

## **Course Descriptions, Fall Term 2020**

### **All Courses taught online with ZOOM**

*Note: classes will normally last one hour, although more time will be allowed if participants and instructor wish to continue*

#### **Monday: 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM Post Industrial Northwest Connecticut**

Did you know northwest Connecticut is a post-industrial area? For nearly 200 years this area hosted a number of industries making products from mousetraps to heavy ship forgings and cannons. This course reviews that history in five sessions covering the towns of Norfolk, Canaan, Salisbury and Sharon.

**Instructor: Dick Paddock: September 14 – October 19: On Zoom (5 sessions)**

#### **Tuesday: 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM: The Roberts Court: Who Would Have Thought?**

As Americans awaited a series of June rulings by the Supreme Court in a number of sensitive cases, the general impression was that Chief Justice John Roberts would side with his conservative colleagues in virtually all these cases. While he did in some, he joined the liberal justices in three key cases, one involving the rights of the LBSTQ community, another the DACA program, and the third a Louisiana abortion law. Roberts has replaced Anthony Kennedy as the swing vote on the Court, and the Court can now be rightfully called the Roberts Court. We will examine the key decisions of the Court this past term and attempt to analyze the jurisprudence of the Chief Justice.

**Instructor: Larry Rand: September 15 – October 27: On Zoom (7 sessions)**

#### **Tuesday: 1:00 – 2:00 or 3:00 PM: Shakespeare**

We'll read and discuss Henry IV Parts 1 and 2, and Henry V, the most celebrated of Shakespeare's English history plays. The plays trace the trail of the father and son from Henry IV's successful deposition of Richard II and the founding of his own ruling line to the expedition to France and the glorious victory at Agincourt of his son, Henry V, the "star of England." But the two kings are in competition for the audience's attention and sympathy with Sir John Falstaff, a knight conspicuously lacking in royal qualities. Falstaff's exuberance and lustful striving after whatever experiences life offers suck the air out of the description of the political machinations of both his sovereigns, to such an extent that what was originally conceived by Shakespeare as a subplot has become for many theatergoers the main plot of the plays, with the political trajectories of the two Henrys functioning as a subplot. We'll investigate why this is so and if we agree with this scholarly upending of the roles. After consulting with the class members, sessions may extend to two hours, including a short break at the midpoint.

**Instructor: Robert Rumsey: September 15 – November 3: On Zoom (8 sessions)**

**Wednesday: 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM: Monsters in 19<sup>th</sup> Century British**

**Literature:** In this course, we will explore the figure of the monster and conceptions about monstrosity in nineteenth-century British literature. Across a century that experienced unprecedented advances in science and industry, the expansion of the British Empire and global travel, and changes in the agrarian and urban landscape, monsters figure centrally in the cultural and literary imagination. Our readings will include Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818 edition), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky," and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as we try to understand figures that are grotesque, frightful, demonic, mysterious, and seductive. Among the questions we will grapple with are: What forms do these monsters take? What spaces do they inhabit? What reactions do they elicit? What are their origins? How do we recognize them as "monsters?" What are the social, political, and economic contexts in which these stories unfold? A reading schedule will be shared with course participants by mid-August, and supplementary handouts will be provided in class and electronically.

**Instructor: Linda Neiberg: September 16 – November 4: On Zoom (8 sessions)**

**Thursday: 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM: The Future Ain't What it Used to Be**

**Autumn: 1950's Bronx, New York:** ("Yogi") Berra, a Navy veteran is playing catcher for the New York Yankees. It's a sure thing for a team that is getting ready for yet another world series championship. Yogi's many humorous quotes will make him the most beloved of all our baseball greats. The Yankees are invincible but so is our nation; the world's only superpower respected by all.

**Autumn: 2020 Northwest Corner, Connecticut:** Likely that Covid-19 infections and deaths will resume growth. We have watched the reopening and "liberation" of the economy. Enough noncompliance with scientific evidence to make us nervous. The protest and riot events of May-June reveal a nation dividend and under social and economic stress. The crowds will cause infections and deaths to spike.

We will review what has happened to our society, economy and institutions since the beginning of the year. We can continue to hope for a magic cure... a drug or vaccine that can quickly bring life back to what it once was. Maybe, but hope is not a strategy.

There will be opportunities for discussions during the classes and a class forum for you to participate in between classes. With winter and elections coming, it will be up to us formulate our views as to what 2021 will bring. A return to the good old days is no sure thing. But no one is an expert about what hasn't happened yet.

In the meantime, stay well and be sure to follow your President's advice for a healthy diet. "No more cream and sugar in your coffee; try a little Clorox instead."

**WARNING:** Consult your doctor before giving up on the cream and sugar.

**Instructor: Jerry Jamin: September 17 – Nov 5: On Zoom (6 sessions)**

**Friday: 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM: Doctrine, Dictators, and the Devil**

Hitler, Stalin, and Mao, among a few notable others, are responsible for the genocide, murder, starvation, and political extermination of many millions of individuals in the twentieth century, collectively setting records for brutality, destruction, slaughter, and evil in the whole history of humankind. Why did they do it? Why were they tolerated as long as they were? What can be done to prevent a recurrence? The answer may be our understanding of their kind and a willingness to stop them before they become “unstoppable”.

**Instructor: Bruce Montgomerie: September 25 – October 16: On Zoom (4 sessions)**

**Friday: 1:00 – 2:00 or 3:00 PM: Playreading:** In 1956, a new school of British playwrights appeared who expressly declared their opposition to the reigning offerings of British popular theater. The previous hits were called “well-made plays” as a tribute to the very visible skill that went into their creation. They dealt chiefly with upper-middle and upper-class themes, reflected the behavioral norms of their subjects, repressed excessive displays of personal emotion, and were largely innocent of ideological charge. In contrast, the new playwrights were usually of working or lower middle-class backgrounds and referred to upper class themes tangentially if at all. The authors preferred the appearance of spontaneity to that of self-conscious craft, brought raw and unfiltered emotion to the foreground and gave more than a hint of Continental imports such as existentialism. They wanted their plays to disturb, not to entertain. Their success pointed the way to the 1960's celebration of instinct and emotion and its corresponding devaluation of exclusively rational means of entrancing an audience. After an initial period of rejection, theatergoers accepted these new plays with as much enthusiasm as they had patronized their predecessors. The former practitioners of the well-made play were stunningly dethroned and were not resuscitated for decades. We'll try to trace what there was about these new plays that toppled one popular school of dramatists and established another with such utterly different content and treatment. We'll read and discuss *Look Back in Anger*, the play by John Osborne that started the new wave; *The Entertainer*, also by Osborne; *A Taste of Honey* by Shelagh Delaney; and *What the Butler Saw* by Joe Orton in that order. Fridays 1-3 at Zoom, 8 classes. After consulting with the class members, sessions may extend to two hours, including a short break at the midpoint.

**Instructor: Robert Rumsey: September 18 – November 6: On Zoom (8 sessions)**