With eighteen faculty teaching and publishing in twentieth and twenty-first century literature and culture, the English Department at Northwestern offers superb graduate training in the period’s literary and cultural histories, genres, theory, approaches, and methods. Drawing on resources within and beyond the department, graduate students specializing in the period have amassed an extraordinary record of publications, pre- and postdoctoral fellowships, and tenure-track positions.

Faculty include Chris Abani, John Alba Cutler, Nick Davis, Brian T. Edwards, Betsy Erkkilä, Harris Feinsod, Christine Froula, Reginald Gibbons, Susannah Gottlieb, Jim Hodge, Rebecca Johnson, Christopher Lanec, Andrew Leong, Susan Manning, Juan Martinez, Evan Maina Mwangi, Shaundra Myers, and Ivy Wilson. (field specialties on reverse.)

Concentrations within the period include poetry and poetics; narrative; drama, theatre, and performance; literary, gender, critical race, and political theory; African literatures and film; ethnic and diasporic literatures; Anglophone literature and film in transnational and global contexts; interdisciplinary modernism; genetic and textual criticism, among others.

Job Placement
Northwestern’s English Ph. D. program enjoys a strong record of tenure-track placement. Since 2005, Northwestern Ph.D.s in English have been offered tenure-track and post-doctoral positions at a variety of colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada, including Boston University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Ohio State University, Trinity College-Hartford, University of British Columbia, University of Michigan, University of Pennsylvania, University of Pittsburgh, the University of Texas at Austin, Marquette University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Trinity University in San Antonio, and Franklin and Marshall College.

Our specialists in 20th- and 21st-century literature have secured tenure-track positions at institutions including Columbia, the University of Pittsburgh, Marquette, Ohio State, and SUNY at Stony Brook. During their studies, our students have placed or published articles in major journals such as PMLA, Modern Fiction Studies, Callaloo, Novel, The Yale Journal of Criticism, and Modernism/Modernity.

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"After 'Invisible Man' by Ralph Ellison, the Prologue"
Jeff Wall
Chris Abani (Ph.D. USC) teaches Creative Writing (Fiction and Poetry) and Literature. His poetry, essays, and novels of post-coloniality, migration, and (forced) displacement have been translated into 46 languages. His fields of interest include African Poetics, World Literature, 20th-century British and American Literature, African Presence in Medieval and Renaissance Cultural Spaces, The Architecture of Cities and their Potential Symbiotic Relationship with their Populations, West African Music, Postcolonial and Transnational Theory, Robotics and Consciousness, Yoruba and Igbo Philosophy and Religion. He is the recipient of the PEN USA Freedom-to-Write Award, the Prince Claus Award, a Lannan Literary Fellowship, a California Book Award, a Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, a PEN Beyond the Margins Award, the PEN Hemingway Book Prize and a Guggenheim Award.


Nick Davis (Ph.D. Cornell) works in cinema studies, queer theory, gender studies, and 20th-century American literature. His book The Dwelling Image (Oxford, 2013) employs Deleuzian models of film and desire to re-theorize contemporary queer cinema and reassess some of its key films. He has published many articles and book chapters and also reviews movies at www.NicksFlickPicks.com.

Brian T. Dang (Ph.D. Yale), jointly appointed in Comparative Literary Studies, specializes in 20th- and 21st-century literature and culture from the U.S. North Africa and the Middle East. His publications include Morocco Bound: Disorienting America’s Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakesh Express (Duke, 2005); Globalizing American Studies (co-edited with Dilip Gaonkar, Chicago, 2010); and After the American Century: The Ends of U.S. Culture in the Middle East (Columbia, 2016), academic essays in American Literary History, Public Culture, NOT/EUL, Journal of North African Studies, creative non-fiction in The Believer, McSweeney’s, A Public Space, and Malhîn Quarterly Review, and essays and opinion pieces in publications such as Salon, Chronicle of Higher Education, Foreign Policy, and Chicago Tribune.

Betsy Erickili (Ph.D. Berkeley) specializes in Romantic and 19th-century American literature; women’s poetry and letters; print and visual culture. Her current projects include a book on gender, race, and political theory and transatlantic literary exchange. She is the author of Walk With Me: Among the French, Walketh the Political Post, The Wicked Sister, Mixed Blood and Other American Crosses, and recent essays on Wheatley, Jefferson, Poe, Melville, Dickinson, and Lincoln. Her current projects include a book entitled Imagining the Revolution. She received Northwestern’s Graduate School Faculty Award for Service in 2014 for her distinguished work as a graduate teacher and mentor.


Christine Froula (Ph.D. Chicago) specializes in American, British, and European modernist literature, visual art, and culture; feminist and gender theory; and editorial theory and practice. Books include Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde, Modernism’s Body: Sex, Culture, and Identity; To Write Paradise: Style and Error in Ezra Pound’s Cantos. And a Guide to Ezra Pound’s Selected Poems.

Reginald Gibbons (Ph.D. Stanford) has published over thirty volumes, including poems, translations from ancient Greek and Spanish; fiction; edited collections of essays, fiction and poetry; and editions of modern fiction. He edited ThirdQuar ter magazine from 1981 to 1997, was a co-founder of the Humanities Institute workshop on Poetry and Poetics, and is jointly appointed in Classics and in Spanish and Portuguese.

Sussannah Gottlieb (Ph.D. Chicago) works in the areas of modern and contemporary poetry and poetics, contemporary American poetry, and Asian American literary traditions. She is the author of Regions of Sorrow: Anxiety and Metaphysics in Hannah Arendt and W.H. Auden and the editor of Hannah Arendt: Reflections on Literature and Culture. She regularly teaches courses on poetry, poetics, and literary theory. Her current projects include a book-length study entitled The Importance of Metaphysics: The Intellectual Ventures of W.H. Auden.

Jim Hodge (Ph.D. Chicago) specializes in comparative media aesthetics with an emphasis on digital media. He also works on media theory, film theory, and experimental media art genres including new media art, electronic literature, and avant-garde film. He has written essays on new media art, contemporary cinema, and literary phenomena tradition. His book project argues for the significance of animation for the expression of history in the digital age.

Rebecca Johnson (Ph.D. Yale) Rebecca Johnson teaches courses in Middle Eastern literary and cultural studies with a special focus on modern Arabic literature. Her research focuses on the history and theory of the novel in Arabic and English, the literature of the nineteenth-century period known as the Nahda, and Orientalism and occidentalism, and her wider interests include pre-modern Arabic prose genres, cosmopolitanism, and the politics of translation. Her current book projects deal with early novels of the Arabic and English novels, using translation as a lens through which to understand the form and function of the genre.

Christopher Lane (Ph.D. University of London) specializes in Victorian culture and also publishes in Edwardian and modern literature, including essays on Conrad (in Nord, 2010); D. H. Lawrence, (in Modernism/Modernity); Joyce (in Quan Jieyu, Sasso and other First World War poets (in Raritan); Forster (in The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster).

Andrew Leong (Ph.D. Berkeley) is a comparative literature scholar who works primarily in English and Japanese, with additional interests in Spanish, and Portuguese. His current research focuses on the problem of “migrant stillness” – a transnational circulation of texts, objects, and bodies through Japan and the Americas that culminates not in “free commerce” but unevenly distributed states. He has taught courses spanning a range of textual and visual media — from 19th- and 20th-century Japanese American literature and occidentalism, and her wider interests include pre-modern Arabic prose genres, cosmopolitanism, and the politics of translation. Her current book project studies the intertwined early histories of the Arabic and English novels, using translation as a lens through which to understand the form and function of the genre.

Susan Manning (Ph.D. Columbia) , jointly appointed in Theatre and Performance Studies, specializes in modernism and theatrical performance and is the author of English and the Drama: The Degradation of Modern Drama, (in Nord); Race in Motion, Dance noires/blanche Amerique, and co-editor of New German Dance Studies.

Juan Martinez (Ph.D. UNLV) is a fiction writer, with critical work focusing on contemporary arts, Asian American poetry, and also publishes in Edwardian and modern literature, including essays on Conrad (in Conrad, 2010); D. H. Lawrence, (in Modernism/Modernity); Joyce (in Quan Jieyu, Sasso and other First World War poets (in Raritan); Forster (in The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster).

Each year the Carole and Gordon Segal Visiting Professorship of Irish Literature brings a specialist to campus to teach for one quarter. Past Segal professors include Maud Ellmann (Cambridge University and Notre Dame), John Bishop (Berkeley), Clair Wills (University of London), Andrew Gibson (Royal Holloway, University of London), Tariq Ali, Carol Lock, Shliss (Stanford), Murray Beja (Ohio State), Lucy McDermid (Villanova), Sean Latham (Tulsa); and Derek Attridge (York).

Through the CIC, our students may take courses and attend seminars, lectures, and workshops at other Chicago institutions, including the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois at Chicago. They may also work in relevant collections held by the Newberry Library holdings and other area libraries. The Paris Program in Critical Theory offers students the unique opportunity to spend one year in Paris familiarizing themselves with French and European theoretical research.

Chicago enjoys a lively theatre and music scene and an array of world-class museums. The Chicago Film Seminar regularly hosts screenings and discussions with filmmakers and scholars. The annual Humanities Festival and the Poetry Foundation sponsor readings and events.

Interdisciplinary Faculty

Specialists in the period in other departments augment our students’ training in many areas, for example:

- African-American literature & theory
  • (Alex Weheliwe, Michelle Wright)

- American studies (Kate Baldwin, Janice Radway)

- visual culture (Huey Copeland, Christina Kaier, Krista Thompson)

- Caribbean & Latin American literature
  • (Jorge Coronado, Doris Garraway)

- film & media studies (Scott Curtis, Miriam Petty, Jeff Sconce, Jacob Smith, Domietta Torlasco)

- gender studies (Alex Owen, Jane Winston)

- Latino/a literatures (Frances Apicario)

- theatre & performance (E. Patrick Johnson, Soyiin Madison, Ramon Rivera-Servera, Harvey Young)

- television studies (Lynn Spiegel, Mimi White)

- philosophy & critical theory
  • (Chris Bush, Penelope Deutscher, Scott Durham, Peter Fermes, Sam Webber)