English and American Literature and Language

ENGL S-163. Contemporary American Drama (CRN: 31646)
Robert Scanlan PhD, Visiting Lecturer, English and American Language and Literature, Harvard University

Reading, discussion, and analysis of contemporary American plays and playwrights and their immediate predecessors of the past half-century. Our reading list represents styles from social realism to avant-garde performance events, the theater of images, feminist performance, and other challenges to conventional theatrical forms. Attention to the social, cultural, and political forces that shaped major aspects of American playwriting. Playwrights include Tony Kushner, David Mamet, Suzan-Lori Parks, David Rabe, John Guare, Paula Vogel, Eve Ensler, August Wilson, and their predecessors, Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill, Clifford Odets, Lorraine Hansberry, Tennessee Williams, and others.

ENGL S-187. Early American Bestsellers (CRN: 31645)
Grantland S. Rice PhD, Director, Corporate and Foundation Relations, Department of Development, Harvard Law School

This course will explore the emergence of popular fiction in America before the Civil War. Focusing on the historical and sociological conditions that gave birth to such popular genres as the captivity narrative, the autobiography, the epistolary novel, the seduction plot, the literary sketch, the romance, and the expos#this course will examine prose works from settlement to the Civil War. Special consideration will be given to issues of authorship, intellectual property, and copyright law. Authors covered will include Mary Rowlandson, Benjamin Franklin, Michel Guillaume Saint Jean de Cr#coeur, Charles Brockden Brown, Hannah Foster, Susanna Rowson, Washington Irving, George Lippard, James Fenimore Cooper, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Wilson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville.

ENGL S-145. Romanticism (CRN: 31573)
William Flesch PhD, Associate Professor of English, Brandeis University

English romanticism sets the tone for most of the English language literature of the past two centuries. In this class we will survey the six great romantic poets--Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Percy Shelley, and Keats--as well as three novelists who formed or responded to the movement: Austen, Mary Shelley, and Emily Bront#

ENGL S-124e. Shakespeare (CRN: 31572)
William Flesch PhD, Associate Professor of English, Brandeis University

This course is a survey of eight plays by England's greatest playwright and poet. We will cover all genres (comedy, tragedy, history, and romance), but will concentrate on the tragedies, culminating with King Lear. We will be thinking about Shakespeare as both writer and theatrical impresario, concentrating on his characters and his language.

ENGL S-141. The Enlightenment Invention of the Modern Self (CRN: 31376)
Leo Damrosch PhD, Ernest Bernbaum Professor of Literature, Harvard University

During the eighteenth century, as traditional ways of interpreting the world came under energetic attack, writers in Britain, France, and Germany brilliantly explored the ways in which the self can be seen as a product of social conditioning, fragmentary and artificial, and yet also as a fundamental core of stable personality. In addition to short selections from poets, biographers, and philosophers, the course will focus on memorable narrative works including Boswell's London Journal, Rousseau's Confessions, Diderot's Jacques the Fatalist, Laclos' Liaisons Dangereuses, and Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography. A final section will consider the anti-Enlightenment critique of the romantic poet Blake.

ENGL S-185. Wit and Humor (CRN: 31614)
Leo Damrosch PhD, Ernest Bernbaum Professor of Literature, Harvard University

Emphasizing wit and humor rather than "comedy" as classically understood, the course will consider selected texts and films (including, for example, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, Robert Benchley, Dave Barry, Woody Allen, and Monty Python) and pay particular attention to theoretical writings by psychologists, sociologists, and critics who have tried to explain why people laugh, want to laugh, and pay to be made to laugh.