COURSE DESCRIPTIONS—Winter 2017

ASEM 2517, Section 1
CRN 4343
18th Century Women Novelists
Nichol Weizenbeck
M, W 2-3:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In *Seductive Forms* (1986), leading feminist scholar Ros Ballaster famously coined the phrase “prostitutes of the pen” to describe the common perception regarding the first English professional female authors of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. It encapsulates the cultural conditions with which women had to contend and their extremely limited options for earning a living. We will trace the social, economic, and historical issues with which English society, particularly the women of the eighteenth century, faced. The eighteenth century witnessed the rise of capitalism, trade, the merchant class, and with these various developments also saw “the separation of spheres”—the domestic from the public. This separation of the domestic from the public constructed a division between men and women, whereby men ruled the public world: economy, politics, and education, and women were relegated to the home and excluded from the public sphere. One of the major effects of this division was the lack of professional opportunities for women. Other than acting as domestic servants, there was little chance for financial independence. Therefore, these “prostitutes of the pen” were true pioneers, women who created a profession for themselves and a way to survive. Beginning with these early British novelists, this course intends to investigate the history and work of English women writers in the eighteenth century, extending to the end of the century. Additionally, this course seeks to explore women’s history in the eighteenth century—their educational and professional opportunities and the ways in which patriarchy, property, and English law affected women and informed their fictional works. Moreover, this course will assess how novels afforded these women authors a voice of protest as well as at times becoming a voice of consent within popular culture.

Fulfills major requirement: ASEM; British Lit Before 1789 (it may not count for both)

ENGL 1000, Section 2
CRN 1582
Introduction to Creative Writing
Ashley Colley
T, F 8-9:50 AM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
“I respond with language, I don’t know if this is good or not, but all I have is language, the only way I have to respond is language” (Hiromi Itō, transl. Jeffrey Angles) Words are names, and names are vital because they allow us to refer to each other and to our experiences. Names also make things vulnerable—discussable and thus questionable. Words call worlds into being, and words call the world out. In this class, we’ll think about the worlds that others’ words have instated and how to respond with words and worlds of our own. We’ll look at how other creative writers do this and imitate their techniques. We’ll think about how to respond to each other’s words and how to incorporate these responses into our writing processes. Readings will include a mix of fiction, poetry, and drama, along with writings that work across and between genres. My hope is that all students will leave this class with a substantive body of much discussed, well revised creative work.

Fulfills major requirement: Intro to CW requirement for English majors who are doing the creative writing concentration.

**ENGL 1000, Section 3**
**CRN 2513**
**Introduction to Creative Writing**
**Thirii Myint**
T, F 10-11:50 AM

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Sylvia Plath said, “The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.” In this course, students will cultivate creative self-confidence through the practice of writing, reading, sharing, and thoughtfully critiquing prose, poetry and genre-defying works. There are only two main objectives for this course: (1) to explore and cultivate your individual “voice” i.e. what you have to say as a writer, and (2) to build a nurturing and invigorating classroom community that will facilitate objective #1.

Over the course of the quarter, we will read texts about Winter in order to engage with our present time and place/space. How does the season and the landscape shape our work? How does it feed our creativity? From where and when to do write? We will engage with authors from all over the world, including Stephen Graham Jones (Blackfeet Nation), Anna Kavan (UK), Tarjei Vesaas (Norway), and Zoë Wicomb (South Africa) in order to challenge our notion of literary lineage and literary community. To whom does Winter “belong”? What does it mean to writers of different places and cultures?

Fulfills major requirement: Intro to CW requirement for English majors who are doing the creative writing concentration.

**ENGL 1000, Section 4**
**CRN 2323**
**Introduction to Creative Writing: Between Borders**
COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In his final thesis on contemporary art, Alain Badiou says, “It is better to do nothing than to contribute to the invention of formal ways of rendering visible that which Empire already recognizes as existent.” In this exploratory course which will serve as a reading and writing laboratory, we will (dis/un)cover the elements of creative writing by paying close attention to literary works that do not conventionally fit into any one genre or tradition. This course aims to (1) hone investigation skills and cultivate your individual aesthetic, imagination, and creative-critical “voice” as a writer-thinker, and (2) establish an open, stimulating space in which you will generate/produce creative work based on our discoveries.

We will read fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry, as well as hybrid texts, poems that pose as essays or visual art (and vice versa), essays that masquerade in other “forms,” and multimedia work. We will investigate and interrogate these readings and the boundaries they establish (or disassemble), in addition to tracing their formal, racial, political, and personal “borders”. Borders may be permeable or impermeable membranes, with infiltration, exchange, and passage.

Course readings include George Saunders, Clarice Lispector, Yoko Tawada, Eliot Weinberger, and Claudia Rankine, among many others.

Fulfills major requirement: Intro to CW requirement for English majors who are doing the creative writing concentration

ENGL 1000, Section 5
CRN 2717
Introduction to Creative Writing
Christopher Rosales
W, F 10-11:50 AM

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is primarily a workshop course on the reading and writing of fiction. Because this is a workshop, you will have the responsibility of carefully reading the work under discussion and coming to class ready to contribute intelligently to that discussion. Within the workshop format, there will be lecture on and discussion of the important concepts of fiction: conflict, point of view, significant detail, story structure, etc. Assigned readings and exercises will familiarize you with these concepts, and enhance your ability not only to use them but to recognize them whenever you read. Good writing depends upon careful reading, and an important goal of this course is to improve your ability to read like a writer. This class will be reading-intensive. We will focus on the work of the students in the class, but we will also read several novels, short-stories, and critical essays from modern, post-modern, and contemporary authors.
Fulfills major requirement:

ENGL 1006, Section 1
CRN 2514
Art of Fiction
Zeeshan Reshamwala
T, R 8-9:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Magic realism inhabits the grey borderland between the fantastic and the real. It invites play: it weaves into itself the supernatural, folktales, fables, myths, and legends. Its characters and its spaces depart from the expectations of realism. And yet, it never escapes the real. It broods deeply upon history and politics, as well as upon the suppressed secrets of society. It picks apart calcified master-narratives, often with laughter, as it seeks for the marginal and the fleeting. We will examine magical realism through texts such as Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children, Gabriel Garcia Márquez’s One Hundred Years of Solitude, María Luisa Bombal’s House of Mist, Mikhail Bulgakov’s The Master and Margarita, and also, The Arabian Nights.

ENGL 1007, Section 1
CRN 2190
Art of Poetry
Jennifer Topale
W, F 10-11:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Paradise Lost, a 17th Century epic poem written in blank verse by John Milton, attempts to “justify the ways of God to man,” but often leaves its readers with more questions than answers. The poem retells the story of Adam and Eve’s fall from Genesis, but the story is complicated by complex and often paradoxical theology. William Blake stated that Milton was “of the Devil’s party without knowing it” because of the seemingly sympathetic portrayal of Milton’s Satan in the poem, which leads us to ask some important questions: Is Satan the hero of the poem? Is Milton’s God tyrannical or merciful? Was Milton a heretic? What was Milton’s theology? This class will closely read the poem to investigate the influences that the Reformation and humanism had on Milton’s theology, including the doctrines of predestination and freewill, and also the questions raised by the complications and paradoxes found within the poem. Texts: I have ordered the scholarly Fowler edition of Paradise Lost, but there is a less expensive Barnes & Noble edition that will also suffice. The other two texts, Milton’s Good God and Surprised by Sin, are recommended for those students interested in the field of Milton Studies, but are not required for the class.
ENGL 1110, Section 1  
CRN 3152  
Literary Inquiry: Wicked: The Female and Male Villains of the Eighteenth Century  
Nichol Weizenbeck  
T, R 2-3:50 PM  

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In England in the late seventeenth century, the form now known as the novel began to develop. As the novel transformed and progressed so did the characters who filled its pages. The course intends to examine the “bad girls and boys” of eighteenth-century literature, and we will march through the changing ideas and ideologies regarding villains and/or antiheroes. This course seeks to investigate the fictional representations of these figures in the literature of the period and the cause for the shifts in such representations, how they mutate over time, and whether or not they retain a shadow of past representations. Beginning with the seventeenth century and continuing to the late eighteenth century, we will explore the cultural conditions that influenced the creations of such characters. We will trace the social, economic, and historical issues surrounding literary figures.

This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

ENGL 2002, Section 1  
CRN 3155  
Creative Writing- Poetry  
Jennifer Foerster  
T, F 10-11:50 PM  

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

“Poems are like dreams: in them you put what you don’t know you know,” wrote Adrienne Rich. This poetry seminar will explore how the art of language can challenge, deepen, and expand our ways of knowing. We will study and practice a range of poetry forms, techniques, and elements of craft, focusing on significant currents in modern and post-modern poetry in the Euro-American traditions. In addition to writing and sharing original poetry, you will be required to research and write about an area of poetics you are interested in. Participation in discussions about weekly readings and assigned texts will be essential to your success in this class. Poetry is especially vital in today’s world; through this course, we will think about why.

Fulfills major requirement: 4 credits of the Intermediate Workshop requirement for CW concentrations.
ENGL 2012, Section 1
CRN 2618
Creative Writing- Fiction
Emily Culliton
W, F 8-9:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The focus of this intermediate course in fiction will be the short story. We will investigate the genre by reading carefully and parsing the mechanics of the short story structure by asking: how do these stories work? What drives them forward? We will pay particular focus to narrative and investigate ways to write active plot. Students will write one short story. We will workshop students’ stories as a group, and students will revise their pieces. Students will also be expected to write thoughtful responses to the assigned readings, as well as their fellow classmates’ work. This will be a reading and writing intensive course. We will be reading short story collections by Raymond Carver, Alice Munro, Grace Paley, Toni Cade Bambara, George Saunders and others.

Fulfills major requirement: 4 credits of the Intermediate Workshop requirement for CW concentrations.

ENGL 2200, Section 1
CRN 2874
English Lit II: Donne-Johnson
Nichol Weizenbeck
W, F 12-1:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course explores the literatures of the 17th and 18th centuries. This 200-year period marks England’s transition from a medieval, relatively static society bound by hierarchy, religion and shared cultural values into a restless early-modern society of cities, social mobility, civic unrest, colonies and cosmopolitanism. Students work on understanding genres and styles, and the terminologies, as well as learning differing methods of literary criticism. The course includes several generic categories. We will examine poetry, drama, and prose fiction from 1660 to 1789. The intent of this course is to trace the arc of British authors from the Restoration to the up to the Romantic period and enable a general understanding of the literary movements and literary works of the differing periods, as well as the historical, political, social, and cultural contexts surrounding the texts. To enhance our understanding of the historical and cultural context regarding the literature of the time, both major and minor works will be explored.

Fulfills major requirement: British Literature before 1789.
CRN 4260
Globalization & Cultural Texts
Eric Gould
T, R 2-3:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course combines fiction and film from India/Indian Diaspora, South Africa, and Japan with readings in sociological and other theories of globalization. We focus on the impact of globalization on cultural texts, examining how they deal with postcolonial identity, the morally ambiguous effects of westernization and modernization, cosmopolitanism, and the way cultural hybridity complicates nationalism and internationalism.


Course is primarily for University Honors. Others only by permission of instructor.

ENGL 2709, Section 2
CRN 4258
Topics: Why Novels Still Matter
Eric Gould
M, W 2-3:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course takes an international look at the importance of novel-length story-telling that dramatizes national and global issues, the politics of identity, ethical dilemmas, and the impact of modernization. The authors include: Sjon (Iceland); Albert Camus (France), Kamel Daoud (Algeria), Don DeLillo (USA), Marilynne Robinson (USA), Zia Haider Rahman (Bangladesh/UK), and Fumiko Enchi (Japan).

Fulfills major requirement: International Literature

ENGL 2716, Section 1
CRN 4259
American Poetry
Bin Ramke
R 4-7:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
I intend that we enact a possible version of English-speaking North America’s attempt to listen to itself speak (to itself and of itself to the world around it), beginning about three-hundred years ago, moving in great leaps and small steps toward the present. By “enact” I mean we will read, intensely and closely, poems first as poems, then secondarily as evidence of social and historical forces. By English-speaking I mean we will include non-European, especially native, cultures which became “America” and are available to us in English. This is not an attempt either to establish or to follow a canon, but an attempt to find a way through the welter of voices and visions that accompanied the populating of this continent post-European-invasion. We will read a small group of books by late nineteenth to late-twentieth century poets, and a large group of individual poems that I will provide as hand-outs, or via Canvas.

Each student must produce a term paper based on personal preferences. There will be several exams throughout the quarter. Participation in class discussion is required, which means attendance is critical—missing one class means missing ten percent of the course, or one letter-grade.

Fulfills major requirement: American Literature after 1900.

ENGL 2751, Section 1
CRN 2217
American Literature Survey II
Tayana Hardin
T, R 10-11:50 AM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course focuses on American literature and culture from the mid-19th century through the mid-20th century. Our examination is bracketed on one end by the upheaval of the Civil War, and, on the other end, by the impact and consequences of interwar industrialism. This time period demanded new considerations of what it meant to be an “American,” who had rights to that honorific, and by what means these rights were acquired. As we will see through our examination of novels, short stories, poetry, and criticism by this period’s canonical and marginalized writers, literature writ large served as a site to interrogate, censure, and even praise the ever-shifting terrain of American identity.

Fulfills major requirement: American Literature (Before OR After 1900)

ENGL 3002, Section 1
CRN 4261
Advanced Creative Writing- Poetry
Graham Foust
T, R 12-1:50 PM
COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is a writing and reading intensive course for students who are practicing poetry at an advanced level. All students must have taken an intermediate workshop prior to enrolling in this course.

Over the course of ten weeks, students will write and discuss their own poems, all of which will be based on different formal constraints, and will also read and discuss eight volumes of poetry in pairs as follows:

T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land and Other Poems* and Geoffrey G. O’Brien’s *Metropole*

John Berryman’s *77 Dream Songs* and Elisa Gabbert’s *L’Heure Bleue, or The Judy Poems*

Elizabeth Bishop’s *Geography III* and Rowan Ricardo Phillips’ *The Ground*

Joseph Gordon Macleod’s *The Ecliptic* and Moikom Zeqo’s *Zodiac*

Elisa Gabbert and Wayne Miller (poet and translator of Moikom Zeqo) will also visit the class to discuss their work.


FULFILLS MAJOR REQUIREMENT: Advanced Creative Writing

**ENGL 3711, Section 1**
**CRN 4262**
**20th-Century American Fiction**
**Charlotte Quinney**
**M, W 2-3:50 PM**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The mythological American West developed in the nineteenth century as an endeavor of dime novelists, ethnologists, Indian painters, theatrical performances, Wild West Shows, folktales, nascent cinematic technologies, and World’s Fairs. The culture of the nineteenth-century American West has been read as an embryonic form of post-modern simulation, however the western frontier tropes of expansionism, progress, civilization, and futurity continue to possess and inhabit American identity, politics, and policy. This course will examine how twentieth-century short stories, drama, novels, and film engage with historical discourse on the West, as well examining how the tension between romance and reality fuels increasing generic hybridity in representations of western landscapes and subjects. We will explore a range of revisionist, postmodern, speculative, irreverent, apocalyptic, and hybridized texts by authors including Nathaneal West, Robert Coover, Richard Matheson, Cormac McCarthy, Stephen Graham Jones, and Joe R. Lansdale. Through close textual analysis and creative
projects, students will explore the expanding imaginative parameters of mythic, regional, and post* cultural production.

Fulfills major requirement: American Literature after 1900

ENGL 3732, Section 1  
CRN 3159  
Topics: The Talking Book  
Tayana Hardin  
T, R 2-3:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course focuses on African American literature written during the 19th century. Written against the backdrop of American slavery and emancipation, this body of literature signaled the stirrings of a distinct brand of American writing—one heavily shaped by the politics and histories of race and gender in the United States. Through our examination of autobiography, fiction, music, journalism, and political manifestos by Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and others, we will trace the beginnings of what would become known as “the African American literary tradition,” and also take stock of its resonances in two 20th century novels by African American authors Octavia Butler and Edward P. Jones.

Fulfills major requirement: American Literature (Before 1900), Ethnic Literature

ENGL 3732, Section 2  
CRN 3160  
Topics: Postmodern Literature: Technologies of Disruption  
Laird Hunt  
M, W 2-3:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Through a careful examination of the modalities employed in postmodern fictional output we will attempt to deepen our understanding of the range of techniques and tactics experimental post-War writers have had at their disposal. We will cast our net into different corners of what gets called postmodern in an attempt to make sure our gleanings are as varied as possible. Works read will include Italo Calvino’s If On a Winter’s Night a Traveler, Kathy Acker’s Don Quixote, Marie Redonnet's Rose Mellie Rose, Percival Everett’s Erasure and Vladimir Nabokov’s Pale Fire. Essays and excerpts by Jameson, Haraway, Cixous, Barth, some of the aforementioned authors and others will be called on to help fuel our conversation. While close reading and resultant discussion will be at the
center of our proceedings, participants will be called on to generate and put into practice their own mechanisms for textual disruption (and to present these in class). Two papers will be produced over the course of the quarter, as well as miscellaneous smaller critical and creative assignments.

Fulfills major requirement: For undergraduates only.

**ENGL 3732, Section 4**
CRN 4910
Old English
Donna Ellard
M, W 10-11:50 AM

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Old English is the first of a two-part undergraduate / graduate sequence.

Old English is a foreign language, so this will be a foreign language course. You'll be learning how to decline nouns, conjugate verbs, and parse OE grammar so that, in the Winter, you can read *Beowulf* (part two of this sequence). Every class period will consist of grammar paradigms followed by short Old English texts. Every week or two we'll have quizzes plus a midterm and a final exam.

All this may sound like 10 weeks of no fun, but there is joy and beauty in foreign language learning; and, as the “disciplinary” architecture of the University makes clear, there is pleasure in discipline, even the “discipline” of English. Moreover, as a course angled towards future horizons, this course will not only prepare you for *Beowulf* in the Spring but will also point you towards 20th- and 21st-century poetry. Pound, Auden, and Heaney; Wilbur, Prynne, and Draycott; Hughes, Haynes, and Bergvall—these poets and many others have turned to “Old” English, a poetic language and rhetorical form of future possibility.

Fulfills major requirement: Rhetoric/Theory; fulfills a tool requirement for the PhD degree

**ENGL 3732, Section 5**
CRN 4923
Topics in English: Opus Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow*
Billy J. Stratton
T, R 12-1:50

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Thomas Pynchon’s 1973 novel, *Gravity’s Rainbow*, is widely regarded as among the most significant English-language novels produced over the last century. Considered by
readers and critics from the onset as both innovative and maddening, it was selected as co-winner of the 1974 National Book Award for fiction. While this recognition confirmed the publication of Gravity’s Rainbow as a significant literary event, it achieved legendary status when it was unanimously chosen for the 1974 Pulitzer Prize by the jury on fiction, but due to criticism from the Pulitzer board that claimed the novel was “turgid,” “overwritten,” and “obscene,” this selection was rejected and no award for fiction was given. Since then, however, Gravity’s Rainbow has come to be viewed as a foundational text of American postmodern fiction, one that masterfully grapples with the notion of ontological instability and what the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard identified a few years later as an “incredulity towards metanarratives” that lies at the center of “the postmodern condition.” This course will proceed from these critical and philosophical underpinnings to enact the performance of a close reading and literary analysis of Gravity’s Rainbow, along with a selection of secondary sources, in order make the text at once more accessible as a literary/read-able artifact, while also creating a visionary understanding of the ways in which Pynchon employs such elements as narratology, characterization, intertextuality, metaphysics, pop culture, humor, and art to both create and deconstruct systems of meaning and knowing. Out of this experience, it is my hope that at the end of our ten weeks together we will be enabled to better assess the novel’s location within American literature/letters/philosophical traditions/culture.

Fulfills major requirement: American Lit after 1900; open to undergraduate students only.

ENGL 3982, Section 1
CRN 2564
Writers in Schools Training & Residencies
Internship & Service Learning Course

Eleni Sikelianos
T, R 10-11:50

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Required books:

*Rose, Where Did You Get That Red*, by Kenneth Koch

Other resources:

http://twcresources.org
http://www.poets.org/page.php/prmID/6
http://witsblog.org/category/lesson-plan/

Open to Graduate Students and Advanced Standing Undergraduate Creative Writing Majors or Minors. Prerequisites for undergraduate students: introduction to Creative Writ-
ing, one Intermediate Creative Writing Workshop in poetry or fiction, and either an Advanced Creative Writing Workshop (poetry or fiction) or permission of the instructor.

This course will operate mostly “in the field.” Following the models of California Poets in the Schools and Teachers & Writers Collaborative, we will train in residence, first observing a five-week poetry residency at Steele Elementary School, about 10 minutes from DU’s campus. (We will be sure there’s ample time to travel to and from classes on campus.) Each week, following observation onsite, we will meet to discuss pedagogy, classroom practices and management, teacher-writer relations, and all other necessary logistical planning. Students will be expected to engage in planning meetings with a classroom teacher, and, by the fifth week of the quarter, begin their own residencies in small teams. Students will track student writings, and will help to compile, type and produce an anthology. This anthology will contain one piece of writing by every school student involved in the residencies. There will be one visit to the residency site after our quarter ends, to facilitate an anthology celebration. Those interested in working with other populations (shelters, refugee centers, etc.) are encouraged to do so.

ENGL 4000, Section 1
CRN 1442
Colloquium
Adam Rovner
W 2-3:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is a graded class required for all second-year doctoral students. The primary aim is to provide a lively introduction to a variety of professional development matters, including departmental policies; preparing for comprehensive examinations; the dissertation process; preparing for the job market; teaching/publication/service; making one’s work public; interdisciplinary studies; theory and methodology; and academic work and life.

ENGL 4200, Section 1
CRN 4264
Special Topics: Early Modern Literature
SIMULACRE: the poetics & praxis of adaptation
Scott Howard
W 4-7:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course investigates the poetics and praxis of adaptation through a range of literary forms (drama, poetry, prose) and related fields (cinema, philosophy, visual art). While our primary focus concerns the 16th and 17th centuries, the scope of our studies covers an international and interdisciplinary field from Classical times through the early modern and into the modern & postmodern eras. Within that capacious context, we will pay spe-
cial attention to important schools of thought, cultural developments, and artistic practices that have deep roots in earlier times, such as: materialist philosophy; the poetics of the sublime; and various theories of indeterminacy, contingency, and eidetic making. We will also recover an almost forgotten conversation about poetic fictions and simulacra. Research projects may include a variety of critical, theoretical, and creative approaches. As with any trans-historical class offered at the graduate-level, the department’s default policy is that the student’s research project may determine the matching distribution requirement and/or program concentration. Students are requested to be prepared to discuss the following works at the first meeting: Plato’s Republic, Books 7 – 10; Aristotle’s Poetics; Shakespeare’s Hamlet; and Guy Debord’s The Society of the Spectacle—all of which are freely available on the web through a variety of open-access sites.

ENGL 4424, Section 1
CRN 4265
Special Topics: 19th Century Literature
Rachel Feder
R 12-3:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this course, we’ll dive deep into formations of the sublime by thinkers ranging from Longinus to Sianne Ngai and use the sublime as a lens through which to read Romantic poetry and prose. Course participants will craft a response to the sublime in a genre of their choosing.

ENGL 4701, Section 1
CRN 3165
Topics in English
Clark Davis
M, W 12-1:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Most of the writers we’ll read are poets, but all can be thought of as being on the strange and stressed edges of Calvinist/Protestant experience. Pushed to the margins by ideas of grace and will-less freedom, their work wrestles with (sometimes succumbs to) the angel at the crossing.

Not a course in the “poetics of” anything exactly, but in how writers in this tradition fought for a way out of or into constraint and freedom to speak. The voices most their own seem always someone, something else’s.

Readings will include incidental writing and fragments of Freedom of the Will by Jonathan Edwards; Michael Wigglesworth’s strange and tormented Diary; the ecstatic, Jesus-voiced poems of Jones Very; Melville’s historical ventriloquisms in Battle Pieces and
Timoleon (perhaps a slice of Clarel); and Emily Dickinson. Since much of what we’ll attempt is to figure out simply how to read these writers, we will also carry on a sidebar discussion with Rita Felski’s The Limits of Critique.

ENGL 4702, Section 1
CRN 3166
Topics: Critical Imagination
Brain Kiteley, Adam Rovner
T 4-7:50 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the imagination of the critic, and the critical mind of the author of imaginative fiction. At stake are no less than two central questions of our discipline: What is literariness? And, what do critical approaches to literature consist of? To suggest partial answers to these questions we will read critical essays by two very different thinkers: Walter Benjamin and Benjamin Harshav. The eclectic philosophical theories of Benjamin remain a touchstone for contemporary literary and cultural critics. The rigor of Harshav’s constructivist poetics from the latter half of the 20th century offers a competing vision of how to understand literature and its relationship to the world. Students will consider the modes of inquiry suggested by Benjamin and Harshav as they read through two creative works, again by authors of differing styles, temperaments, and periods: Isaac Babel and Saul Bellow. While both authors remain canonical, only Babel is widely taught—a fact which raises questions about the imaginative horizons of the contemporary university.