LITERATURE (LIT)

LIT 214 Forms of the Novel (3 credits)
The first novels were romances, tales of wanderers, allegories and satires. Works by Cervantes and John Bunyan exemplify the early novel. The novel as a genre soon developed an enthusiastic audience and a variety of forms, from realistic to fantastic. The course presents novels from different times and places to sample some of this variety and to see how authors have made use of the enormous potential of the novel.

LIT 216 Forms of the Short Story (3 credits)
The modern short story is characterized by its movement toward a moment of realization or insight. How can we decipher and benefit from this insight? This course studies the different short stories that take and the different ends to which individual writers subject the form. It includes writers who have contributed to the development of the modern short story (such as Anton Chekhov, Edgar Allan Poe and Katherine Mansfield) and more recent innovators (such as Ernest Hemingway and Raymond Carver). It incorporates the stories of visiting writers who come to Bentley to share their work.

LIT 218 Forms of Nonfiction (3 credits)
This course examines the most protean of literary forms, the essay, and explores its development into a flexible medium capable of reflecting on personal matters as well as sports, business, politics, food and science exploration. Authors vary from Michel de Montaigne and Samuel Johnson to such contemporary American writers as Annie Dillard and Stephen Jay Gould. The theme varies from year to year.

LIT 220 The Tradition of Biography and Autobiography (3 credits)
Biography and autobiography—stories about real people—have been called the most useful form of literature: they provide real-life models to emulate, real-life mistakes to beware of, and real-life experiences that help us understand ourselves and the forces that shape us. But it is important to remember that no matter how hard they try to be honest and accurate, biographers and autobiographers can provide only versions of someone’s life (even their own), of which other versions are always possible. This course invites students to study the lives of others (both famous and ordinary), to appreciate the wide range of factors—cultural, social, political, and historical—that shape the kinds of stories writers tell, and just as importantly, the stories they do not tell. Selection and focus of biographies and autobiographies vary by instructor and semester.

Focus: CI
LSM: MAS

LIT 230 Literature and Culture I (3 credits)
How do some texts come to be seen as foundations of cultures? And when do they come to be seen in this way? What do they tell us about what different civilizations regard as essential to their evolving cultural identities? This course explores the connections between literary texts, generally of the ancient and medieval world, such as Homer, the Bible and the Tao Te Ching, and the circumstances in which they were composed. It asks whether there are indeed universal human values, or whether the attitudes, beliefs and societies we as readers live by or take almost for granted can be usefully contrasted with those revealed in the older texts we study. The course queries what cultural assumptions we bring to the act of reading these texts, and how our outlook helps to shape our understanding and is challenged by them.

LIT 232 Introduction to Mythology and Folklore (3 credits)
This course studies selected archetypal stories and legends as well as games, riddles and proverbs to discover basic patterns and variations in the human experience. It includes materials from all parts of the world, and from a variety of perspectives, regarding such topics as creation, myths of the elements, the seasons, the loss of paradise, death, the underworld, the hero, the Great Mother, and the trickster.

Focus: INTL

LIT 233 The Bible as Literature (3 credits)
This course discusses selections from both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament in considerable detail: Genesis, Exodus, Samuel, Kings, Ecclesiastes, Job, Matthew, Acts, and perhaps some selections from the prophets, Psalms, and other books as well. These books include stories about human origins, families, love, war, sex, betrayal, politics, prophets and kings, and the development of a stormy relationship between God and humankind. The books of the Bible also contain laws, histories, philosophy and prophecies, all of which can help us understand the ancient cultures that so influenced the world.

Focus: CI

LIT 243 The New Testament (3 credits)
Today, more is known about Jesus as a historical figure than at any other time in the past 2,000 years. The same is true for the founding and development of Christianity and for the transition of Judaism into its modern form, both of which occurred in the middle to late years of the first century of the Common Era. Students will read the New Testament in the context of this knowledge, which comes from archeological discoveries and careful scholarly research. Students will also look at samples of other texts from the period: the Apocrypha, the Dead Sea Scrolls and non-canonical gospels.

LIT 260 Introduction to African American Literary and Cultural Studies (3 credits)
Employing the methods of several disciplines, including literature, history, philosophy, and anthropology This course introduces the dramatic and detailed documentation of the presence and legacy of Africans in Ancient America (or Pre-Columbian America). It explores the major genres, themes and criticisms which compose the literary and cultural traditions of African Americans. Selected oral narratives, essays, slave narratives, poetry, short stories, autobiographies, drama and novels will be critically studied. Attention is given to historical, cultural and socio-political backgrounds.

Focus: DIV
LSM: AMP; DSC; ESR

LIT 261 American Traditions (3 credits)
The United States has always been a contact zone, a meeting place of a variety of cultures. This course introduces some of the diverse American literature produced between the 17th and 20th centuries. Students will learn about the many writers associated with the Boston area, such as Bradstreet, Alcott and Thoreau, as well as writers such as Douglass, Twain, Dickinson and Cather from the diverse regions and cultural backgrounds within the United States.

LSM: AMP; DSC
LIT 262 Native American Literature and Culture  (3 credits)
In this course students will examine the long history of Native American textual production, from early Native writers such as Samson Occum and William Apess to contemporary authors including Louise Erdrich and Sherman Alexie. Within these readings students will focus on narrative strategies for physical and cultural survival and remembrance in the face of colonialism and erasure. At the same time, students will investigate how native American writers deploy a diverse array of tactics and theories to consciously oppose stereotypes of Native identity in mainstream literature and film.
Focus: DIV  
LSM: AMP; DSC; ESR

LIT 298 Experimental Course in Lit  (3 credits)
Experimental courses explore curriculum development, with specific content intended for evolution into a permanent course. A topic may be offered twice before it becomes a permanent course. Students may repeat experimental courses with a different topic for credit.

LIT 299 Experimental Course in Lit  (3 credits)
Experimental courses explore curriculum development, with specific content intended for evolution into a permanent course. A topic may be offered twice before it becomes a permanent course. Students may repeat experimental courses with a different topic for credit.

LIT 310 Creative Writing: Poetry  (3 credits)
This course develops the students' ability to recognize, analyze and design effective structures of imaginative language and poetic form. Classroom methods include workshops to critique student work, in-class exercises, analysis and exposition of works by noted poets, and frequent writing assignments. The class is limited in size so that every student writer's work can receive full attention.
Focus: CI

LIT 311 Creative Writing: Fiction  (3 credits)
This course is an intensive workshop in writing short stories and an exploration of the creative process. The material of the course is drawn primarily from students' own experience. The emphasis is divided between the technique of short-story writing and an analysis of the psychological difficulties faced by individual writers. Students will study the elements of fiction, analyze the stories of a contemporary writer, and apply what they learn in their own writing. They will also read work in progress and receive constructive suggestions from the group. Each student will be helped to conceive, write and revise four complete short stories during the course of the semester. Visiting writers are frequently invited to sit in on a class. The class is limited in size so that every student writer's work can receive full attention.
Focus: CI

LIT 312 Creative Writing: Drama/Screen Writing  (3 credits)
This course develops students' ability to recognize, analyze and design effective structures of imaginative language and dramatic form. It emphasizes writing for the theatre versus the screen; may vary from semester to semester. Classroom methods include workshops to critique student work, in-class exercises, analysis and exposition of the work of noted playwrights and/or screenwriters, and frequent writing assignments. The class is limited in size.
Focus: CI  
LSM: MAS

LIT 313 Creative Writing: Nonfiction/Essay  (3 credits)
Personal essay and memoir are among the most popular forms of literature today, a fact one can confirm by looking any Sunday at the best-seller list in the New York Times. This course emphasizes creativity of expression and provides an opportunity to practice these genres. It encourages experimentation with a variety of first-person forms and shows how to treat subjects that students know about and that are important to them. It is conducted as a workshop in which students share their work with and learn from one another. Frequent individual conferences with the instructor are required. The class is limited in size.
Focus: CI  
LSM: ESR

LIT 314 Creative Writing: Mixed Genres  (3 credits)
Each student chooses his or her own work (family history or memoir, love poetry or satire, nature or adventure writing, among others). Using class and individual exercises, videotaped inspiration, and guests discussing their own work in progress, students will learn the major skills of each written genre to apply to their own special piece. Includes word choice, imagery, language rhythm, conflict, characterization, narrative intervention and tone. Other overarching concerns that professional writers struggle with include subtext, production and intention. The class is limited in size.
Focus: CI

LIT 330 Literature of the Holocaust  (3 credits)
In attempting to write about the genocide that took place during World War II, writers have struggled with the dilemma, "How does one represent the unrepresentable?" This course will examine the attempts of writers writing originally in English, French, Italian, Hebrew, Polish and German to come to terms with this issue of "fictional representation" of the Holocaust. The reading list will be complemented by films that have also tackled the problem of turning the "unrepresentable" into art.
Focus: INTL  
LSM: DSC

LIT 332 Images of the Hero  (3 credits)
Heroes can be warriors or pacifists, romantics or realists, officers or outlaws, or a composite of all of these. The kind of hero a culture admires can tell us a lot about its values, its beliefs and its fears. This course examines male and female heroes from a spectrum of modern and traditional cultures. It considers how literary heroism functions as an expression of cultural values and social expectations. In exploring the ways that heroes do and do not function as role models, it also explores the conflict between individuality and social responsibility often revealed in heroic narratives.
Focus: CI; DIV; INTL

LIT 333 Literature and Film of the Vietnam War  (3 credits)
The year 1995 marked the 20th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. In the intervening 20 years many novelists and poets — some of them veterans, some not — have attempted to transform their immediate experience of it or its effect on their lives into an art form that will have meaning for all. In this they join the many writers throughout the world history of war who have written in the genre of war literature. This course addresses the genre of war literature and the questions, issues and values it raises by looking closely at the literature and films of the Vietnam War.
Focus: DIV
LIT 336 The Irish Tradition (3 credits)
Irish writers have made a remarkable contribution to 20th-century literature; three Nobel Prize winners hail from Ireland, a country of fewer than 4 million inhabitants. Presents elements of a literary and oral tradition in Ireland that extends from the pre-Christian mythological stories to the modern novels of Joyce and Beckett. This course will attempt to understand the concerns of writers and storytellers in a social and historical context and to explore the contribution of Irish authors to a variety of literary forms. Writers studied include Swift, Maria Edgeworth, Wilde, Shaw and Frank O'Connor. Modern works may include George Moore's novel, The Lake, James Joyce's story collection, "Dubliners", Samuel Beckett's play "Waiting for Godot", and J. M. Synge's, The Aran Islands.
Focus: CI; INTL
LSM: DSC; GP

LIT 337 Caribbean Literature (3 credits)
This course introduces students to the literature of the Caribbean. Texts will be selected from the offerings of several islands and from various genres: novel, poetry and short fiction. Emphasis will be placed on the shaping influences of the island's rich mystical heritage and on questions of personal identity. The effects of slavery, African cultural survivals, and the role played by the English, French and Spanish colonials, white creoles, mulattos and blacks in forming the cultural mosaic of the island will be studied. Students will read the works of such authors as V. S. Naipaul, Jean Rhys, Jacques Roumain, Derek Walcott and Esmeralda Santiago, among others.
Focus: DIV, INTL
LSM: DSC

LIT 338 Graphic Novel (3 credits)
Are graphic novels lowbrow, juvenile comics or a more complicated format expressing ideas, creating complex characters, addressing issues and telling stories in a fashion unmatched by other media? This course explores a recent and still-emerging genre of narrative literature. We will investigate several significant modern novels that use both words and images to tell their tales. What literary and social values do these novels reflect? Students will sharpen their critical thinking and writing skills while examining both the textual and visual messages of these novels and the criticism that has surrounded them.
LSM: DSC

LIT 339 Women in Literature (3 credits)
This course explores the literary representation of women's nature, lives and issues. The literary definitions and dynamics of women appear in such terms as self, voice, autonomy, relation to men, and position and agency in the world. The course considers whether the gender of the writer affects the literary treatment of the subject. The texts studied will vary each semester.
Focus: DIV
LSM: DSC

LIT 340 Graphic Novel (3 credits)
Are graphic novels lowbrow, juvenile comics or a more complicated format expressing ideas, creating complex characters, addressing issues and telling stories in a fashion unmatched by other media? This course explores a recent and still-emerging genre of narrative literature. We will investigate several significant modern novels that use both words and images to tell their tales. What literary and social values do these novels reflect? Students will sharpen their critical thinking and writing skills while examining both the textual and visual messages of these novels and the criticism that has surrounded them.
LSM: DSC

LIT 345 English Romanticism, 1790-1850 (3 credits)
In the decades following the American and French Revolutions, a revolutionary cultural and literary movement had a powerful impact on intellectual and social life in England and the rest of Europe. The imagination, the subjective experience of individuals (no matter how humble), and sentiment or emotion were extolled as superior to (or at least as important as) the rational and scientific ideals of the Age of Reason. This course considers what was (and wasn't) revolutionary in the work of romantic writers such as poets William Blake and John Keats, essayist William Hazlitt, and novelists Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen.
LSM: DSC

LIT 346 The Victorian Period (3 credits)
British literature of the 19th century reveals the excitement—and the struggle—of learning to live in a world of rapid technological advances. During this period, England led the world in industrial development, in urbanization, and in the possibilities and disruptions brought on by these changes. Writers of the Victorian period—novelists like Charles Dickens and George Eliot, poets like Tennyson and Browning—eagerly examined and portrayed the great new world. They investigated the changes in city and country life, political and religious upheavals (particularly the clash of religion and science), and the development of a Victorian "attitude" about respectability and values. This course presents some of the great authors and works that mark this remarkable period.
LSM: DSC

LIT 347 Jane Austen in Fiction and Film (3 credits)
Students study the novels of Jane Austen and their cinematic adaptations. In addition to developing insight into the novels and movies, students also analyze selected critical, historical and biographical contexts. Students can thus incorporate scholarly and popular views into their analyses of the novels and films. Participants get to focus on the work of a single major author whose writing established many of the traditions of modern fiction, and become immersed in an important historical period. They also learn to think and write critically about social, artistic and commercial motives behind the enduring interest in Austen.
LIT 362 American Literature, 1830-1870  (3 credits)
In the early 19th century, transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson proclaimed the need for American literary independence. By the time of the Civil War, the emerging nation of the United States had produced literature worthy of international recognition, leading some 20th-century scholars to call this period the "American Renaissance." This course covers some of the authors and texts(such as Walden, Moby Dick, and The Scarlet Letter) often considered at the heart of this period, alongside the slave narratives, sentimental fiction, gothic tales and women's poetry that were popular in their own day and have recently emerged as objects of literary study.

LSM: AMP

LIT 363 American Literature: Realism and Naturalism  (3 credits)
The period between 1870-1920 was the era of the invention of the bicycle, the telephone and the incandescent light. The poet Walt Whitman captured the spirit of optimism of these inventions and celebrated the creative force of Americans. Awe by the inhuman scale of new technologies, naturalists including Dreiser and Wharton were not as optimistic about one's capacity to shape personal destiny. It was everyday life and emotion not grand or disastrous destinies with which realist writers such as Howells were concerned. This course explores these varied viewpoints on this transformative era as they are expressed in literature written between the war "to preserve the union" and "the war to end all wars.

LSM: EEGS; HIND

LIT 364 Modern American Literature  (3 credits)
This course considers the major developments in 20th century American literature, with special emphasis on issues of race, class and gender. It examines responses to the upheavals of the two world wars, the liberation movements of the 1960s, including feminism, and the influence of literary developments in other parts of the world. Significant attention will also be given to more recent writers, such as Toni Morrison, Philip Roth, Louise Erdrich and Derek Walcott.

LSM: AMP

LIT 365 Immigrant and Ethnic Literature  (3 credits)
The United States has been called "a nation of immigrants." Certainly, most people living in the U.S., if not immigrants themselves, are the descendants of people who were born overseas and came to these shores seeking political asylum, religious freedom, or--most often--economic opportunity. Stories will reflect the pains and satisfactions of adjustment to American culture, as well as the sometimes troubled relations between immigrant parents and their American-born children. The ethnic groups represented in the course may change from semester to semester.

Focus: DIV

LSM: AMP; DSC; ESR

LIT 366 American Icons  (3 credits)
Meet three commonly identified American icons - the cowboy, the capitalist and the feminist - to see what they reveal about themselves and U.S. culture. Through literature, film, historical documents and narratives, students will see how these representations of America evolve and change in response to changes in society itself, and how they differ from icons in other cultures. The course addresses ethnic, racial and other variations in American life embodied in these American icons.

Focus: CI; DIV

LSM: AMP; MAS

LIT 369 Sexual Identity and Culture  (3 credits)
From power lesbians to drag queens, representations of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals are now visible throughout popular culture. But when does a novel or film accurately reflect the lives of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals? And when do they simply reproduce stereotypes? This course surveys contemporary gay literature and cultural expression in American life since the advent of the gay rights movement in 1969. It explores the representation of sexual identity in language, the intersection of political and aesthetic goals, and the differences in representations in class, race and ethnicity. It asks what defines gay, lesbian and bisexual literature, what distinguishes contemporary gay, lesbian and bisexual literature from earlier texts, and how gay, lesbian and bisexual literature has changed.

Focus: DIV

LSM: AMP; DSC; ESR; MAS

LIT 370 Passing in American Literature  (3 credits)
'Passing' refers to the conscious adoption of a new category of identity. While passing traditionally refers to the practice of African Americans passing as white, American literary history provides many examples of people who, for various reasons, assume another race, sexual identity or gender. This course examines fictional 20th-century representations of such passing in order to question the act of passing from a social and cultural perspective.

LSM: AMP; DSC; ESR; MAS

LIT 371 American Cities in Literature  (3 credits)
This course uses literary texts as a lens through which to look at American cities and their significance in American culture in general and American literature in particular. It aims at understanding urban American intellectual and social culture, and the architecture, music, politics and philosophy that embody it. Students will examine five important U.S. cities – New York, New Orleans, Chicago, Nashville and Los Angeles – as case studies of American life at moments of dramatic technological and cultural change. Students will study the work of some of the premier creative writers and thinkers in American history, from the Romantic authors who generated a literary Renaissance in Boston to the musicians of Memphis and the counter-cultural activists of San Francisco. Readings for the course include texts by Henry James, Theodore Dreiser, Tennessee Williams and Joan Didion.

LSM: DSC

LIT 377 Transgender Literature  (3 credits)
"Trans" literally means "across or beyond." This course surveys recent American literature to ask how people journey across or beyond gender identity categories. Are terms like "masculine" and "feminine," "heterosexual" and "homosexual," and "male" and "female" always mutually exclusive? Or can they be negotiated? Who defines someone's gender, the individual or society? The stories, novels, poetry and films discussed in this course utilize drama, humor and autobiographical events to convey the complexity of transgender lives and their variety, which includes cross-dressers, transsexuals and drag queens and kings, and any person whose gender identity or expression does not fit traditional categories.

LSM: AMP; DSC; MAS
LIT 380 Money, Love, and Death: Colonialism in Literature and Culture  (3 credits)
Students will explore colonialism as an important frame of reference for understanding contemporary cultures, and the connections among the themes of money, violence, love and colonialism, including cases involving U.S. foreign and domestic policy. Can there be love between people on opposite sides of a political conflict? How are the motives of romantic fantasy and profit connected in campaigns to exert political influence (hegemony) or dominance over another culture or group? To what extent is the legacy of colonialism a story of physical and emotional violence? What can we learn about our own lives from experiences such as European imperialism and Vietnam? Can we speak of an “internal colonialism,” here in the culture we inhabit? Students will explore a broad range of cultural materials, both visual and textual, film and literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, to understand these and other complex questions about cross-cultural relationships.
Focus: DIV; INTL
LSM: DSC; GP; MAS

LIT 381 Sitcom Nation: The American Family in Fiction and Film  (3 credits)
The nurturing nuclear families of television sitcoms such as “Leave it to Beaver” and “Father Knows Best” are often idealized by contemporary Americans anxious about and frustrated by contemporary family conflicts and complexities. The media converts these anxieties into consumable types (e.g., the deadbeat dad) and positions them against the sitcom ideal of the self-sacrificing mother and tough, but loving, father. By analyzing literary and cinematic responses to “classic” TV sitcom representations of American familial and cultural norms, this course explores the entrenchment of and challenges to gendered (and race- and class-based) family ideals. It addresses the impact of consumerism and the media on people’s perceptions of the ideal American family and their own distance from its norms. As this is a Communication Intensive section, it includes writing workshops and individual writing conferences in which students develop and hone their oral and written communication skills.
Focus: CI; DIV
LSM: AMP; MAS

LIT 391 Selected Topics in Literary Form  (3 credits)
In reading books, hearing songs or watching films, we tend to focus on the “content” of the work, on what it seems to be “about.” Still, we recognize that the form through which that content is communicated makes a big difference in how we respond to the work, even in what the work means. Two different versions of what seems to be the same story may differ greatly because of different formal characteristics. Similarly, the meaning of a song is likely to be very different than the meaning of the same words without the music. A writer, in choosing to present material in a specific form, is thus making an important decision. This course examines one specific form and consider the ways in which it shapes a variety of different works. Possible forms include the short story, the bildungsroman, the sonnet sequence, science fiction, and the mystery novel. (Allows repetition for credit.)
Focus: CI

LIT 392 Selected Topics in Literary Themes  (3 credits)
Certain themes and concerns have such a powerful hold on the human imagination that they have appeared over and over again in the literature of very different cultures and in very different periods. Some examples are obvious and include such themes as love and marriage, war, religion and faith. More surprising themes that nevertheless occur repeatedly are horror and the monstrous; the journey; utopias and dystopias; stories of the Holocaust; and the crippled hero. This course chooses one such theme, which will vary from semester to semester, and traces it in the creative work of a variety of times and places. It emphasizes the way different cultures share certain preoccupations but differ in the way they treat them. (Allows repetition for credit.)

LIT 393 Selected Topics in World Literature  (3 credits)
This course explores the literature that speaks of and for a particular nation, ethnic group or cultural situation. Includes the literature of Italy, Africa or Latin America; colonial and post-colonial literature; or the literature of East Asia. It emphasizes the way in which the works read reflect the characteristics and concerns of the culture. (Allows repetition for credit.)
Focus: INTL

LIT 394 Selected Topics in African American Literary and Cultural Studies  (3 credits)
This course explores a specific genre, period, movement or theme of African American literature and culture, such as the oral tradition; slave narratives, theory and criticism; the Harlem Renaissance; Black women and resistance; and the Civil Rights Movement. (Allows repetition for credit.)
Focus: CI; DIV

LIT 395 Selected Topics in American Literature  (3 credits)
This course explores a specific genre, period, author or theme in American literature. It includes literature of the Vietnam war; literature and baseball; and American frontier fictions. (Allows repetition for credit.)

LIT 396 Selected Topics in British Literature  (3 credits)
This course explores a specific genre, period, author, or theme in British literature. The course could include: non-Shakespearean renaissance drama; the Gothic tradition; contemporary British working-class fiction. (Allows repetition for credit.)

LIT 397 Selected Topics in Cultural Studies  (3 credits)
This course explores a specific issue or theme in cultural studies. It could include: diasporic literatures; literary responses to colonialism; Third World feminism; and the politics of literary canons and traditions. (Allows repetition for credit.)

LIT 401 Directed Study in Literature  (3 credits)
This course explores a specific issue or theme in cultural studies. It could include: diasporic literatures; literary responses to colonialism; Third World feminism; and the politics of literary canons and traditions. (Allows repetition for credit.)

LIT 402 Seminar in Literature  (3 credits)
This course permits a small number of students to pursue a particular topic in a seminar format. Topics may range from a subgenre (such as the theater of the absurd) to a particular author, to a large field not covered in other courses (such as modern approaches to literary criticism). Limited to 12 students. (Allows repetition for credit.)
Note: Not offered regularly. Check with department chair for availability.
**LIT 421 Internship in Literature  (3 credits)**
Internships permit students to integrate conceptual knowledge with practical experience, allowing them to participate in career-related employment associated with their academic interests. Internships help students apply theory to workplace challenges, test career options, strengthen skills, learn more about their values and interests and make the transition to the world of work. Tuition is charged for this class.

**LIT 491 Methods of Research  (3 credits)**
This course surveys the techniques and resources available for scholarly investigation in the humanities.

**LIT 492 Directed Study in English  (3 credits)**
Directed Study permits qualified individual students or a small group of students, in consultation with a faculty member, to study material and topics not covered in other courses. (Allows repetition for credit.).