

FALL 2019
GRADUATE COURSE OFFERINGS

Department of English ▪ Florida Atlantic University

AML 6938: Race and Kinship in Early America

Professor Shelby Johnson

In his Sermon on the Execution of Moses Paul, the Mohegan writer and preacher Samson Occom called Moses Paul, an indigenous man condemned to death, “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” What does it mean from an indigenous pastor to draw from the Genesis account of Adam and Eve – and thus from a cultural imaginary of patriarchal, heterosexual relation -- to name a same-gender kinship connection with a murderer facing a death sentence? What does it mean to proclaim such a profound sense of family to a broader (and primarily white) audience?

This course approaches moments like these in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century African American and Native American literature as a way to think through improvised, heterodox, and queer forms of kin-making by speakers and writers of color. Many of the writers we will encounter rendered structures of social death and natal alienation through the idiom of racial disinheritance as a framework for testifying to experiences of forced removal from their homelands, the violations of sexual abuse, and the devastating separations from kin and shipmates. Indeed, African American, Caribbean, and indigenous communities imagined and improvised fugitive forms of belonging, what Hortense Spillers names “shadow” and Elizabeth Maddock Dillon “lateral” familial arrangements moored in alternative kinship patterns, often through reconfiguring marital, matrilineal, or sibling attachments.

Disinherited from a past, or what Saidiya Hartman calls “the isolation of being severed from ... kin and denied ancestors,” writers and speakers of color, in addition, repeatedly respond to kinship disruptions with attempts to create new, separatist communities in London, Nova Scotia, Brotherton, and Sierra Leone. “Kinship,” then, will be a broad and encompassing framework for us throughout the semester, as we consider representations of nuclear families alongside larger conceptions of racial community. As we will see, speakers and writers of color engage with these tensions across journals and letters, poetry and hymns, legal documents, petitions and wills, conversion narratives and sermons, and activist reportage. We will supplement with secondary readings by literary scholars and historians in order to think analytically about the kinds of questions that drive contemporary scholarship on race, kinship, and the Atlantic world. By doing so, my hope is that we will have opportunities to reflect on our own research and writing methodologies across the disciplines we call “home” and their interpellation in critical practices with conflicted relationships to histories of slavery, indigenous displacement, and patriarchy.

LIT 6934-001: Modernism as Crisis

Professor Don Adams

In this course, we will be reading modern fiction through the lens of ethical philosophy, looking at changing values in the modern period. We will read some or all of the following fiction writers: Oscar Wilde, Somerset Maugham, Ronald Firbank, Jane Bowles, Jim Thompson, Graham Greene, and Patricia Highsmith, using the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, Emmanuel Levinas, and Soren Kierkegaard. The philosophy material will be provided as PDF handout-attachments.

LIT 6932-003: From Heaven to Hell and Back: A Survey of the Utopia

Professor Ian MacDonald

This course will investigate the history, texts, and philosophies behind the concept of “utopia.” We will cover enormous ground—from Plato, to Thomas More’s eponymous island and his immediate successors, through to the nineteenth-century utopian renaissance, to the move toward anti-utopianism in the first half of the twentieth century, to the critical utopias of the second half—culminating in questions of what value the utopia has for our current historical moment especially in ecocritical terms. In addition to attending to the utopian program, comprising those imagined perfect societies or “intentional communities” aimed at constructing political, social, cultural, and religious movements—encompassing even such everyday spaces as shopping malls, suburban housing developments, and the Internet—we will also consider the variety of practices that challenge the conditions of the present, what Lyman Tower Sargent calls the “utopian impulse,” which includes the way such horizons of hope intersect popular culture, advertising, literature, architecture, art, and music. Primary readings that may include texts by Plato, Thomas More, Francis Bacon, Margaret Cavendish, Edward Bellamy, William Morris, Yevgeny Zamyatin, Aldous Huxley, Ursula LeGuin, Joanna Russ, and Ben Okri will be supplemented by theoretical readings from the likes of Frederic Jameson, Ernst Bloch, Raymond Williams, Gyan Prakash, Lyman Tower Sargent, Darko Suvin, Brian Stableford, Friedrich Engels, Naomi Jacobs, Tom Moylan, and M. Keith Booker.

LIN 6107: History of the English Language

Professor Joanne Jasin

In LIN 6107, we will examine the causal relationship between historical events in England and key developments in the grammar and vocabulary of English in its early stages. We will also identify the ways in which English later became standardized with the establishment of dictionaries, rules of grammar, and the like. Following the transition of English from synthetic to analytic language will strengthen our understanding of the historical and grammatical basis for the language we use today.

ENC 6726: Literary Publishing and Editing

Professor Becka McKay

This course will provide a combination of theoretical background and practical, hands-on experience in the field of literary editing and publishing. Graduate and undergraduate students will work together to produce *Coastlines*, the undergraduate literary journal of Florida Atlantic University. Graduate students will work together to produce *Swamp Ape Review*, FAU’s new, national literary magazine. Duties involved in the production of both of these journals include soliciting and evaluating submissions, editing, proofreading, marketing, publicity, research, fundraising, web design, public relations, and more.