

The English Aggie

March 2024

Upcoming Courses

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Faculty Book Q&A

Student Submissions

All About Health Humanities

National Reader's Month

Upcoming Course Offerings

ENGL 303: Approaches to English Studies

Race, Medicine, and Literature

Dr. Michael Collins

This course will explore the ways in which ideas about race, racial identity, and racial difference have affected medical practice, race relations, and writings about both by creative writers, doctors and researchers. Readings will cover topics such as medical training, drug use, the AIDS epidemic, and the meaning of health. As a writing-intensive course, the class will include discussion of the mechanics of essay writing, as well as opportunities to write short essays and a longer research paper.

The Unreliable Narrator

Dr. Andrew Pilsch

In this section of ENGL 303, we will consider the history of the “unreliable narrator,” that is texts which are narrated by people who are not, we eventually learn, telling us strictly the truth. Particular attention will be paid to the relationship between this figure and fiction about crime. We will also use these questions to explore underlying assumptions about fiction itself, especially as these questions matter for the English major.

The Work of World Literatures

Dr. Ira Dworkin

By examining text and context, the class will consider the ways that diverse literary works enter into conversations with each other and, more widely, with broader cultural archives. Beginning with Chinua Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart*, students will become acquainted with the many different methodologies scholars use to read, discuss, and write about literature and other cultural texts. What kinds of questions do we ask in the discipline of English Studies, and what approaches and tools do we use to answer those questions?

Moreover, we will consider the relevance of English Studies to the wider world within which readers read and writers write. What do the questions and critical methodologies we bring to texts have to offer to the culture at large? Throughout the semester, we will practice the basic skills essential to more advanced study in English: close reading, clear writing, and the formulation of fertile, well-informed research questions.

Gaming Literature

Dr. Regina Mills

This course explores games as a literary category and examines how we make games out of literature. We will look at how games make narratives through story and design. From fan fiction, in which readers of literature play with the literature they adore, to tabletop and online role-playing games, in which a gamemaster or game developer builds worlds and players characterize their created personas (avatars) through actions and dialogue, games of all kinds use and play with the conventions of literature. “Gaming Literature” is about seeing games as literature and viewing literary studies as a field of exploration and experimentation.

This course provides a robust introduction to the major, showing students the many avenues of research available to English majors. From “literary studies” methods like close reading and socioformal analysis, area studies approaches such as Black studies and Latinx studies, queer studies, feminist studies,

cultural studies (with a focus on pop culture and even folklore approaches), digital humanities, creative writing, rhetoric, film studies and the study of visual culture. There may be guest lectures from scholars across the country (via Zoom) who will introduce you to a variety of ways to approach games and other literary productions. This is a portfolio-based course, meaning that students' final grades depend heavily on their ability to reflect on feedback, learn from failure (just like you do in Mario when you fall into that pit or hit a Goomba over and over), and revise their work. Students will also create their own game (digital or analog) - a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure that will test their ability to use worldbuilding, characterization, and storytelling tools.

ENGL 481: Senior Seminar

The Book in Hand: Reading and Materiality of Texts

Dr. Kevin O' Sullivan

This course will provide a sustained interrogation of the relationship between texts and the media which convey them. Beginning with early book forms, such as cuneiform tablets and palm-leaf books, and extending to twenty-first century technologies like e-readers and generative AI, students will analyze how modes of physical production have influenced textual production across millennia. In addition to critical writings on relevant aspects of book history, our thinking here will be further supported by readings in reception theory that foreground the role of the reader as essential to textual production. These theoretical considerations (re)defining "the book" will be nuanced and critiqued through weekly visits to special collections, where students will interact with actual examples of the materials about which they are reading and thereby strengthen their skills in primary-source research.

After establishing an applied understanding of analytical bibliography through early assignments, the semester will culminate in a longer research project focused on the original analysis of an item (or small group of items) from Texas A&M's own rare books and special collections repository, the Cushing Library.

The Authenticated Self

Dr. Sarah Potvin

Who are you? How do others know that you are you? These are questions of mutual, if differentiated, interest to philosophers of the human experience and companies that claim to protect your devices and accounts from unauthorized access. This course will center texts, films, and visual art to explore questions of identity, authenticity, and self. Texts will be paired with hands-on investigations of technologies and methods that authenticate (or, conversely, fabricate) the self, including stylometry, multimodal AI and other predictive technologies. This pairing will invite critical discussions of the historical and theoretical assumptions that inform and shape these technologies.

For additional course offerings, reading lists, and updates, visit the English website or scan the QR code below!





Faculty Book Feature:

Dr. Regina Mills' *Invisibility and Influence: A Literary History of AfroLatinidades*

Dr. Regina Mills is an Assistant Professor of English at Texas A&M University from Northern Virginia. Her research interests include AfroLatinx studies, life-writing, and the intersection of Latinx studies and video games. In her free time, she enjoys playing video games. Most recently, she has been playing *Dave the Diver*, *Marvel's Midnight Suns*, and *Final Fantasy VII Rebirth*.

Over the course of eight years, Dr. Regina Mills has been working on her debut book, *Invisibility and Influence: A Literary History of AfroLatinidades*. It initially started as her dissertation, but has been crafted and reshaped over the years to best accommodate the literary format. I was fortunate enough to learn more about the story and research behind

Her debut book combines two of her many research interests: AfroLatinx studies and life writing. The subject of life writing takes many unique forms, "[l]ife writing studies examines the many different ways that people tell their life narratives, from traditional memoirs...to more experimental forms." AfroLatinx studies consider the treatment of Black Latinx people in the US, "focusing on how their racialization as Black in the US, the Caribbean, and Latin American has influenced their treatment and experiences in the Americas." In her book, Dr. Mills combined these two topics to consider how they interact with each other within a Western context.

Dr. Mills initially planned to center her dissertation around US-Central American Literature.

Specifically, Dr. Mills wanted to focus on her mother's history as a Guatemalan immigrant during the 36-year Civil War, an event she was unaware her mother experienced until graduate school.

"I'm the daughter of a Guatemalan immigrant and a white American father, and I wanted to write about literature that reflected my mother's history."

After her mother's unexpected death in 2015 at 45 years old, she could not continue with the project as planned. When considering how to continue with her research, she recalled a memoir by Afro-Panamanian memoirist Veronica Chambers.

This source pivoted her research towards AfroLatinx life writers, while still keeping US-Central American literature, and her mother, "at the heart of [her] book."

Dr. Mills wants readers to understand the influence AfroLatinx writers have had on life writing today, "I really wanted to highlight the literary history and value of AfroLatinx writers



A Literary History

Invisibility & Influence

of AfroLatinidades

Regina Marie Mills

and to counter the narrative that AfroLatinxs are a 'new' identity, just now emerging." She emphasizes, "AfroLatinx writers have been influential in the US and Caribbean...[I want] to encourage readers to rethink how we approach Latina/o/x identities, since they have historically excluded Black Latinxs."

Students of any major could gain something from learning about the rich, untold history of AfroLatinx life writers. I look forward to reading her book upon its release!

Find Dr. Mills' book online and in stores June 4th, 2024!

Double Double

By Madison Dykman

Your finger on the closet door, mocking me
whispering “I’m near, I’m near,”
but it’s not a whisper, it’s a scream
that nobody can hear.

Don’t you see them too?
Don’t you see those three Weird faces
Making their monthly entrance, eyes set on my heart,
claws set on my flesh? My flesh that covers bones
That are not firm enough to keep the Weird out,
but work measures as a finger-laced prison keeping me in.

“Go away,” I scream not at them but at my father who checks on me
Who sees the same faces, feels the same claws
night, after night, after night to the last syllable
of recorded time.

I used to think he was a king,
now I know him to be something much darker
Something no screaming, nor spells, nor good memories
Can bring into the light.

Health Humanities

Minor Requirements: 18 Hours

- **Introduction to Health Humanities: ENGL 107 or ENGL 292**
- **Rhetoric or Literature: ENGL 312 or ENGL 395**

And 12 hours of health humanities electives!



All About Health Humanities: a Q&A with Dr. Jessica Howell

What exactly is health humanities?

Health Humanities is a growing field that combines different disciplinary perspectives to study health, illness, healing, and the body.

Why is health humanities important?

Health Humanities allows us to investigate these experiences of being human in a collaborative and self-reflective way. It bridges boundaries between health sciences, humanities, and the arts. The practice of Health Humanities based in narrative methods also encourages us to listen to and read other people's stories of illness and healing, understanding that their experiences in their bodies are unique. We discuss how different forms of human expression can capture different experiences of being in a body.

How do health and humanities combine?

Health Humanities explores topics like bodily autonomy, pain and its expression, health inequalities and access to care, undiagnosable or misdiagnosed disease 'categories,' or historical versus contemporary responses to epidemics. To study these topics, we often draw on historical, philosophical, literary and cultural methods of analysis. In introductory Health Humanities courses, we read chapters by experts in these fields, to understand how we practice the history of medicine in a Health Humanities context, for example, or how to closely examine a film that represents the body. Then we practice these skills using specific case studies, like autobiographies by women with breast cancer, social

debates about doping in sports, novels about the plague, or films depicting disabled characters.

In more advanced Health Humanities courses, we might focus on a more specific topic, like graphic medicine (comics about health), blindness and disability in literature, medical detective literature and film, human health and the environment, or creative nonfiction about illness and healing. Students often submit a more in-depth project at the end of these courses, like a research essay or a piece of creative nonfiction, on topics that they develop in conversation with their instructor.

How could health humanities be applied to a job? Who could the study of health humanities benefit?

Health Humanities stu-

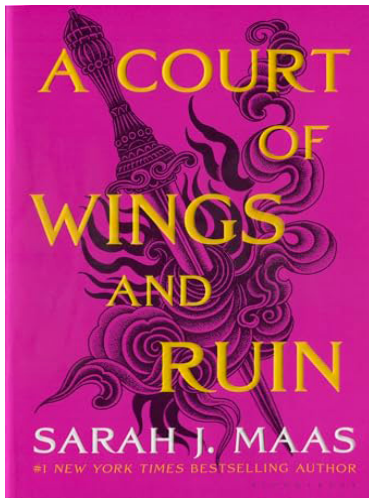
dents are often interested in healthcare, or in allied fields like public health or healthcare administration. Some pursue law, public policy work, or graduate work in the humanities. Practice thinking outside the 'box' of one disciplinary perspective can help students in the Health Humanities address society's bigger issues. This skill can enhance jobs where the student needs to work in a team in order to problem solve. Of course, the skills of responsible research, strong writing, collaboration with peers, and clear and convincing argumentation are relevant to all job fields. If there is one characteristic that I see in many Health Humanities students, it is that they often draw upon their commitment to engaging with and enhancing their communities in their work for class.

What are English Aggies Reading?

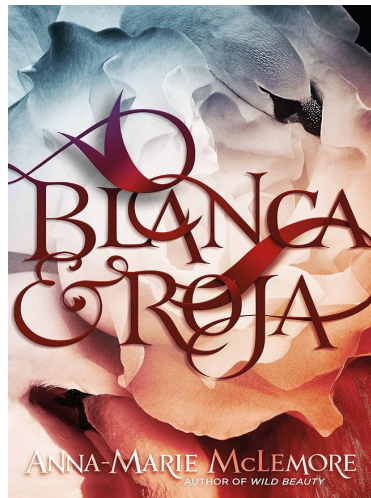
Popular Genres and Medium

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Fantasy | 1. Novel |
| 2. Horror | 2. Poetry |
| 3. Romance | 3. Short Story |
| 4. Contemporary | 4. Graphic Novel |
| 5. Classics | |

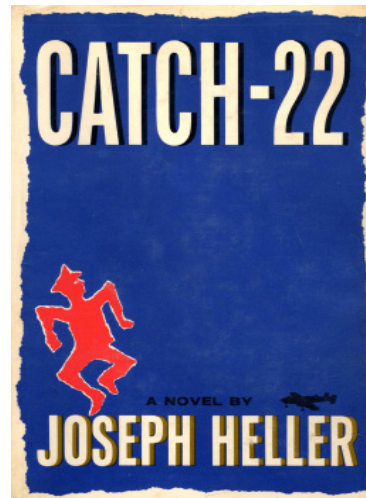
Highlights



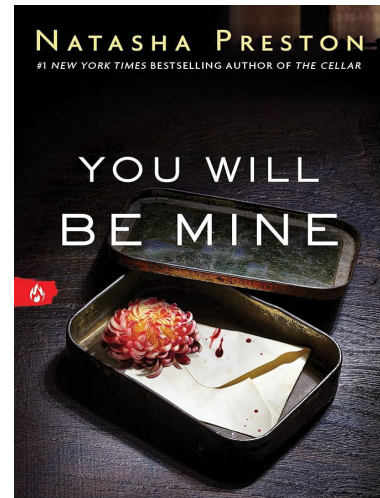
"...[T]his book has it all. The political drama, the fight scenes, the romance. I also think it's well-paced and keeps the reader's attention throughout. Honestly, if I only read one book for the rest of my life it would be this one."



"For 'Blanca y Roja'...I love the romantic way in which the protagonists interact with and view the natural world....It is a beautiful way to see the world and the book shows the strength of love and family."



"Thought provoking, encouraging, challenging, but inspiring themes. These [kinds of] books are my favorite because they make me think! They remind me that I really don't know that much."



"All of these books make me think and have twists that are not expected. That is what makes them some of my all time favorites."

Recommendations from the Editor

Bunny
by Mona Awad

Gone Girl
by Gillian Flynn

Throne of Glass
by Sarah J. Maas

Book Lovers
by Emily Henry

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