

Sociologies of Literature Since 1945

Live Zoom sessions Mondays and Wednesdays 5:00 - 6:20 p.m. EDT

Professor Scott Challener (sdchallener@wm.edu)

Outdoors Office Hours (weather permitting), TBD

Virtual Office Hours Mondays and Wednesdays, via Zoom, 12:30-2:30 p.m. EDT, and by appt. (<https://calendly.com/sdchallener/30-minute-conference-virtual-office-hours>)

LAND AND SLAVERY ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As the author of this syllabus and as a faculty member at William & Mary, I acknowledge the Indigenous peoples who are the original inhabitants of the lands our campus is on today – the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway), Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Mattaponi, Monacan, Nansemond, Nottoway, Pamunkey, Patowomeck, Upper Mattaponi, and Rappahannock tribes – and share my regard for tribal members past and present.

I also underscore that William & Mary acknowledges that it “owned and exploited slave labor from its founding to the Civil War; and that it had failed to take a stand against segregation during the Jim Crow Era.”

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Questions about the relationship between literature and society are at least as old as Madame de Staël’s *On Literature Considered in its Relationship to Social Institutions* (1800), but they have become newly urgent in the twenty-first century. What is literature? Where does it come from? Who claims it? Who makes it? Why do people so passionately devote their lives to it? Who reads this stuff? And, given our current conditions of social and economic precarity, how could we read now? This seminar pursues these and other questions through a variety of sociological approaches to the study of literature, including history of the book, systems theory, computational methods, digital humanities, new disciplinary history, the sociology of translation, social poetics, and Marxist sociology. Through a series of case studies we’ll examine a variety of overlapping but distinctive literary phenomena, including the problem of canon formation; literary prizes and economies of prestige; the formation of the reading class; the situation of “world literature” in the global literary marketplace; the traffic of global genres in the world system; the “three percent problem” (the percentage of literary translations published in the U.S. each year); the consolidation of the publishing industry; the rise of the creative writing program; the rise of Amazon and Google; the marketing of minoritized literatures; and the relationship between the academic study of literature and processes of literary production, distribution, consumption, and reception. We’ll place particular emphasis throughout on the determinant roles that constructions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class play in the social lives of literature—how, where, why, and when literature is variously used, shared, bought, sold, read, invoked, desired, embraced, and refused.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS (Most of the texts below are not available for unlimited user access licenses from Swem. You may purchase print editions through W&M's [Official Bookstore](#) or online. Please consider supporting local independent bookstores by using [Bookshop](#).)

Octavia Butler, [Kindred](#) (1978; Beacon P reprint, 2003). ISBN: 9780807083697.

Roberto Bolaño, *By Night in Chile* (Editorial Anagrama, 2000; New Directions, 2003), translated by Chris Andrews. ISBN: 9780811215473.

J.M. Coetzee, [Foe](#) (Penguin, 1986). ISBN: 9780240096231.

Eve L. Ewing, *1919* (Haymarket Books, 2019). ISBN: 9781608465989.

Elena Ferrante, [The Lying Life of Adults](#) (Europa Editions, 2020).

R. Zamora Linmark, *Rolling the R's* (Kaya P, 1995; 2016). ISBN: 9781885030511.

Toni Morrison, [Sula](#) (1973; Vintage reprint, 2004). ISBN: 9781400033430.

Sally Rooney, [Normal People](#) (Hogarth, 2018). ISBN: 9781984822185.

Fran Ross, *Oreo* (New Directions reprint, 2015). ISBN: 9780811223225

There are no digital versions of *1919*, *Oreo*, and *By Night in Chile* available.

COURSE WEBSITE

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard site at blackboard.wm.edu.

REQUIREMENTS

25% PARTICIPATION

As with an in-person, on-ground class, regular attendance and active, thoughtful participation are required. You are expected to present at every virtual class meeting. Our virtual classroom will be a mix of pre-recorded and real-time lectures, small-group and large-group discussions, and asynchronous writing. Discussion requires every student to take the intellectual risk of offering observations, ideas, and arguments in class in response to one another and to the instructor. You aren't supposed to know all the answers in advance, but you are required to come to class prepared to join in a communal effort to figure things out. If you are apprehensive about speaking in class or have a special situation that will affect your participation, please see me during office hours at the start of the term. If you fall ill or miss class for a family emergency, please contact me as soon as possible. Lateness, lack of preparation, and disruptive behavior will affect the participation grade.

GROUPME

Our course has a [GroupMe](#). Click on the link to join. Our GroupMe will function as an informal space for “uncritical” responses that zero in on what is typically left out of traditional “critical” interpretation. See the [assignment sheet](#) for details on this difference.

15% KEYWORDS ENTRY

The "keywords" entry (4-5 pages, min.) takes a long, historical view on the vocabulary by which we understand the world. See the [assignment sheet](#) for details.

20% PAPER ENGAGING A SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY/Framework/CONCEPT

An interpretive paper (6-8 pages, min.) making an argument that engages a sociological theory/framework/concept to the study of literature. The paper should make appropriate use of secondary sources. See the assignment sheet for details.

20% PROPOSAL FOR A LONG-TERM SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

The detailed research proposal asks you to envision and design, as precisely as possible, an applied sociological study of a "literary" phenomenon. Projects might focus on the circulation of poetry on social media, the function of blurbs, the outside popularity of certain non-U.S.-based authors in the U.S., a study of a specific literary prize, an analysis of Oprah's Book Club or of review communities like Goodreads, an examination of fan fiction, the role of literature in government, a viral literary scandal or other viral phenomenon, a study of the books you own but haven't read, or a study of the books made conspicuously visible in all those Zoom backgrounds.

You will be expected to lay out the historical, disciplinary, and interpretive stakes of the study as well as consider questions related to method. These latter questions will pose significant problem-solving challenges: what determines the selection and definition of an object of analysis? How will you select your "corpus" or data set and delineate its boundaries? Why one method and not another- why conduct a network analysis and not an ethnographic study? How will you constitute, represent, and analyze evidence? What will key, foundational concepts like "reading," "author," and "literature" mean for this study? How will the project draw on previous studies? And so on. I expect the proposal to be as rigorous in its written form as in its imagining of the follow-through: you will be expected to put forward a motivating problem that the study seeks to clarify or better understand and argue with conviction about the significance of that problem. You will also be expected to anticipate and describe the limitations and challenges associated with their approach. See the assignment sheet for details.

20% PUBLIC-FACING PRESENTATION OF PROPOSAL

For your final project, you will take one last step with your research proposals: you will "translate" them for a public-facing, non-academic audience. This last assignment is in a sense the most challenging of all: how to explain sociological questions and concerns to an audience of readers and non-readers with varying levels of interest, education, time, and exposure? You will be prepared to face these challenges head on because we will be regularly studying how sociologists of literature do just that. Alongside canonical articles, we'll be reading and watching shorter, hotter takes in mainstream venues (Slate.com, *Public Books*, *Post45 Contemporaries*, the *New York Times*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and other national media) that address the

selfsame sociological questions we'll be studying in greater detail. Our discussions will not only focus on reading comprehension of the “content” (argument, method, analysis, implications) but also on the strategic aesthetic and formal decisions these scholars make when explaining what it is they do--and why--to nonacademic audiences. See the assignment sheet for details.

HEALTHY TOGETHER COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

By taking this course you agree to William & Mary’s [Healthy Together Community Commitment](#). As the website states, this agreement means that “you affirm that you understand what is required in order to be physically present in our community this year and that you will fully comply. You also acknowledge that an inability or failure to comply with our Healthy Together Community Commitment may impact your ability to remain on campus and/or participate as a member of the William & Mary community. Accordingly, there will be consequences for non-compliance, for both employees and students.” Specifically, you agree to three key actions: 1) you will mitigate risk of transmitting COVID-19; 2) demonstrate care and concern for the physical and psychological well-being of others; and 3) support W&M’s mission.

GRADING

William & Mary uses a four-point [grading system](#). The general standards for grades are as follows:

A range: Outstanding work, demonstrating thorough mastery of course materials and skills.

B range: Good work, demonstrating serious engagement with all aspects of the course but incomplete mastery of course materials and skills.

C range: Satisfactory work, meeting requirements but indicating significant problems mastering the course materials and skills.

D range: Poor or minimally passing work, meeting the basic course requirements, but frequently unsatisfactory in several major areas.

F: Failure due to unmet course requirements or consistently unsatisfactory work.

GROUND RULES FOR STUDY, PRACTICE, CARE, ASSESSMENT

In this course we will establish ground rules for study: our collective practice of study, care, attention, and assessment. I have designed four major assignments for this course; the only criterion I propose is that if you do not complete them, then it is not possible to pass the course.

RECORDING OF CLASS LECTURES & DISCUSSIONS

Students may not record class lectures and discussions without permission. Permission will be granted on a case-by-case basis.

WRITING RESOURCES CENTER

The [Writing Resources Center](#) (Swem Library, 1st floor) offers one-on-one consultations for students to discuss their work in any discipline with well-trained writing consultants. Consultants will work with you at any stage in your writing process. They will work with you to help you do your own best work, so you should expect to be actively involved in your session. The WRC is a resource for all William & Mary students. Whether you consider yourself to be a strong writer or a weak one, you can benefit from meeting with a writing consultant.

The hours for the current semester are posted on the website. I encourage you to reserve an appointment in advance. You may schedule a session online or in person. In addition to consultations at the WRC, Swem Library offers a number of other resources for students, including workshops, guidance on research, and physical spaces ideal for an array of projects, from individual projects to group work.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is at the heart of the university, and we all are responsible to each other and to our community for upholding the ideals of honor and integrity. William & Mary has had an [Honor Code](#) since at least 1779. Your full participation and observance of the Honor Code is expected. To present something as your own original writing or thinking when it is not is plagiarism. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are serious violations of trust. Academic and intellectual dishonesty, including plagiarism, will have severe consequences, in accordance with the student-led honor system. For details about your responsibilities as a student, please see the [Student Handbook](#).

STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & BELONGING

You are welcome regardless of status, documentation, gender, race, class, ethnicity, or ability. This classroom is a safe space, but it is not a hermetically sealed environment. Rather, it is a microcosm of our larger community. To begin to make the classroom an equitable space you have to follow a few basic guidelines. You are expected to be respectful in your speech and actions. Intentions matter. Effects do too. Practice self-reflexivity. Consider the positions you inhabit and the positions you take. Recognize the impact you have on others. Active participation does not necessarily mean that you talk; it means that you listen. It means that you recognize both the spaces you occupy and move through and the structures that organize them. Be aware of how much airtime you take up. Prioritize historically marginalized voices whenever possible. Practice critical compassion. Whether you agree or disagree, acknowledge and respond in turn. Justify your perspective with textual evidence; and pose questions from your experience. Learn the names of your peers. And finally, accept and sit with your feelings, whether “bad” or “good” or otherwise. Embrace and explore the full range of intellectual and affective possibilities at hand—including discomfort, confusion, anxiety, insecurity, pleasure, delight, gladness, joy, and all the mixtures thereof, for which we may not have a language. Read my latest “Diversity Statement” [here](#).

“The curriculum is us,” Eric Hayot affirms. When we study texts, we read them; when we read them, we interact with them. We press on them; they press back. We bring to them norms we’ve learned through habit, practice, and repeated exposure. Given this, we will wrestle with parallel truths: that norms are constitutive of literary form; that they differ among different publics; and that they change over time—that they’re fluid, neither permanent nor inevitable.

CHOSEN NAME & GENDER PRONOUNS

This course aims to be an inclusive learning community that supports students of all gender expressions and identities. Please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name or set of pronouns than those listed in the official class roster. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this course, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, William & Mary provides many support services that are available to all students.

William & Mary accommodates students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws and university policy. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact Student Accessibility Services staff at 757-221-2512 or at sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation.

[Student Accessibility Services](#) is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. Student Accessibility Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to Student Accessibility Services.

SCHEDULE (subject to change)

I. BETWEEN LITERATURE & SOCIETY: CANONS AND READERS

Wednesday, January 27th. Introductions. Syllabus.

Read:

- “[Chapter One: The Promise](#),” in C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford UP, 1959).
- James English, “[Everywhere and Nowhere: The Sociology of Literature after “the Sociology of Literature”](#)” (*New Literary History*, Vol. 42, No. 2, Spring 2010).
- Leah Price, “[Introduction](#),” *What We Talk About When We Talk About Books: The History and Future of Reading* (Basic Books, 2019).

Prompts:

- Icebreaker: Dr. Katherine McKittrick’s question: [Where do you know from?](#) Come prepared to share answers to Eugenia Zuroski’s six questions (via the link above).
- According to John Guillory, a literary syllabus *constitutes* and *distributes* cultural capital *unequally*. It is not just a *document*; it is a *genre*, a *social institution*, and a *problem*--“a problem of the access to the means of literary production and consumption.” What is a literary syllabus according to *you*? Peruse some of the examples below.

English 135. Fate and the Individual in European Literature: First semester. 2 hours credit. Open to Juniors, seniors, and graduate students who secure written permission from Professor Arno Rader, 2222 Angell Hall. Th. 4-6. 2215 A.M. Instructor W. Auden			
Required Reading			
Dante	The Divine Comedy		Modern Library
Aeschylus	The Agamemnon (translated Louis MacNeice)		
Sophocles	The Antigone (translated Dudley Fitts or Fitzgerald)		
Horace	Odes	Loeb	
Augustine	Confessions	Loeb	
Shakespeare	Henry IV, Part 2		
Shakespeare	Othello		
Shakespeare	Hamlet		
Shakespeare	The Tempest		
Ben Jonson	Volpone		
Pascal	Pensées		Everyman
Racine	Phèdre		
Blake	Martingale of Heaven and Hell		
Goethe	Faust, Part I		Everyman
Kierkegaard	Fear and Trembling		
Stendhal	Journals		Random House
Ibsen	Peer Gynt		Everyman
Dostoevsky	The Brothers Karamazov		Modern Library
Rimbaud	Une Saison en Enfer (tr. Schwartz)		Modern Library
Henry Adams	Education of Henry Adams		New Directions
Melville	Moby Dick		Modern Library
Rilke	Journal of My Other Self		Norton
Kafka	The Castle		Knopf
T. S. Eliot	Family Reunion		Harcourt Brace
Opera Libretti			
Orpheus	(Glinka)	Flying Dutchman	(Wagner)
Don Giovanni	(Mozart)	Tristan und Isolde	(Wagner)
The Magic Flute	(Mozart)	Götterdämmerung	(Wagner)
Fidelio	(Beethoven)	Carmen	(Bizet)
	Traviata	(Verdi)	
Recommended Critical Reading			
Patterns of Culture	Ruth Benedict		
From the South Seas	Margaret Meade		
Middletown	Lynn		
The Heroic Age	Chadwick		
Epic and Romance	L. P. Ker		
Plato To-Go	R. M. S. Crossman		
Christianity and Classical Culture	C. M. Cochrane		
The Allegory of Love	C. S. Lewis		

Review the [COLL400 requirements](#). Why are they designed this way? What do they tell you about William & Mary’s general education curriculum? How should we fulfill them?

What do *you* talk about when you talk about books? What *don't* you talk about?

What should the ground rules for our course be? Let’s establish them *together*.

W.H. Auden's 1941-1942 Syllabus for English 135, "Fate and the Individual in European Literature" (U Michigan).

Thursday, January 28th.

Optional Event: “[Lift Every Voice: Why African American Poetry Matters](#)” with Kevin Young, Amanda Gorman, Kris Bowers, Robin Coste Lewis, and Safiya Sinclair. □

Monday, February 1st. Canons | Canonicity.

There is no escaping him.

--Virginia Woolf on [Robinson Crusoe](#)



J.M. Coetzee (b. 1940;
Photograph: Bert Nienhaus)



Daniel DeFoe (c.1660-1731)

Read:

- J.M. Coetzee, *Foe*, 1-103.
- John Guillory, “Preface” and “Canonical and Noncanonical: The Current Debate,” [Cultural Capital](#) (1993).
- Richard Ohmann, “[The Shaping of a Canon: U.S. Fiction, 1960-1975](#)” (*Critical Inquiry*, 1983).

Prompts:

- What is a literary canon? How is it made? How do texts enter and leave it? What differentiates one canon from another?

Wednesday, February 3rd.

Who is the Tolstoy of the Zulus, the Proust of the Papuans?

--Saul Bellow, in an interview

Tolstoy is the Tolstoy of the Zulus.

--Ralph Wiley, qtd. in [Between the World and Me](#)

Read:

- *Foe*, complete.

Recommended:

- J.M. Coetzee, “Introduction,” *Robinson Crusoe* (Oxford World Classics, 2000); [Nobel Lecture](#) (2003); [“The Novel in Africa.”](#)
- [“Critics on Defoe and *Robinson Crusoe*”](#) (CUNY handout).

Explore:

- Digital Humanities-related Defoe Projects
 - Georgina Samira Paiella, [“Visualizing Crusoe”](#) (USC)
 - [Digital Defoe.](#)
 - [“Crusoe at 300”](#) (UNC).
- The [Stanford Literary Lab](#) Pamphlets 8, [“Between Canon and Corpus”](#); 11, [“Canon/Archive”](#); and 17 [“Popularity/Prestige”](#).
- [De-canon Project](#) (@decanonproject).

Prompts:

- What is the relationship between canon, corpus, and archive? How do popularity and prestige affect how, what, and why we read literature?
- What is Digital Humanities? What are its promises? To whom does it make them? What does it mean to you? More basically, how has the internet--and all that digitality affords--changed literature?

Friday, February 5th.



Monday, February
8th. Reading |
Reception.

My preference was for
the demolition of the
lobby altogether.

--Toni Morrison,

[“Unspeakable Things
Unspoken”](#)

Toni Morrison, 1931-2019 (Photograph: Bettmann via Getty Images, 12 Dec 1985)

Read:

- Toni Morrison, *Sula*, 3-111.

- Toni Morrison, “[Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature](#).”
- Roger Chartier, “[Laborers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader](#)” (1992).

Prompts:

- What is reading? Who reads? How do we read? What is the relationship between social differentia (including but not limited to categories of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality) and reading? How have reading and reading norms changed over time?

Wednesday, February 10th.

Read:

- *Sula*, complete.
- Toni Morrison, [Nobel Lecture](#) (1993).
- “[To see as we never see](#)”: [Dialogue between Pierre Bourdieu and Toni Morrison](#),” *Vacarme* (1998).
- Wendy Griswold et. al., “[Reading and the Reading Class in the Twenty-First Century](#)” (*Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 31, 2005).
- Richard Jean So and Gus Wezerek, “[Just How White Is the Book Industry?](#)” (*New York Times*, 11 Dec 2020).

Friday, February 12th. No classes.

Monday, February 15th. Reading Close | Critical | Distant | Surface | Symptomatic | Good | Bad | Uncritical | Feminist | Queer | Decolonial | ...

Select four answers to the question what should a reader be to be a good reader:

1. The reader should belong to a book club.
2. The reader should identify himself or herself with the hero or heroine.
3. The reader should concentrate on the social-economic angle.
4. The reader should prefer a story with action and dialogue to one with none.
5. The reader should have seen the book in a movie.
6. The reader should be a budding author.
7. The reader should have imagination.
8. The reader should have memory.
9. The reader should have a dictionary.
10. The reader should have some artistic sense.

—Vladimir Nabokov, “Good Readers and Good Writers” (1948)

Read:

- Franco Moretti, “[The Slaughterhouse of Literature](#),” (*MLQ*, March 2000). (Recommended read: Kathryn Schulz, “[What Is Distant Reading?](#)” *New York Times*, 24 June 2011).
- Amy Hungerford, “[On Not Reading](#)” (*Chronicle* 11 Sep 2016); recommended skim: “On Not Reading DFW” in *Making Literature Now* (Stanford UP, 2016).
- Nan Z. Da, “[The Digital Humanities Debacle](#),” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (27 March 2019).
- Explore the “[How to Read](#)” podcast.

Recommended:

- Skim: Ted Underwood, “[A Genealogy of Distant Reading](#)”; “[Distant Reading and Recent Intellectual History](#).”
- Skim: Merve Emre, “[Good Reader, Bad Reader](#)” (*Boston Review* 27 Nov 2017).
- Skim: Mark McGurl, “Introduction: Halls of Mirror” *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (Harvard UP, 2009).

II. RACISM, PERIODIZATION, PUBLISHING: READING PRESENCE IN THE POSTWAR NOVEL

Wednesday, February 17th. Keywords.

Keywords Entry assigned.

Read:

- Fran Ross, *Oreo*, Part One (2-88).

Optional: Thursday, February 18th. 2021 D.F. McKenzie Lecture, Francesca Orisini, “[The Magazine and World Literature](#),” 5-6 p.m. GMT (12-1 p.m. EDT).



(Greyfalcon House, Inc., 1974)



(Northeastern UP, 2000)



(New Directions, 2015)

Monday, February 22nd. Periodization | Contextualization.

[Share keyword annotations.](#)



Read:

- Fran Ross, *Oreo*, complete.
- Scott Saul, “[The Great Deflector](#)” (*LARB*, 22 July 2019).

Listen:

- Kinohi Nishikawa, “[Black Vision, Black Voices, and Book Design](#)” (*Book Dreams Podcast*, explore the links, too!)
- Mat Johnson, “[Oreo: A Satire of Racial Identity, Inside and Out](#)” (*NPR*, 7 Mar 2011).

Recommended:

- Skim carefully: Eric Hayot, “[Against Periodization; or, On Institutional Time](#)” (*New Literary History* 42, no. 4, 2011).
- Watch [Kinohi Nishikawa on Oreo](#) (Duke).

Fran Ross (1935-1985)

Prompts:

- What is a literary period? What is periodization? What is a context? What is contextualization? Why periodize? Why contextualize?

Wednesday, February 24th. Science Fiction | Genre | Gender | Other.

History...is, in the plantation context, itself, fiction; a fiction written, dominated, controlled by forces external to itself.

--Sylvia Wynter

Read:

- Octavia Butler, *Kindred*, 9-51.
- Ursula LeGuin, "[Introducing Myself](#)" (n.d.); "[American SF and the Other](#)" (1975); "[Is Gender Necessary?](#)" (1976/1988).
- Darko Suvin, "[On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre](#)" (1972).

Prompts:

- What is a literary genre? What kind of an institution is genre? What is the relationship between genre, gender, "otherness," and literary production?

Sunday, February 28th.

Keywords Assignment due.

Monday, March 1st.

Paper assigned.

Read:

- Octavia Butler, *Kindred*, 52-107.
- John Rieder, "[On Defining SF, or Not: Genre Theory, SF, and History](#)" (*Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 Jul 2010).



Octavia Butler (1947-2006) in her home (Photograph: Patti Perret, 1984).

Wednesday, March 3rd. Racism | Science Fiction.

He had changed--in five years he couldn't help changing. But the markets he wrote for hadn't changed.

--Octavia Butler, *Kindred*

Read:

- Octavia Butler, *Kindred*, 108-188.
- Samuel Delaney, "[Racism and Science Fiction](#)" (*NYRSF*, August 1998); "[Samuel Delaney on Racism, Capitalism, and Science Fiction](#)" (*Public Books* 6 Aug 2019).

Thursday, March 4th. No classes.

Monday, March 8th.

...transgression inheres, however unarticulated, in every aspect of the black writer's career in America.

--Samuel Delany

Read:

- Octavia Butler, *Kindred*, complete.
- Octavia Butler, "[Positive Obsession](#)." In *Bloodchild and Other Stories*, 2nd ed., 123–35. New York: Seven Stories, 2005.

Prompts:

- What is the relationship between racism, capitalism, and science fiction?

Tuesday, March 9th.

Paper draft due.

III. POETRY'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FORMS: 1945-PRESENT

Wednesday, March 10th. Social Poetics.

A riot is the language of the unheard

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

Read:

- Eve Ewing, *1919*.
- Langston Hughes, "[The Negro Speaks of Rivers](#)" (*The Crisis*, 1921).
- Carl Sandburg, "[Chicago](#)" (*Poetry*, 1914).
- Eve Ewing, *Electric Arches*, selections.



Dr. Eve Louise Ewing (source: <https://eveewing.com/about>).

Recommended:

- Watch Eve Ewing discuss her work (via YouTube, selected clips).
- Gwendolyn Brooks, *RIOT*, "[Boy Breaking Glass](#)."
- Harris Feinsod, "[‘The Mayor Is a Tough Act to Follow’: Some Social Poetry in the Theaters of the Rahm Regime](#)" (*Post45*, 23 Apr 2019)

Monday, March 15th. Micro | minor.

Read:

- Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric*, selections.
- Claudia Rankine and Beth Loffreda, "[On Whiteness and the Racial Imaginary](#)," from *The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind*, (Fence 9 Apr 2015).
- Cathy Park Hong, "[There's a New Movement in American Poetry...](#)" (*The New Republic*, 1 Oct 2015)
- Heather Love, "[Small Change: Realism, Immanence, and the Politics of the Micro](#)" (*MLQ*, 2016).

Recommended:

- Cathy Park Hong, "[Delusions of Whiteness in the Avant-Garde](#)" (*Lana Turner Journal* 2014)
- "[Reconsidering Claudia Rankine's Citizen: A Symposium](#)"
- Dorothy Wang, "Introduction," *Thinking its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian Poetry* (Stanford UP, 2013).
- [Symposium](#) on *Thinking its Presence* (Syndicate 19 August 2020).
- T.W. Adorno, "[On Lyric Poetry and Society](#)."
- Michael Dowdy and Claudia Rankine, eds. "Introduction," *American Poets in the 21st Century: Poetics of Social Engagement* (Wesleyan UP, 2018).
- Explore Graywolf Press's webpage dedicated to teaching [Citizen: An American Lyric](#).

Tuesday, March 16th.

Paper due; Research Proposal assigned.

Wednesday, March 17th. No classes.

Monday, March 22nd. Social poetics, part 2 | Refusalism | Anti | Against | Away | no

Read:

- Mini- digital anthology in process, [Refusalism](#), ed. Scott Challenor.
- Junot Díaz, "[MFA vs. POC](#)" (*New Yorker*, 30 Apr 2014).
- Amy King, ed. "[What Is Literary Activism?](#)" (*Poetry*, 18 August, 2015) and Wendy Trevino et. al., "[A Response to 'What Is Literary Activism?'](#)" and Amy King et. al. "[A Response from the Writers of What Is Literary Activism?.](#)"
- Juliana Spahr and Stephanie Young, "[The Program Era and the Mostly White Room](#)," *Los Angeles Review of Books*; "[On Poets and Prizes](#)," *ASAP/J*; "[Numbers Trouble](#)," *Chicago Review* (2015)

Recommended:

- Margaret Ronda and Lindsay Turner, “[Introduction: Poetry’s Social Forms](#)” (19 Apr 2019, *Post45*).
- Margaret Ronda, “[The Social Forms of Speculative Poetics](#)” (26 Apr 2019, *Post45*).
- Mark Nowak, “Introduction,” *Social Poetics*; “[Notes Toward an Anti-Capitalist Poetics](#)” (*VQR* Spring 2006, Vol. 82, No. 2).
- Maureen McClane, “[This Is Not an Essay on Poetry of the Past 20 Years](#)” (*Public Books*, 5 Oct 2020): “[Projects, Poetics, Chorotopes: On Anne Boyer, Bhanu Kapil, and Juliana Spahr](#)” (*LARB*).
- Claudia Rankine, “[In Our Way: Racism in Creative Writing](#),” 2016 AWP keynote; “[Open Letter: A Dialogue on Race and Poetry](#).”
- Jasper Bernes, Joshua Clover, Juliana Spahr, essays on the “[self-abolition of the poet](#)” (*Jacket2*).

Prompts:

- What is literary activism? What is the relationship between poetry and protest? What is the difference between protests, strikes, and riots? Is poetry special? Is poetry literature? Does it matter?

IV. PRIZING OTHERNESS: “WORLD LITERATURE” & THE GLOBAL LITERARY MARKETPLACE



Roberto Bolaño (source: <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/roberto-bolano-sepulcros/>).

Wednesday, March 24th. Latin American literature as “World Literature.”

Read:

- Roberto Bolaño, *Nocturno en Chile* [*By Night in Chile*], 1-56.
- James English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Harvard UP, 2005), “Introduction: Prizes and the Study of Culture” (1-14) and chap. 13, “Prizes and the Politics of World Culture” (297-313).
- Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 146-157.
- Franco Moretti, “[Conjectures on World Literature](#)” (*NLR* 1 Jan-Feb 2000).

Recommended:

- Explore some Latin American Nobel Lectures:
 - Gabriel García Márquez, [Nobel Lecture](#) (1982).
 - Octavio Paz, [Nobel Lecture](#) (1990).
 - Maria Vargas Llosa, [Nobel Lecture](#) (2010).
- Joshua Clover, “[Nobel Notes: Dylan as Literature](#),” (*LARB*, 17 Oct 2016).
- Michael Robbins, “[Visible Republic: Does Pop Music Need a Nobel?](#)” (*Bookforum*, Dec / Jan 2017).

Monday, March 29th.

Read:

- *Nocturno en Chile*, complete.
- Roberto Bolaño, *Between Parentheses*, “Literature and Exile,” “On Literature, the National Literature Prize, and the Rare Consolations of the Writing Life,” “Chilean Literature,” “Neruda.”
- Chris Andrews, [Introduction](#), *Roberto Bolaño’s Fiction: An Expanding Universe* (Columbia UP, 2014).
- Mariano Siskind, “Introduction,” “The Global Life of Literary Genres.” [Cosmopolitan Desires: Global Modernity and World Literature in Latin America](#) (Northwestern P, 2014).

Recommended:

- Nan Z. Da, “[Other People’s Books](#)” (*New Literary History* Jul 2020)
- Jorge Luis Borges, “[The Garden of Forking Paths](#)” (1941)
- Pablo Neruda, [Nobel Lecture](#), selected poems [“The Heights of Macchu Picchu,” “The United Fruit Co.,” selected odes].
- Skim: Sarah Pollack, “Latin America Translated (Again): Roberto Bolaño’s ‘The Savage Detectives’ in the United States,” *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 61, No. 3, The Americas, Otherwise (Summer, 2009).
- Skim: John Pat Leary, “Introduction,” *A Cultural History of Underdevelopment: Latin America in the U.S. Imagination* (UVA P, 2016).

Prompts:

- What is magic realism? Why, and how, do some genres “go global”? What does “global” mean? What is “world literature”? What is the situation of Latin American literature in the global marketplace? What is a “national literature”? What is the relationship between nation states and literary production, circulation, and distribution?

Wednesday, March 31st. Value, redux.

Read:

- Elena Ferrante, *The Lying Life of Adults*, Parts I & II (1-96).
- G. Huggan, “[Prizing ‘Otherness’: A Short History of the Booker](#)” (1998).
- Alexander Manshel, Laura McGrath, J.D. Porter, “[Who Cares about Literary Prizes?](#)” (*Public Books*, 3 Sept 2019).

Recommended:

- “Introduction,” [*Combined and Uneven Development: Toward a New Theory of World-Literature*](#) (Warwick Research Collective).

Prompts:

- What is value? What is literariness? What determines the “literariness” of a work? What is the relationship between prizes, prestige, and literature?

Monday, April 5th. Translation.

Draft Research Proposal due.

Read:

- Elena Ferrante, *The Lying Life of Adults*, complete (read as much as you can).

Recommended:

- Rebecca Walkowitz, “Introduction,” *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*, (Columbia UP, 2015).
- Chad Post, *The Three Percent Problem: Rants and Responses on Publishing, Translation, and the Future of Reading* (2011), selections.
- Explore this [Symposium](#) on *The Lying Life of Adults*.

Prompts:

- What is the relationship between translation and literary production? Do “we” read translations differently? How? Why?

Tuesday, April 6th. No classes.

Wednesday, April 7th. No classes.

V. LITERATURE AS DATA IN THE NEW GILDED AGE: WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY FICTION? (Weeks 14-15)

Debt has ... become the defining feature of economic life today.

--Annie McClanahan

Monday, April 12th. Filipinx American Literature and Queer Decoloniality.



R. Zamora Linmark (Photograph: Noe Tanigawa; source:

<https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/post/r-zamora-linmark-not-necessarily-filipino#stream/0>

Read:

- R. Zamora Linmark, *Rolling the R's*, 13-118.
- Annie McClanahan, "[Introduction](#)," *Dead Pledges: Debt, Crisis, and Twenty-first Century Culture* (Stanford UP, 2017).
- Michael Maguire, "[The Literary Blurb Economy](#)" (*Post45* 30 Nov 2018)

Recommended:

- Check out Barbara Jane Reyes's "[Filipinx and Pinay Lit Class Readings](#)."

Wednesday, April 14th.

Read:

- R. Zamora Linmark, *Rolling the R's*, complete.
- Raphael Dalleo and Elena Machado Sáez, "[The Formation of a Latina/o Canon](#)," *Routledge Companion to Latina/o Literature* (Routledge, 2013).
- Kirsten Silva Gruesz, "[What Was Latino Literature?](#)" (*PMLA*, March 2012).

Prompts:

- What defines Filipinx literature? Is Filipinx literature Latinx literature?
- What defines Latinx literatures?

Monday, April 19th. The Rooney phenomenon.

Research Proposal due.

Read:

- Sally Rooney, *Normal People*, 1-110.
- Matthew Wilkens, "[Contemporary Fiction by the Numbers](#)," *Post45* (11 Mar 2011).
- Dan Sinykin, "[How Capitalism Changed American Literature](#)" (*Public Books*, 17 Jul 2019).
- James Wood, "[Tell Me How Does it Feel?](#)" (*The Guardian*, 5 Oct 2001) and Zadie Smith's response, "[This Is How It Feels to Me](#)" (*The Guardian*, 13 Oct 2001).

Recommended:

- John B. Thomson, "Introduction," *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century*, Second edition, (Penguin, 2012).
- Theodore Martin, "Introduction," [Contemporary Drift: Genre, Historicism, and the Problem of the Present](#) (Columbia UP, 2017).

Prompts:

- How did capitalism change the literatures of the U.S.?
- What is the contemporary? What defines it? What is the relationship between contemporaneity, historiography, and the present? What is the relationship between literature and history?

Wednesday, April 21st.

Read:

- Sally Rooney, *Normal People*, 111-206.
- Mark McGurl, "[Everything and Less: Fiction in the Age of Amazon](#)," *MLQ* (Sept 2016) and "[Feeling Like the Internet](#)," *Public Books* (30 Jan 2017).

Recommended:

- Mark O'Connell, "[A managerial Mephistopheles': Inside the Mind of Jeff Bezos](#)," *The Guardian* (3 Feb 2021)

Prompts:

- How have Google and Amazon changed literature and literary production?

- What does the Internet feel like?

Monday, April 26th. No classes.

...the nonwhite subject is still the bad conscience of the contemporary novel...

--Zadie Smith, "[Two Paths for the Novel](#)" (20 Nov 2008, *New York Review of Books*)



Sally Rooney at the Edinburgh International Book Festival on August 22, 2017, in Edinburgh, Scotland (Photography: Simone Padovani/Awakening/Getty Images).

Wednesday, April 28th.

Public-facing Presentations of Proposals.

Read:

- Sally Rooney, *Normal People*, complete.
- Explore "[Reading Sally Rooney](#)," ed. Gloria Fisk, *Post45* (15 Jun 2020). Read Brouillette and Hu.
- Laura McGrath, "[Comping White](#)," *Los Angeles Review of Books* (January 29, 2019).

Monday, May 3rd. Course evaluations.

Public-facing Presentations of Proposals.

Wednesday, May 5th. Last class.

Public-facing Presentations of Proposals.