



Course Descriptions, Spring Term 2025

Monday: 10:00AM - Noon: Ernest Hemingway's Stories

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) was a journalist before he began writing stories and novels. His early career seems to have made him a keen observer of people's lives--he wrote about them as he saw them. In his writing career (he published 7 novels and 6 collections of stories), writing stories was a life-long commitment. These provided not only a necessary source of income but also international popularity. Awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954, he may seem today to be a voice of the cultural upheavals of the times in which he lived. Thus, his stories draw on his exposure to wars (WW1, WW2, Spanish Civil War), jazz-age parties at home and abroad, his lifelong love of hunting and fishing. For Hemingway, it seems that life and writing went tightly hand-in-hand—a topic worth discussing.

This study group will be devoted to discussion focused on understanding Hemingway as a story writer. We will read 18 of his stories, 3 for each of the 6 group meetings. The stories, which cover a span of 1923-1939, include nine of his Nick Adams stories (which we might consider autobiographical fiction?) and nine stories that focus on other protagonists whose struggles draw on the author's life experiences. Supplemental readings include excerpts from Hemingway's writing about writing. Participants will need to have a copy of the following edition of Hemingway's stories:

Ernest Hemingway, *The Hemingway Stories*, selected and introduced by Tobias Wolff, Scribner, copyright 2021.

To facilitate group discussion, enrollment is limited to 14 participants.

Instructor: Joanne Carlisle, 6 sessions, April 14– May 19 at Geer

Tuesday: 10:00 – Noon: On Shostakovich

Dimitri Shostakovich - The Russian Composer Beloved by musical cognoscenti from Glazunov through 21st century Punk Rockers & Their Fans, and Occasionally by Joseph Stalin (although sometimes *not!*).

Continuing our overview of modern Russian composers we will examine, with the assistance of The Great Courses' Professor Robert Greenberg, the life, music, and times of Dimitri Shostakovich. Combining Greenberg's excellent lectures with some of the finest

available concert videos and recordings we will enjoy and appreciate one of the most gifted and prolific "serious" composers. Almost universally acclaimed in his native Russia and elsewhere he was publicly fun, loving, and poetic and very sensibly protective of his privacy. Shostakovich used his expressive musical genius to "poke Russian autocrats in the ear" and yet avoid Siberia. He made his statements musically on a high-wire - well played!

Instructor: John Robinson, 8 sessions, April 15– June 3 at Geer

Wednesday: 10:00 AM – Noon: Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*

In *Northanger Abbey* Jane Austen follows Catherine Morland as she is introduced to society, revealing the challenges a girl from a quiet rural family faces in coping with social expectations of the times. Much of the pleasure of reading the novel derives from Austen's satire – a humorous portrayal of life in Bath that involves misjudgments of friendship and affairs of the heart, at the same time revealing issues young folk face in striving for acceptance, independence, and secure relations outside of their families. Austen portrays Catherine as if she were the heroine of the kind of Gothic novel that was popular at that time. Catherine's reading of such novels leads to fantasies of mystery and villainy, which in turn lead her into trouble with her hosts at the Abbey. In the end, Austen leaves us with heightened awareness of the complexity of social factors that a young impressionable girl must learn from.

The group will meet for six sessions. Along with discussing events and issues in the novel, we will examine the context in which the novel was written. This includes historical events, literary trends, the physical and social environment (Catherine's home, Bath, and Northanger Abbey), and related matters, such as the challenges Austen faced as a woman writer. We will explore Austen's skillful blending of romance, humor, and drama. What is Austen's point in writing a parody of a Gothic novel? How does she amuse us while implicitly commenting on social pressure?

Group members should have a copy of the following:

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, Penguin Classics.

(The Penguin Classics is dated 1985. Most recent publication date might be 2003, but this will vary because there are different introductions, etc.. Most probably all Penguin copies will have the same text and notes.) Optional, supplemental readings will be made available (printed and electronic).

Enrollment is limited to 14 to facilitate discussion format.

Instructor: Joanne Carlisle, 6 sessions, April 16 – May 21 at Geer

Wednesday: 1:30 – 3:30 PM: Patrick Modiano’s Lost Memories

Since 1974, the French writer Patrick Modiano, winner of the 2014 Nobel Prize in Literature, has been exploring the relationships among trauma, memory, and identity in a series of short, evocative, interlocking novels. Although often wearing the cloak of mystery tales, Modiano's closely written books rise above genre constraints to pose thoughtful questions about trauma and self-knowledge. We will examine three of these novels as well as Modiano’s evocative memoir. In each of the novels, the protagonist (a literal or metaphorical detective) becomes obsessed with digging into a hazy past, a search that ultimately brings greater self-awareness and yet more questions. Looking at three novels with similar themes from different periods in Modiano’s career will allow us to consider how the author’s style and concerns have evolved over time as he reworks his key themes. In addition, in week 5, we will read Modiano’s brief memoir, *Pedigree*, which focuses on the early personal experiences that haunt his novels.

Each week, we will read and discuss one-half of a novel plus an occasional brief essay (approximately 100 pages). I will provide in advance some questions to ponder as you read, and we will work together in class to flesh out both substantive and stylistic issues in the week’s reading. As we proceed, we will reflect on the commonalities and cross-references among the novels, which constitute interesting puzzles to be solved—puzzles about the past posed by Modiano’s narrators, and puzzles posed by Modiano himself about the intersections among trauma, memory, and identity.

Discussion format, limited to 15 participants

Readings:

Patrick Modiano, *Missing Person*. Penguin, 2019 (originally published in 1978)

Patrick Modiano, *Honeymoon*. Verba Mundi (Godine), 1995/2014 (originally published in 1990).

Patrick Modiano, *Pedigree*. Yale Univ. Press, 2015.

Patrick Modiano, *Invisible Ink*. Yale Univ. Press, 2021.

Instructor: Addison Stone, 7 sessions, April 16 – May 28 at Noble Horizons

Thursday: 10:00AM – Noon: President Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Tyranny

Do you remember the scene in which President Merkin Muffley is on the phone with the Soviet premier, Dimitri? Jump ahead to 2025, when President Trump is on the phone with Vladimir Putin. The two men pretend to be talking peace, but unlike Merkin and Dimitri, what they are discussing is not peace but the extension of tyranny. The purpose of this course is to use documentary films to examine the historical roots of tyranny and to discuss methods of resisting it. P.S. If we get overly depressed in our study of tyranny, we can regain our good humor by reflecting on the performance of Peter Sellers in Dr. Strangelove.

Instructor: Larry Rand, 8 sessions, April 17 – June 5 at Noble Horizons

Friday: 10:00 AM – Noon: Conversation Class.

A continuation of our weekly discussion sessions, examining everything and anything any member of the class wants to discuss.

Instructor: Larry Rand, 7 sessions, April 18 – June 6 at Noble Horizons