

CORE 200: LIBERAL ARTS READING SALON

Amy Cannon

Lecture W 4-5:50 pm 63576R

“Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story”: Narrative and Perspective in Literary Retellings

With the recent explosive success of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Broadway musical *Hamilton*, we’ve seen the powerful influence a fresh perspective can have in reviving stories we think we know. But Miranda’s not the first to attempt this project of remixing stable narratives. Throughout literary history, and especially in the 20th and 21st centuries, these questions have been explored by retellings that call into question authoritative authorial voices from the past. Together, we’ll look at texts that “flip the script”—telling familiar tales from the point of view of the silent servants, the misunderstood monsters, or the minor characters.

What changes when a well-known and beloved classic is told from the villain’s perspective? How does it alter our understanding of *Jane Eyre* when it’s narrated by the madwoman in the attic? What if Horatio and Hamlet were lovers? What difference does it make if Snow White is black in 1950s America? Literary retellings offer insight into classics that we may be too intimidated to get to know, or that we may know all too well. We’ll explore what happens when we change the gender, the sexuality, the race, the narration, who gets to tell the story and whose story it is anyway. When *Don Quixote* is translated into a YA novel about a Texan teenager with Mad Cow Disease, or when we hear about the faithful Friday instead of Robinson Crusoe, we can find new avenues into these canonized classics.

CORE 200 lasts for twelve weeks (instead of the usual fifteen) and meets once each week for two hours in a seminar setting. The Salon encourages the sharing of ideas and thoughts, highlights common themes and interdisciplinary connections as they emerge from discussion. Discussions that grow out of reading groups can become the starting point for future research. The two-unit Salon is an integral part of the Thematic Approaches to Humanities and Society minor. A special feature of the Reading Salon is that some of the books to be read by the participants will be selected by the students. The course is graded Credit/No Credit.

Proposed ReadingsLibba Bray. *Going Bovine*.J.M. Coetzee. *Foe*.John Gardner. *Grendel*.Myrlyn Hermes. *The Lunatic, the Lover, and the Poet*.Lin-Manuel Miranda. *Hamilton: An American Musical*.Helen Oyeyemi. *Boy, Snow, Bird*.Jean Rhys. *Wide Sargasso Sea*.