Course Descriptions:

LIT 308.001-Studies in Genre: The Graphic Novel
This course considers literary approaches to the study of comics and the graphic novel. We will read a variety of texts in such genres as biography, memoir, journalism, short story, and long-form fiction, informed by critical readings on the form and function of comics.

LIT 310.001- Major Authors: Doris Lessing and Margaret Atwood
Students will read selected novels and other imaginative writing by two distinguished contemporary novelists: Doris Lessing and Margaret Atwood, recent recipients of the Nobel Prize in Literature and the Booker Prize (respectively). We will explore central ideas and strategies of narrative structure and expression in each author's work.

LIT 334.001-Shakespeare Studies: Topics in Renaissance Literature: Metaphysical Moves: Writing Revolution or the Revolution of Writing?
This course looks at Shakespeare as a developing artist, solving problems from one play to the next, even as it situates his work in the political and religious world of his time.

LIT 341.001-Topics in Romantic Literature: The Romantic Novel
The Romantic Era is primarily known for the poetry of William Wordsworth, Percy Shelley, and other canonical poets, but is there also an important history of the novel to be identified and investigated during this period? This course suggests there is and will consider major Romantic poetic texts alongside some of the important novels of the period. Readings will include examples of the gothic novel as well as novels written by Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Mary Shelley, and William Godwin.

LIT 346.001-Topics in Film: Melodrama
In this class we will develop a historical and theoretical framework for studying melodrama. Starting from the evolution of early film melodrama and its relationship to popular theater, we will trace the generic conventions of the mode in a diverse range of texts, from classical Hollywood formulas and "women's movies," to contemporary action and disaster films.

LIT: 346.002-Topics in Film: African Cinema
This course will explore cinema produced in sub-Saharan Africa from 1960 until the present. We will discuss the historical and cultural contexts of the films as well as their aesthetic forms. We will also explore the particular challenges of making and distributing films in Africa. Students will view a wide range of films, from Francophone “art house” films, to the popular Nollywood video-films of Nigeria, to the international blockbusters of South Africa.

LIT 367.001-Topics in World Literature: Modern Chinese & Sinophone Literature
This course is an introduction to major literary works from mainland China and Sinophone communities such as Taiwan and Hong Kong, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present. In discussing short stories, graphic novels, martial art novels, and online literature, the class explores issues including representation and historicism, nation building and globalization, queer diasporas, and cyber politics.
LIT 481/681.001-Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature: Metanarrative
Course descriptions tell you nothing about a course. They generate vague course goals and list names of potential authors (Calvino, Cortázar, Puig, Stoppard) or film directors (Egoyan, Fellini, Jonze) to be covered. But these are always listed such that it reads like some sort of academic society column, clamoring for attention. You’re reading between the lines of this description right now, wondering if the course has something to do with “postmodernism,” or whether theory might be involved – or perhaps both. This description will not help you figure it out, or even acknowledge what “metanarrative” might mean in the first place.

LIT 437/637.001- Advanced Studies in Restoration & 18th century Lit: Travel Writing & the 18th Century Imagination
Throughout the eighteenth century, British men and women traversed the known and unknown world, their motives including colonization, science, curiosity, trade, diplomacy, and tourism. Throughout the semester, we will read a range of fictional and non-fictional travel narratives including Robinson Crusoe (Daniel Defoe); Gulliver’s Travels (Jonathan Swift); The Turkish Embassy Letters (Mary Wortley Montagu); The History of Mary Prince, a West African Slave (Mary Prince); accounts of North American exploration and contact; and texts documenting the South Sea voyages of Captain James Cook and Sir Joseph Banks. Considering a wide range of letters, novels, journals, and critical materials, we will discuss questions of narrative voice and authenticity; exploration and colonialism; eighteenth-century philosophy and science; national and racial identity; gender and travel; slavery and abolition; and the literary picturesque and Gothic.

LIT 440/640.001-Topics in 19th Century British and European Literature: 19th Century French Realist Fiction
This course looks at a series of novels that investigated what it meant for fiction to claim to represent reality. Realism, thus, does not mean, more or less approximating reality, but having that ambition and holding beliefs about how best to do that in literary form. Because the fiction was written in France in the 19th century, a period of constant turmoil and frequently changing forms of government, the history of the fiction and its definitions of what it meant to claim to represent reality is also in part the history of France between the fall of Napoleon (1815) and the fall of the Second Empire (1870). Authors discussed will be Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert and Zola, a couple of novels for each writer.

This course is inspired by Margaret Thatcher’s famous statement that “there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families.” (Women's Own magazine, October 31 1987) which is usually dismissed as conservative hyperbole, but which encourages us to examine the ways in which the “social” changed in the 1980s. My argument, which the course will test, is that in the 1980s the margins gained cultural capital through what we might call the utilization of “cool.” In the 1980s, it becomes apparent that everything can be repackaged, remarkeeted, and rewritten so as to become new and salable. History, iconography, and to a limited extent class, gender, and race become floating signs
detached from stable referents. Truth becomes tied to the market or public consciousness in ways that are both liberating and anxiety provoking. In the course we will evaluate Scott Lash’s argument that the 1980s is a period of “de-differentiation,” challenging the boundaries set up by modernism. These boundaries include: high culture/mass culture, truth/fiction, mind/body, science/art, culture/society, art/everyday life, dominant culture/subculture. The challenging of these boundaries is motivated by a search for the “cool,” and reflects a shift in emphasis from permanent value to temporal experience.