

**School** Liberal Arts and Education  
**Department** Languages, Literature, and Philosophy  
**Date** November 22, 2000

**NEW COURSE** ENGL 370 Special Topics in Literature  
3 credits 3 hours

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will offer students a chance to approach literature through the perspective of a unifying theoretical or thematic concept. Students will also have the opportunity to read literature in areas particularly close to their own personal and societal experience and to gain perspectives on problems and issues in their own lives. Some examples of topics for a course organized around unifying themes and perspectives are: The Invisible Agenda: Class and the American Novel, The Changing Concept of Race in the American Novel, Literature of Social Protest, and Feminist Literature: From Victim to Hero.

**PREREQUISITES:** ENGL 150, ENGL 212

**FREQUENCY** Alternate Semesters

**EFFECTIVE DATE** Fall 2001

**STUDENTS TO BE SERVED** English majors and all students who seek a literature elective

**ANTICIPATED ENROLLMENT** 15 students

**RATIONALE**

This course will fulfill one of the literature elective requirements for students who pursue a degree in English. This course will encourage a more cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary perspective than survey courses and will offer faculty the chance to develop a course around a concept in which they have particular expertise and or to share some aspect of their ongoing research. The course lends itself especially well to collaboration with faculty from other disciplines and departments.

## Special Topics in Literature

Dr. Andrea Freud Loewenstein, Medgar Evers College, CUNY

This open-ended course will offer students a chance to approach literature through the perspective of a unifying theoretical or thematic concept. Such a design will encourage a more cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary perspective than survey courses, which are organized in terms of national identity and chronological order. Students will also have the opportunity to read literature in areas particularly close to their own personal and societal experience and to gain perspective on problems and issues in their own lives. The course will also offer faculty the chance to develop a course around a concept in which they have particular expertise or to share some aspect of their ongoing research with their students. The course lends itself especially well to a cross-disciplinary approach, and collaboration with faculty from other departments will be encouraged.

Some examples of the course organized around a theoretical approach are: *Childhood in Literature: A Psychoanalytic Approach*; *Passion in Literature: Illness or Solution*; *Queer Theory and Gay and Lesbian Literature*; *From Film to Fairy Tale: Deconstructing the Classics*; *Feminist Literature: From Victim to Hero*; *Proletarian Literature: A Marxist Approach*; *The Invisible Agenda: Class and the American Novel*; *Gender and Character: Men and Women in Love and Battle*; *The Changing Concept of Race in the American Novel*.

Some examples of the course organized around a thematic approach are: *Literature of Immigration*, *Literature of Social Protest*, *Literary Responses to Slavery*; *Literary Responses to the Holocaust*; *Women and Madness*; *Justice For All: Crime and the Novel*; *Beyond our World: Science Fiction as Alternative Reality*; *Dystopian and Utopian Literature*. Below, I briefly describe one such "special topics" course, *Novels of Social Protest*.

### Novels of Social Protest.

This course will explore the intersection of literature, specifically the novel, and social change. We will consider voices of social protest in English by authors who are speaking out against social injustice, writing to condemn a current social practice or to advocate a specific area of social reform. Are the aims of social protest compatible with the creation of great literature? Can the production of novel actually foster social change? Is it possible for an author to actually step outside of his or her society's assumptions and beliefs? Why are authors who protest one form of injustice often so blind to other forms of injustice? These are some of the questions we will examine in this course.

### Class Format

The class will be run as a seminar, and students will be expected to work together to analyze and critique the texts, to learn how to take a stand, and to actively use the Internet and library. The research paper will provide the chance for students to research a particular area of concern or a particular author.

Special Topics in Literature, 3

Martin Luther King: "Letter From Birmingham Jail"

James Baldwin: "Notes of a Native Son" and "The Fire Next Time"

Cherie Moraga: "If I Could Write this in Blood..."

Adrienne Rich: "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" and "Split at the Root: An Essay in Jewish Identity"

Audre Lord: "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action"