

Course Descriptions, Winter Term 2021

Monday: 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM: Hits and Misses:

Instructor: Thomas Gruenewald: January 18 – February 15 (5 Zoom sessions)

This class will explore the creation of varied theater events. It is the intention to help the student understand why some productions succeed and some do not. Familiarity with the material (available in print, on YouTube and iTunes) will be helpful. I will share my experiences (and probably some gossip) and entertain questions and comments from the class.

January 18: Off-Broadway run followed by tour and return to New York as a stage manager to off-Broadway director: Hamlet, Androcles and the Lion and Dark Lady of the Sonnets.

January 25: Period shifting with 7 productions of As You Like It: University of Wisconsin, Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival (2), Berkshire Playhouse, Southern Methodist University, Penn State Festival, University of Connecticut.

February 1: Complete development process through critical and commercial success: Original off-Broadway musical Man with a Load of Mischief.

February 8: From Goodspeed Opera House to Broadway: revival of Take Me Along (the musical adaptation of O’Neill’s Ah, Wilderness!): Goodspeed to New Haven (Shubert Theater) to Kennedy Center to Broadway.

February 15: Opera: Metropolitan Opera Studio, St. Luke’s Opera (BAM, 92nd St. Y, Alice Tully Hall), Sarasota Opera, Hidden Valley Music Seminars.

Tuesday: 10 :00 AM – 11:00 AM: Men Plan, the Gods Laugh; but Sometimes the Gods are not Paying Attention.

Instructor: Thomas Key: January 19 – February 23 (6 Zoom sessions)

Sessions One, Two and Three: “Making the Constitution of the United States of America”. This will be a history, certainly not an interpretation.

One- The short comings of the Articles of Confederation and the need for change.

Two- Building the Constitution with the various problems, plans and options that were considered.

Three- Ratification of the Constitution.

Sessions Four and Five: “Mr. Madison’s War and the Battle of New Orleans.” A war that few wanted and for which neither side was prepared. The war ended primarily due to lack of interest on either side, and the greatest impact of the war took place after a peace treaty was signed.

Session Six: A Look at Don Sickles”: A rogue by most definitions, Sickles was supported by Tammany Hall, had a significant impact on design of NYC Central Park, shot and killed Francis Scott Key’s son due to an affair Key was having with his wife, and as a Union general either almost caused the Battle of Gettysburg to be lost by the Union or saved the Union’s battle line from destruction. The jury is still out.

Tuesday: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM: Douglas MacArthur:

Instructor: Robert Rumsey: January 19 – March 9 (8 Zoom sessions)

Rarely in American history has there been a more fruitful subject for partisanship than Douglas MacArthur. Few of his contemporaries, subsequent biographers or historians were immune to his attraction or repulsion. William Manchester called him an “American Caesar.” FDR was sure he was “the most dangerous man in America.” Harry Truman was equally sure that MacArthur was a “counterfeit,” “a man there was nothing real about,” and “a dumb son of a bitch” to boot. Yet for Lord Alanbrooke, the senior British military officer during WWII, MacArthur was “the greatest general and the best strategist that the war produced.” For one of MacArthur’s subordinates, he was “the greatest man alive.” For another, similarly bewitched, he was “the greatest man in history.” He may have been comparable to Caesar as an inspirational leader of men when he wasn’t antagonizing them. But his Rubicon was not the Potomac nor even the Mississippi, but the Yalu River that separated North Korea and China half a world away from Washington. And Harry Truman, whom MacArthur despised as a man and as a president, fired him before he could cross it. To cite just one example of the complicated nature of his personality: born fifteen years after the Civil War ended, his speeches, always written by himself in the purpliest of prose, habitually referred to “muskets” and “cannon” as generic weapons of war. Yet in the final act of his professional career he advocated dropping atomic bombs on Communist Chinese targets. Just to make sure that no future attack would come from that quarter, he proposed spreading a five mile deep belt of radioactive waste from one side of North Korea to the other, creating a semi-permanent no-man’s land of roughly 2,000 square miles. And that’s just a sample. Eight sessions on Tuesday afternoons from 1 to 3 pm

Wednesday: 10:00 AM – Noon: Narratives of Contagion in an Age of Pandemic

Instructor: Linda Neiberg: January 20 - March 10 (8 Zoom sessions)

In this course, we will explore how writers across several centuries have imagined and narrated information about and experiences of widespread, contagious diseases. Collectively, we will try to understand how literature, history, and culture have been shaped by outbreaks—from bubonic plague, to cholera, to influenza, to HIV/AIDS, to

COVID-19—and likewise, how literature has shaped cultural histories of disease outbreaks. Our readings will include Giovanni Boccaccio’s *The Decameron* (selections), Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal of the Plague Year*, Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Masque of the Red Death,” Katherine Anne Porter’s “Pale Horse, Pale Rider,” Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*, and Fang Fang’s *Wuhan Diary: Dispatches from a Quarantined City* (selections). Weekly readings will be supplemented with scholarly essays, scientific and medical articles, and primary source materials. Some of the questions we will attend to are: How do writers grapple with the material and metaphorical aspects of contagion? What do contagion narratives reveal about a particular culture? How do literary texts (re)imagine order and disorder in the context of pandemics? What do our narrative responses to disease outbreaks reveal about our relationship to mortality? And what does it mean to read these works as we navigate our own pandemic experience and its attendant anxieties? I will email participants a copy of the reading schedule and list of texts before our first class.

Wednesday: 1:00 PM– 3:00 PM: Renaissance Women Writers

Instructor: Linda Neiberg: January 20 – March 10 (8 Zoom sessions)

In this seminar, we will read poetry, prose, and drama written by women in continental Europe and England during the early modern period. We will consider the possibilities that were available to women, the conditions within which they wrote, and what their writerly concerns reveal about them as individuals, and about their respective cultures. Our readings will include Elizabeth Cary’s play, *The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry* (England), sonnets by Louise Labé (France) and Vittoria Colonna (Italy), and María de Zayas y Sotomayor’s *The Disenchantments of Love* (Spain), as well as biographical materials and scholarly essays. Our guiding questions include: How did women influence one another to write? How did they relate to their male contemporaries? How do these women and their works shape our ideas about the Renaissance and early modernity? And how are these works still resonant and relevant in our own time? I will email participants a copy of the reading schedule and list of texts before our first class.

Thursday: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM: Our Novel Coronavirus: What We Have Learned, Where We Have Failed, and What Is Coming Next

Instructor: Dr. Richard Kessin: January 21 - February 11 (4 Zoom sessions)

Session One: Basic molecular biology, the virus, and its spread.

Sessions Two and Three: Vaccines

Session Four: The politics surrounding the struggle with SARS-Covid-2.

Note: Dr. Kessin will post an aggregate of the columns on this subject that he has written for *The Lakeville Journal* and *The Berkshire Eagle*.

Friday: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM: Shakespeare.

Instructor: Robert Rumsey: January 22 – March 12 (8 Zoom sessions)

We'll read aloud and discuss Shakespeare's final three plays of which he was the sole author: *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. These plays are commonly subsumed under the heading of romance, neither tragedies nor comedies, although with elements of both genres, but chiefly characterized by an emphasis on, among other things, dreams, enchantment, music, shifting identities, recovery of lost siblings and people newly birthed from disasters at sea. *Cymbeline* illustrates Shakespeare's dexterous management of an extravagantly complicated plot and tests our tolerance of the author's creative wordplay. *The Winter's Tale* explores what today we call schizophrenia, centering on the hyperbolic jealousy of King Leontes and its echoing derangement of the other characters' behavior. And *The Tempest*, often called Shakespeare's valedictory, provides a fertile field for postcolonial interpretations and modern explorations of gender. *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* in particular contain some of Shakespeare's most memorable verse, as well as songs that have been set to music by subsequent composers such as Schubert. We'll read "*The Winter's Tale*," "*The Tempest*" and "*Cymbeline*" in that order. For those of you who may not have the books, I'll post the complete texts of the plays on my screen and share them with you via Zoom.