

Catalyst 110 – Writing Sample Courses

CTL 110: Beyoncé, Black Feminism, and Pop Culture (Unger)

This course uses Beyoncé's 2016 video album, *Lemonade*, as the starting point for an examination of race, gender, sexuality, and identity in US popular culture. Together, we will explore both the literary and theoretical frameworks of black feminism that inform Beyoncé's meditation on contemporary black womanhood. Our semester will be divided into three sections, each revolving around a novel that develops these ideas: Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993), and Jacqueline Woodson's *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2014). Other readings will include essays and poems by Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Patricia Hill Collins, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and Warsan Shire. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: Prisons and Punishment in American History (Frohardt-Lane)

Are prisons primarily for punishing those convicted of crimes, rehabilitating them to rejoin society, or deterring criminal activity? How are America's prisons different in the 21st century than they were in colonial America? This course will look at how the purposes of prisons, the methods of punishment, the population and conditions of prisoners, and the public's attitudes toward incarceration have changed over the course of American history. As we study the history of prisons and punishment we will explore a variety of topics including convict labor, solitary confinement, prisoners' rights movements, capital punishment, rehabilitation, for-profit prisons, and prison reform. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How? Using the reporter's questions in critical reading and writing (Woods)

In the processes of critical reading and critical writing, we face parallel tasks: developing the most complete understanding of the text possible, and fully expressing that understanding in clear, analytical writing. The reporters' questions, called the "circumstances" in ancient rhetoric, offer ways to focus analysis of what the text is saying, and to develop an evidence-based thesis that takes these circumstances into account. In this course, we'll examine literary texts that speak the reporters' questions in different ways, and consider how these same questions function in developing and supporting a strong argument. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: 'Going Native' in the Americas: Transformation, Appropriation, and Being in the New World (Guevara-Geer)

This CTL 110 course offers a comparative exploration of how we perform, fake, and transform identities in the Americas. We will discuss narratives, films, manifestos, and other cultural texts as we watch normative strictures encounter contestatory resistance ...which may itself become normative. One of our recurring questions will be: who gets to speak for whom...and how? Which voices are authentic and which are ventriloquists? We will think, read, and interpret up and down the Americas, examining identity fashioning in Spanish America, Brazil, and North America. All texts will be approached in English. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: Women of Note (Kraaz)

Women have been composing, performing, and writing about music for centuries, but most people, when asked to name a female composer, can only come up with one or two names. What kinds of opportunities for creating and making music did women have in the past? How did they view themselves and their work? And how have these processes changed over the course of the last two centuries? Is music composed by women different from music written by men? These are questions we'll address in this course. We will listen to music by women and read what many of them have written about themselves and their art. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: Understanding the Bible (Smith)

CATALYST 110 is a process-based intensive writing course designed to help develop skills as readers, writers, and critical thinkers. We will complete reading and writing assignments, which ask us to reflect on readings and the larger cultural context in which these were written. Specifically, we will be examining biblical texts, which will serve as the content focus for our reading, critical thinking and writing. The course will introduce students to the tools of modern biblical scholarship, which help uncover the original meaning of texts in the social and political contexts in which they were written. It will discuss how the books of the bible evolved from oral tradition to written texts and how cultural factors shaped their form and purpose. Continuities and discontinuities between the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Scriptures will be highlighted, focusing on issues such as core values, moral laws, meaning of history, and relationships with other religions beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: Personal Stories, Public Lives (Roy)

Whether through autobiographies and memoirs, on reality TV or YouTube, in social media postings or in job interviews, people often share parts of their personal stories with the public. Why do we publicize our private lives? What roles do personal stories play in shaping public images and professional reputations, in how we advocate for causes, promote political campaigns and even change the course of history? By applying theories of communication to a variety of case studies, we will explore how, why and to what effects people communicate their personal stories for the public. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: Gender Matters (McGowan)

This course will deal with gender-related issues (matters) in American culture and society. Topics will include: historical background of gender issues, the role of gender and sexuality in youth culture/high school and college in the past and present, the history of the Pill as a crucial turning point in the lives of women and men, the role of film in creating and disseminating gendered message. The course will pose the question: Does gender matter in the twenty-first century or have we achieved a state of perfect equality in public and private life? The course will use books, films, articles, and web sources to explore these issues. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: Shakespeare & Popular Culture (Pleiss Morris)

In his introductory poem in the First Folio, Ben Jonson wrote that Shakespeare "was not of an age, but for all time!" In this course, we will explore how the purveyors of popular culture have ensured Shakespeare's longevity by adjusting his works to suit new genres, new social constructions, and new aesthetic tastes. We will consider the following questions: How have Shakespearean texts been manipulated to suit the needs of artists and audiences over the centuries? Are Shakespeare's plays "universal" in their appeal? In what ways might pop culture adaptations be less about the "greatness" of Shakespeare and more about the sociocultural values of the times and places in which they are created? In addition to selected Shakespeare plays, our texts will include musical scores, films, artwork and visual

designs, and live performances. This course requires a field trip to the American Player's Theater; in addition to books, students should budget for a course materials fee of \$25. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: Monsters, Deviants, and Outcasts in French Literature (Poncelet)

This course examines how and why literature creates and portrays beings that are scary, most often because they fall outside what society considers normal or because they are at the margins of what is believed to be real. By creating monsters, deviants, and outcasts in imaginary or realistic worlds, literary texts offer us venues to explore the social and psychological mechanisms that drive our fears. In some cases, literary texts invite us to question the norms by which we judge those who are different. In many cases they also show us how haunted we are by ancient myths or allegories from the past, and reveal the "monsters" that dwell within our minds. All the texts used in this course are in English translation. No knowledge of French is required. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: Fairy Tales and Contemporary Retellings (Gannon)

Disney princesses, happy endings, heavy-handed morals, and wealthy Victorian children reading the Grimm brothers at bedtime: these are just some of the things you think of when you hear the words "fairy tale," right? What if I told you that fairy tales were told for hundreds of years all over the world before they were ever written down, that they have no single author, that they have mutated or been purposely altered over generations, and that, according to novelist John Updike, "They were the television and pornography of their day, the life-lightening trash of preliterate?" In this course we will examine the history and moral complexity of fairy tales by reading a number of well-known classics as well as their contemporary retellings, and we will guide our inquiries with a number of open-ended questions. Have fairy tales helped to shape Western social norms, or have they merely reflected the unspoken rules by which we tend to abide (or both?) What agendas do different authors bring to their fairy tale retellings, and how do different readers receive these texts? What aspects of fairy tales seem to have commonly accepted interpretations, and how have these symbols achieved their universality? Over the course of the semester, we will hone our reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, while also becoming experts in the emerging field of Fairy Tale Studies. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: Reforming Schools in the USA (Nichols)

School's out *in* for the summer! Year-round schooling, homework debates, the charter school movement, high-stakes testing, common core standards, integrating technology, cutting recess and the arts, cost-effective cafeteria menus, addressing poverty and racial disparities, redistricting, bullying initiatives... Fixing public schools in the United States is complicated and contentious. Stakeholders in communities, governments, and businesses argue over which solutions would best serve our nation's youths. In this course, we will analyze opposing viewpoints regarding current schooling problems and recommended education reform. Our goal will not be to pick a side in these debates. Instead, we will develop and articulate the gray areas that live between polarizing positions. We will investigate contemporary issues in education using books, articles, media (film/TV/music), and online sources. *No prerequisites.*

CTL 110: Vices and Virtues (Truesdell)

In literature, in politics, in life generally, we root for the "good guys" and despise the "bad guys." But how do we distinguish one from the other? Usually, by identifying those who share our notions of good and evil and act in ways we think are virtuous, not vicious. This course explores the foundations of vice and virtue. We will pay particular attention to texts where ideas of virtue or vice are in conflict, whether in myth and fairy tale, political documents or essays, or in fiction by authors including Faulkner, Arthur C. Clarke, LeGuin, Camus and Shakespeare. Students will analyze these and other texts, using a variety of compositional modes, as part of the attempt to clarify their understanding of these issues. *No prerequisites.*