

## Spring 2026 English Special Topics and Themed Courses

Course descriptions for all other courses can be found at the [NCSU Course Catalog](#)

*In addition to the requirements listed, depending on your concentration, some courses may be appropriate for meeting the Core-Breadth requirement. Talk to your advisor about this possibility.*

### **COM 395 / ENG 395: Studies in Rhetoric and Digital Media - Rhetoric of Sacred Spaces**

*Professor Skyler Meeks*

What makes a space sacred? Is it the architecture that frames it, the rituals enacted within it, or the stories we tell about what has taken place there? This course begins with those questions, not to resolve them, but to examine how meaning, memory, and place are woven together through rhetoric.

We will study sacred spaces as rhetorical phenomena—sites where language, image, sound, and design combine to shape collective experience. Some are centuries old and institutionally recognized; others are temporary, vernacular, or even digital. Each invites us to consider how communities mark certain places as significant, and how those places, in turn, influence identity, memory, and belonging.

Our work moves between theory and practice: reading key scholarship on rhetoric and space, analyzing diverse case studies, and creating projects that span multiple media. Along the way, you will refine your ability to analyze with precision, while also developing a more nuanced understanding of how sacredness is communicated, contested, and reimagined across contexts.

**Requirements met:** As listed in Degree Audit CORE - Rhetoric; English Elective; RPW - Methods, Strategies, and Context

### **ENG 394: Studies in World Literature - South Asian Literature: Nation, Identity, Voice**

*Professor Alok Amatya*

South Asian Literatures have made significant contributions to contemporary culture, producing award-winning authors and shaping major literary themes. Does South Asian Literature in English truly empower diverse voices from countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Nepal? Or, does the global literary marketplace bring exotic “others” to us as neatly packaged commodities? For literature to deliver a rich political discourse dealing with global issues, must it leave behind “the nation” as a default framework? What is the legacy of colonialism for people on the margins of the global economy in the twenty-first century? To address these questions, this course will analyze literary genres like the novel, the short story, the essay, and the poem. We will read works by internationally renowned authors such as Arundhati Roy, Michael Ondaatje, Nadeem Aslam, Agha Shahid Ali, and Manjushree Thapa. Students will craft their own interpretation of literary issues, as they work to redefine their reading practices and perfect their academic prose.

**Requirements met:** CORE World Literature OR Global Literature OR Additional Literature Elective; Literature Elective; English Elective; Literature - Perspectives

### **ENG 410: Gender and Genre - Contemporary Women's Novel**

*Professor Barbara Bennett*

Novels about the experiences of women in our world today with an emphasis on feminism.

**Requirements met:** CORE - Additional Literature Elective; Literature Elective; English Elective; Literature - Perspectives; Literature or TED - Author/Genre

### **ENG 490: Studies in Medieval Literature - Original Gothic: Medieval Literature, Art, and Architecture**

*Professor Jim Knowles*

What is the Gothic? Dark castles, stormy nights, the supernatural? Vampires, ghosts, and madwomen in the attic? Derelict southern mansions and trees hung with Spanish moss? Teenagers with dyed hair, leather, and piercings? Massive stone cathedrals flooded with stained-glass colored light, flying buttresses, pointed arches? Whichever set of images the word "gothic" conjures up for you, this course will help you uncover its roots in the literature, art, and architecture of the Middle Ages. During the so-called Gothic period -- spanning roughly 1100 to 1500 C.E. -- poets, painters, and builders produced some of the most magnificent works of art the world has ever seen. This course will explore a small selection of these works and their creators, focusing primarily on canonical literary texts in the European vernaculars (English, French, Italian) but pairing these with contemporaneous masterworks in the fields of architecture, painting, philosophy, and theology. Our objects of study may include texts from Marie de France, Chretien de Troyes, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Dante Alighieri, the Pearl-poet, Julian of Norwich and William Langland; paintings like Giotto's fresco cycle of the life of St. Francis, illuminated Apocalypse manuscripts, and the mysterious Wilton Diptych; and buildings like Salisbury Cathedral, the Great Coxwell Barn, and the Basilica of Saint-Denis. Student projects will add to this list of Original Gothic objects, connecting them with variations on the Gothic style up to the present day. All non-English texts will be read in translation.

**Requirements met:** CORE - British Literature OR Global Literature OR Additional Literature Elective; Literature Elective; English Elective; Literature - Interdisciplinary Approaches; Literature - Pre-1800 Co-req.

### **ENG 491H: Honors in English - Humans, Machines, and In-Betweens**

*Professor Paul Fyfe*

This course explores the long literary history of artificial intelligence from Frankenstein's monster to contemporary machine learning. We investigate how genres of fiction develop as a way of defining (and often redefining) the boundaries of humans, animals, machines, computers, and artificial consciousness. Students will gain an understanding of the genealogy of AI, explore key fictional representations in the history of science fiction, analyze how these representations evolve in different mediums (text, films, games, &c), experiment with futures thinking, and reflect on the ethics of science, technology, and engineering. Across the course, students will undertake critical as well as creative writing projects, producing regular response

assignments, workshop reports, and a course project in which they use AI to compose their own short story. (restricted to students in the English Honors program)

**Requirements met:** CORE - American Literature OR Additional Literature Elective; Literature Elective; English Elective; Literature - Interdisciplinary approaches OR Capstone

### **ENG 492 / WL 495: Special Topics in Film and Media Studies - Hispanic Horror**

*Professor Jorge Mari*

The course will explore theories and practices of cinematic horror through a historically contextualized exploration of Hispanic (Spanish and Latin American) horror films and thrillers of the last three decades. We will examine films by Guillermo del Toro, J.A. Bayona, Alejandro Amenábar, Paco Plaza & Jaume Balagueró, among others.

**Requirements met:** CORE - film; English Elective; Film - Film and Media Elective

### **ENG 492 / ENG 592: Special Topics in Film and Media Studies - Global Queer Cinema**

*Professor John Paul Stadler*

Global Queer Cinema introduces students to the diversity of queer expressions and subjectivities in various film industries outside of the United States. In particular, this course examines the role of the nation in constructing expansive notions of gender, sexuality, community, and kinship that move beyond mainstream gay and lesbian film narratives and economies. Films from Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Latin America will be surveyed to investigate how contemporary fights for global equality manifest amidst various local social, cultural, political and religious contexts. This comparative perspective opens up a rich and nuanced perspective not only on queer life, but also on queer filmic storytelling, writ large. Assignments will include forum posts, research essay, video essay, and a collaborative global queer film festival.

**Requirements met:** CORE - film; English Elective; Film - Film and Media Elective

### **ENG 494: Special Topics in Linguistics: Bilingualism and Language Contact**

*Professor Agnes Bolonyai*

Linguistic, cultural and socio-political aspects of bi- and multilingualism in a global context. Issues and implications of bilingualism from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Topics include: language maintenance and shift; child and adult bilingualism; relationship between language, culture and identity in bi- and multilingual situations; psycholinguistic aspects and linguistic outcomes of bilingual contact, such as code-switching, convergence and language attrition; language ideology, the politics of language choice and language policy; globalization and intercultural communication.

**Requirements met:** CORE - linguistics; English Elective; Linguistics - Linguistics Elective

### **ENG 494: Special Topics in Linguistics: Sociolinguistics for Speech-Language Pathologists**

*Professor Walt Wolfram*

This seminar focuses on language variation and mainstream American English under the lens of speech-language pathology. Students will learn about prevalent dialects in the US and the course offers an introduction to how language norms manifest in settings like education and healthcare.

**Requirements met:** CORE - linguistics; English Elective; Linguistics - Linguistics Elective

### **ENG 499: Special Topics in Creative Writing - BookTok to Book Bans: Controversies in Publishing**

*Professor LaTanya McQueen*

From both a writer's and reader's perspective, this course will examine our individual role within the larger literary community through examining recurring issues in today's publishing landscape. We'll discuss the rise of BookTok and the influence of social media in book sales, autofiction versus appropriation, censorship and book bans, nepotism in prize culture, the politics of likability and pandering, and the ethics of being a literary citizen. You'll review debut books, workshop your own creative writing, and build a submissions dossier (including a query letter, artistic statement, and list of journals/presses), among other assignments, so that by the end of the semester you'll have a deeper understanding of how to navigate the literary community—whether you want to publish, edit, or simply engage more meaningfully with the books you love.

**Requirements met:** As listed in Degree Audit

### **ENG 539: Seminar in World Literature - Reading the West through a Non-Western Lens**

*Professor Elaine Orr*

This world literature seminar will focus on 20th-21st century narrative texts that look at the Western world and its ethos/political practice/economic realities through the lens of non-Western (or hybridized) eyes. Texts will likely include Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, Chris Abani, *Graceland*, Jenny Erpenbeck, *Go Went Gone*, Louise Erdrich, *The Round House*, Michel Ondaatje, *Running in the Family* and Manuel Munoz, *The Faith Healer of Olive Avenue*. Thus we will be examining the novel, memoir, and short story forms. Alongside these creative texts, we will read theorists such as Gayatri Spivak, Franz Fanon, and Jose David Saldívar. Students will turn in two major written projects (these may be creative, critical, a hybrid form that includes writing and art, a teaching plan, or other project approved by the professor. Each student will present on one of their projects and each student will join a group to present on an author. Weekly writing will be required as well.

**Requirements Met:** CORE - World OR Global Literature; Literature Elective; English Elective; Literature - Perspectives OR Capstone

### **ENG 582: Studies in Literature - Langston Hughes: Pop Culture and Civil Rights**

*Professor Jason Miller*

Langston Hughes (1901-1967) consistently noted that his greatest source of inspiration was listening to (or reading) the news. In shaping both Harlem's values and the social turmoil of the 1960s, this seminar reassess this writer whose career merely begins with his role as a leading poet of the New Negro Movement of the 1920s.

After engaging with extensive works from Hughes's seventeen-volume oeuvre, this course directs students into the archival realm of primary sources which includes his mentoring of NC's own jazz singer Nina Simone. Music shaped the rhythms and cadence of a new innovative genre created solely by Hughes that David Chintz has rightly labeled "Blues Poetry." Through regular student presentations, we will examine Hughes's dramatic works, track his influence on Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), and move into his weekly newspaper columns written for the *Chicago Defender* from 1942-62. Final projects for this course might explore such questions as "How does literature serve as a rehearsal for social change?" or "What role did communism play in the life of this writer who was forced to testify on television before Joseph McCarthy in 1953 at the height of the Red Scare?" Of special note, this seminar begins and ends with extended exploration into the newly identified role Hughes's poetry played in the Civil Rights Movement and its direct inspiration on the nation's most visible dreamer— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Requirements Met:** CORE - American OR Additional Literature Elective; Literature Elective; English Elective; Literature - Perspectives OR Capstone OR Interdisciplinary Approaches OR Author/Genre

### **ENG 585: Studies in Film - Media Engines: AI, Animation, & Games**

*Professor Andrew Johnston*

This seminar investigates the aesthetic, technical, and cultural dynamics of computational media systems, focusing on the entanglement of game engines, AI, and animation. We will explore how contemporary media forms are driven by "engines," defined as software and hardware assemblages that automate vision, movement, and world-building. And how these engines shape perception, affect, and play. What happens to animation when it becomes procedural, generative, or data-driven? How do AI models and rendering pipelines alter our understanding of realism, agency, and authorship? And in what ways do game engines operate as laboratories for both creative expression and technical control? To address these questions, we will study a range of media artifacts, such as video games, simulations, machine learning experiments, rendered animations, and computational artworks, alongside key texts in media theory, art history, and critical code studies. Students will examine how contemporary media practices extend or reconfigure concepts such as the operational aesthetic, algorithmic spectatorship, and procedural worldmaking. Throughout, the seminar emphasizes analytical and creative approaches that bridge theory and practice, asking how computational systems do not simply represent the world but actively render it. (Typically not open to undergraduates).

**Requirements Met:** CORE - Film; English Elective; English elective; Film - Film and Media Elective; RPW - Methods, Strategies, and Context

## **ENG 587: Interdisciplinary Studies in English - Responsible AI and Society**

*Professor H. Ding*

With artificial intelligence systems becoming more integrated into today's society, it is important for citizens to develop the ability to critically engage with the fundamental challenges and concerns introduced by such AI tools. In this course, you will learn how to identify biases and discrimination embedded in AI systems and how to use interdisciplinary research to encourage public engagement, inform public discourses about the social impacts of AI, and help create more responsible AI. Topics can include rhetorical theories, data ethics, AI ethics, algorithm systems and risks, AI Model Lifecycle Management, AI in job searches, medicine/healthcare, and finance; and biases and discrimination in automated decision-making systems.

**Requirements Met:** CORE - Rhetoric; English elective; RPW - Methods, Strategies, and Context

## **ENG 590: Special Topics in Creative Writing - Teaching Artist Practicum**

*Professor Belle Boggs*

This class is a combination seminar and practicum that introduces graduate and English honors students to the purpose, principles, and best practices for creative writing extension work in K-12 public schools. The semester will be divided into three parts: in the first weeks of class, students will read widely about public school curriculum, including Common Core standards, and will examine and discuss examples of creative writing-based arts extension curriculum. They'll meet with practicing teaching artists as well as classroom teachers. Through this research, students will develop an ethical framework for teaching artistry, with a focus on creating useful, engaging lessons that build skills, respect and represent diverse literature and perspectives, and model the best of the study of English and writing at the university.

Following and in response to this study, students will work together in groups to propose a 3-4 week unit of study connected to fiction, poetry, or creative nonfiction. These groups will teach these units through pre-arranged public high school class and public library visits during the latter part of the semester, with a week reserved for reviewing and discussing outcomes, including work produced by the students.

**Requirements Met:** English elective; Creative Writing - LCW Elective