950 | Seminar in Pedagogy and Composition Theory**
*Dixa Ramirez-D'Oleo*
An experimental and exploratory investigation into writing as a preparation for teaching college-level writing. Reviews the history of writing about writing, from Plato to current discussions on composition theory. Against this background, examines various processes of reading and writing. Emphasizes the practice of writing, including syllabus design.

## Spring 2026

**ENGL 2361F | Evil Plays**
*Richard Rambuss*
Nineteenth-century poet-critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously posited Shakespeare's villainous Iago as a "motiveless malignancy." One way to take this remark is that the evil which Iago plots exceeds any rationale provided for it. (Does this then make him a figure of "pure evil"? If so, just what is that?)

In addition to *Othello*, this graduate seminar studies the workings of evil in three other Shakespeare tragedies: *Titus Andronicus* (a dramatic atrocity that pushes the logic of the revenge play beyond its breaking point); the sinisterly supernatural (or not) *Macbeth*; and the shatteringly nihilistic *King Lear*. Because Renaissance drama is much more than Shakespeare, we will also consider the spectacularization of malice and depravity in the works of several of his contemporaries, including, for instance, *The White Devil* by John Webster; *The Changeling* by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley; and *Tis Pity She's a Whore* by John Ford. With an eye toward the "afterlife" of Renaissance literature, we will additionally take up Roman Polanski's 1971 film adaptation of *Macbeth* as well as Taylor Mac's recent play *Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus*, which debuted on Broadway in 2019.

Theoretically and philosophically, the seminar aims to study the relations between evil and—cruelty, violence, vengeance, hatred, otherness, inhumanity, monstrosity, outrage, sensationalism, decadence, the taboo. And also pleasure. Additional critical and theoretical readings may include: Artaud; Nietzsche; Nelson; Arendt; Freud; Eliot.

**ENGL 2762A | Race and Its Avatars: Literary Identity Politics From the Medieval to the Present**
*Daniel Kim, Mariah Min*
In this seminar, we will seek to develop an understanding of how "racism is itself," in the words of Etienne Balibar, "a singular history"—of how it consists not so much of "a single invariant racism but a number of *racisms*, each of which "has no fixed frontiers" and can thus cross-contaminate each other, even across wide expanses of time and space. In theoretical and historiographical terms, we will attend to this multivalent and multicombinant quality of race/racism in two ways: 1) we will explore how to conceptualize *relationally* the various racial formations that emerged in modernity out of the slave trade, colonialism in its multiple manifestations, and Nazism; and 2) we will study pre-modern forms of collective hatred and fear that emerged prior to the putative stabilization of race as a defining category of identity. We also focus on a number of literary works from the medieval period to the present that bring the liveliest currents of "race" into vibrant intimacy, both synchronically and diachronically.

The theorists we will likely take up include: da Silva, Foucault, Heng, Mbembé, Said, Spillers, Wolfe, and Wynters. The literary works we will study include such works as: *The King of Tars*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Tempest*, *Jane Eyre, Ceremony, Jasmine*, *Beloved*, and *Home*.

**ENGL 2900S | Twenty-First Century Critical Theory**

*Timothy Bewes*

Intended as an introduction to some influential emergent strains of literary-theoretical scholarship over the past two decades, Twenty-first-Century Critical Theory will examine work in contemporary aesthetics, ecological and environmental thought, affective criticism, transgender studies, black studies, and debates around the future prospects of literary studies. In each case, a substantial 21st-century text will be considered alongside several canonical works (by figures such as Kant, Marx, Du Bois, Haraway) with which it is in conversation. Contemporary authors include Lauren Berlant, Saidiya Hartman, Achille Mbembe, Fred Moten, Jeffrey Nealon, Rob Nixon, Sianne Ngai, Paul B. Preciado, and Sylvia Wynter.