

## Course Descriptions, Fall Term 2021

ALL CLASSES WILL BE ON ZOOM

**Virginia Woolf: Novelist, Essayist, Modernist, Feminist, Pacifist:** In this course, we will focus on the fiction and nonfiction of Virginia Woolf, a central figure of the modernist movement in art and literature, whose experimental style and prodigious intellect transformed the novel and essay. We will examine these works in their historical contexts, including the emergence of Post-Impressionism and the cinema, debates about women's suffrage and women's roles in society, Freud's psychoanalytic theory and Bergson's theory of time, World War I, colonialism, and the rise of fascism. We also will discuss these works in their personal contexts, including Woolf's complex relationship with her sister, the Post-Impressionist painter Vanessa Bell, her deep relationship with London and the seacoast of England, and her battles with manic depression, which ended with her suicide by drowning in 1941. Our readings will include her novels *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *To the Lighthouse*, her book-length essay, *A Room of One's Own*, some of her short stories and essays, as well as selections from her diaries.

Questions we will explore include: How did Woolf emerge from her early life in an upper middle-class Victorian household to become an anti-colonialist, a feminist, and a pacifist? How did her involvement as part of London's Bloomsbury Group contribute to her development as a writer? What effect does Woolf's stream-of-consciousness writing technique have on our experience of the story we're reading and our understanding of its characters? If we find her novels frustrating to read and difficult to understand, may we still enjoy them, and find resonance in them with our present historical time and our own personal, internal time (what Henri Bergson refers to as la duree)? What ideas about social class, gender, race, and trauma do we find in Woolf's works? If you were to imagine yourself in conversation with her, where would you begin?

Please obtain copies of *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *A Room of One's Own*. You may use editions you already have, or any you are able to easily procure. I will email you PDFs of the short stories, essays, diary entries, and supplementary articles, as well as links to webpages on Woolf and her works. After mid-August, I will send you a copy of our reading schedule. In the meantime, here is a video on Virginia Woolf that I have enjoyed and am sharing with you: "[Annual Virginia Woolf Birthday Lecture: 'To pin down the moment with date and season'.](#)" Please feel free to email me with any questions.

**Instructor/Organizer: Linda Neiberg Mondays 10:00 AM on Zoom, September 13 - November 15 (10 sessions)**

**The Barrett Court:** The appointment of Amy Coney Barrett to the United States Supreme Court resulted in her, not Chief Justice John Roberts, being the tipping point Justice, the one whose vote often determines whether the Court conservatives (Alito, Thomas, Kavanaugh, and Gorsuch) will prevail or if the liberals (Sotomayor, Kagan, and Breyer), with the help of the Chief Justice and Barrett, will write the Court opinion. An examination of key cases in the Court's 2020-2021 Term will illustrate the effect of Barrett's appointment to the Court.

**Instructor/Organizer: Larry Rand, Tuesdays 10:00 AM on Zoom, September 14 – November 2 (8 sessions)**

**Lewis and Clark and their America:** The class will be a detailed description of their expedition set in the context of its time. Details of the Louisiana Purchase that started it off; the fierce opposition that the accession of territory aroused among the Federalists and their threats of secession; the tenuous nature of the bond that formed what we today think of as the United States; Spanish and British opposition to an enlargement of U.S. territory; trade with the Native peoples in the new territory; the results of the expedition both immediate and long term for both the Native and the non-Native inhabitants of the U.S.; and modern attempts to make the text of L&C's Journals yield meanings that would have surprised, not to say infuriated, the original authors. I'll also offer a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate my talk.

**Instructor/Organizer: Robert Rumsey: Wednesdays 1:00 PM on Zoom, September 15 – November 3 (8 sessions)**

## **Stuck in the Middle with You**

*Clowns to the left of me!  
Jokers to the right!  
Here I am stuck in the middle with you.*

These lyrics, sung by a Scottish rock band 40 years ago, is where we are today. We are living in a country deeply divided by extremist partisans unwilling to agree on basic facts and devoid of common sense. Many of us have the unsettling feeling that more than half of the country and its politicians are way below average.

Fortunately, our class fails all aspirational metrics for diversity, so your instructor is confident that he won't tell you anything that you don't already know. We will try to hold the middle ground, so we can expect flak from all sides.

We will cover "The Years from Hell" or life in America from January 2020 until the day you show up for class. We will take an objective view of the impact of Covid on our lives including our health, economic and societal issues, and political environment.

Your instructor herewith renounces his aura of omniscience and welcomes class members to challenge any of his facts, figures, or opinions that you think are off the rails. Active class participation is a prerequisite for a great learning experience.

**Instructor/Organizer: Jerry Jamin: Thursdays 10:00 AM - Noon on Zoom, September 16 – November 4 (6-8 sessions)**

**Evangelism in America: Blessing or Bane?** Many found it surprising that 81% of self-identified evangelicals voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 and 2020 elections, despite his being one of our least ostensibly “religious” Presidents. In popular parlance the term evangelical seems to some fundamentally political, signifying connection to the Republican party. A third of Americans consider themselves evangelical. But what exactly is an “evangelical”? Is its core definition religious, cultural, or political? Evangelicalism has deep roots in America, going back to the Puritans and being shaped significantly by the Great Awakening. Evangelicals were instrumental in securing the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment and were heavily invested in social causes in the 19<sup>th</sup> c., including abolitionism. This class will in essence be a survey of American religion, through the lens of evangelicalism. Major attention will be given to major developments in the last half century, and the movement’s current connection to conservative causes.

**Instructor/Organizer: Richard Reifsnyder: Thursdays, 1:00 PM on Zoom, September 23– October 28 (6 sessions)**

**Shakespeare Play Reading:** In my Playreading course we'll read and discuss three of Shakespeare's "problem" plays - problems for us today, that is, not necessarily for him or his audience. We'll take a good, hard, and, I hope, unflinching look at "The Merchant of Venice", "Othello" and "Titus Andronicus". Anti-Semitism and racism rear their ugly heads here and we'll try to understand what the consequences might be if we convict Shakespeare of these horrors. Or not.

**Instructor/Organizer: Robert Rumsey: Fridays, 1:00 on Zoom, September 17 – November 5 (8 sessions)**