

Spring 2025: syllabus
AJ34120: Literary Value and Literary Canon
Michael Kaylor, Tomáš Kačer
Fridays, 12 p.m., G31

As its title suggests, this course will provide an occasion for students to engage issues of literary value – historical, contemporary, and personal. This engagement will be facilitated by a running comparison between established canonical works and the students' research materials (an author's oeuvre or a particular piece – both types will be treated as "case studies"). The questions that will be considered include: What intrinsic qualities establish literary value over time? Beyond extrinsic issues and the demands of the literary marketplace, what establishes a work as canonical? From Aristotle to Harold Bloom, from Horace to Jack Stillinger, this course and its readings will challenge accepted notions as well as foster an appreciation for scholarly traditions.

Case studies to work with in the seminar:

- William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (1600)
- John Keats, *The Eve of St Agnes* (1819)
- Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897)
- Each student's research material

I Classics of Literary Taxonomy – Friday 28 February, 12 p.m.

- Aristotle's *Poetics*
- Horace's *Ars Poetica*
- Longinus's *On the Sublime*

Lesson aims: Discussion about seminar aims, brief presentations of students' projects.

Task: Each student should prepare to present and discuss relevance of the literary canon and the tradition of literary scholarship to their material.

II Values and canonicity Friday 21 March, 12 p.m.

- Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* (1973)
- Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon* (1995)

Lesson aims: Discussion about the aesthetic approach to literature; the task of a literary historian and scholar in contemporary academia.

Task: Each student should prepare to present and discuss literary values and how they do (or, do not) apply to their material. Discuss alternative approaches to literature, especially in the context of your research.

III Research methods Friday 25 April, 12 p.m.

- Jack Stillinger's *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of the Solitary Genius* (1991)
- Brian Vickers's *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels* (1995)

Lesson aims: Discussion about contemporary research methods and trends in literary scholarship.

Task: Each student should prepare to present and discuss various methodological approaches to their material and address challenges they present.

IV Credit conference Friday 16 May, 12 p.m.

During this conference students will give ten to fifteen-minute papers related to both the issues dealt with in the seminar and the topic of their thesis. Alternatively, students may submit a part of their dissertation chapter, which positions their material into the context of the literary canon and/or traditions of literary criticism, as discussed in the course (10-15 pages). These have to be submitted one week before the Credit conference for all students in the course to access.