With seventeen 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, Betsy Erkkilä, Harris Feinsod, Christine Froula, Reginald Gibbons, Susannah Gottlieb, Jim Hodge, Michelle Huang, Rebecca Johnson, Christopher Lane, Susan Manning, Juan Martinez, Evan Maina Mwangi, Natasha Trethewey, and Ivy Wilson.

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 the University of Maryland - College Park, 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*.
Chris Abani (Ph.D. USC) teaches creative writing (fiction and poetry) and literature. He is a novelist, poet, essayist, screenwriter and playwright. His fields of interest include African Poetics, World Literature, 20th-century British and American Literature, African Presences in Medieval and Renaissance Cultural Spaces, The Architecture of Cities and their Potential Symbolism with African Music, Postcolonial and Transnational Theory, Robotics and Consciousness, Yoruba and Igbo Philosophy and Religion. He is the recipient of the PEN USA President’s Award, the National Book 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 Desire-Image (Oxford UP, 2013) employs Deleuzian models of film and desire to re-theorize contemporary queer cinema and reassess some of its key films. He has published articles and book chapters and also reviews movies at NickFlackPicks.com.


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 Blues: Modernism, Minstrelsy, and Fascism; To Write Paradise: Style and Error in Ezra Pound’s Cantos; The Poetry and Poetics of Twentieth-Century Literature; and of TriQuarterly magazine from 1981 to 1997, was a cofounder of the Humanities Institute workshop on Poetry and Poetics, is jointly appointed in English in the English Department, Studying in the Literature of the Chicago Graduate School Faculty for 2014 for her distinguished work as a graduate teacher and mentor.


Reginald Gibbons (Ph.D. Stanford) has published over thirty volumes, including poems; translations from ancient Greek and Spanish; fiction; edited volumes of contemporary fiction and poetry and of twentieth-century poets; and modern poetry. He was the editor of TriQuarterly magazine from 1981 to 1997, was a cofounder of the Humanities Institute workshop on Poetry and Poetics, is jointly appointed in English in the English Department, Studying in the Literature of the Chicago Graduate School Faculty for 2014 for her distinguished work as a graduate teacher and mentor.

“BrooksDay,” a June 7 presentation of her work in readings and performances. His recent books include How Poems Think (2013) and Last Lake (2016; both books University of Chicago Press), and An Orchard in the Street (short fiction; BOA Editions). He has won a Guggenheim fellowship, the Folger Shakespeare Library O. B. Hardison, Jr. Poetry Prize, and has been a winner of the National Book Award. His work in progress includes poems, translations, and fiction.

Susannah Gottlieb (Ph.D. Chicago) works in the areas of modern and contemporary poetry and poetics, continental philosophy and political theory, and Asian American literary traditions. She is the author of Regions of Sorrow: Anxiety and Modernity in Kamakazu Andō and W.H. Auden and the editor of Hannah Arendt’s 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 Heroes 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 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 new media poetics. His book The Odyssey of the Black Widow: A Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, a PEN Beyond the Margins Award, the PEN Hemingway Book Prize and a Guggenheim Award.


Michelle N. Huang (Ph.D. Penn State) has research and teaching interests in contemporary Asian American literature, posthumanism, and feminist science studies. She is currently at work on her book project, “Molecular Aesthetics: Race, Form, and Matter in Contemporary Asian American Literature.” Recently, her writing has appeared in Twentieth-Century Literature, Journal of Asian American Studies, America, and Poets & Writers: Contemporary.

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 recent book is a mixed-genre book that constitutes a meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Her most recent book, Monument: Poems New and Selected, was published in November of 2018.


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 Blues: Modernism, Minstrelsy, and Fascism; To Write Paradise: Style and Error in Ezra Pound’s Cantos; The Poetry and Poetics of Twentieth-Century Literature; and of TriQuarterly magazine from 1981 to 1997, was a cofounder of the Humanities Institute workshop on Poetry and Poetics, is jointly appointed in English in the English Department, Studying in the Literature of the Chicago Graduate School Faculty for 2014 for her distinguished work as a graduate teacher and mentor.

Christopher Lane (Ph.D. University of London) specializes in Victorian culture and also publishes in Edwardian and modern literature, including essays on Conrad (in Need), D. H. Lawrence, Salinger, and Wyndham Lewis (in Modernism/Modernity); Joyce (in Quaire Joyce); Sassoon and other First World War poets (in Kantorius); and Forster (in The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster).

Susan Manning (Ph.D. Columbia), jointly appointed in Theatre and Performance Studies, specializes in modernism in theatrical performance and is the author of Exotica and the Demon: The Dancers of May Wigram and Modern Dance, Negro Dance Race in Motion, curator of Dances natives/branle Amerique, and co-editor of New German Dance Studies.

Juan Martinez (Ph.D. UNLV) is a fiction writer, with critical work focusing on the post-war and contemporary novelists, the sociology of literature, and Vladimir Nabokov’s role in the field of contemporary cultural production.


Natalasha Trefethewey (M.F.A. University of Massachusetts - Amherst) won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry for her book, Native Guard, and served two terms as Poet Laureate of the United States. She has published many poems on historical events and figures, including those of the Civil War; her poems also often explore race and gender. She has said that she considers her creative work a form of research as well as an artistic practice. Her poem-cycle Bellocq’s Ophelias fictionalizes—the basis of early 20th-century photographs by E. J. Bellocq—the life of a prostitute in New Orleans. Beyond Kansas City, her poetry book that constitutes a meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Her most recent book, Monument: Poems New and Selected, was published in November of 2018.

Through the Big Ten Academic Alliance and the Metropolitan Exchange Program, our students may take courses and attend seminars, lectures, and workshops at other Chicago. The University of Chicago of the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois at Chicago. They may also work in relevant collections held by the Newberry Library 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 Poitras, Kwame Anthony Appiah)
- American Studies (Janice Radway)
- Caribbean & Latin American Literature (Jorge Coronado, Doris Garraway)
- Film & Media Studies (Scott Curtis, Miriam Petry, Ariel Rogers, Jeff Sconce, Domietta Toltsch)
- Gender Studies (Alex Owen, Jane Winston)
- Latino/a Literatures (Fernando Aragón, Andrew Seng)
- Political Critical Theory (Chris Busch, Penelope Deutscher, Scott Durham, Peter Fennes, Sam Weber)
- Sound Studies (Neil Verma, Jacob Smith)
- Television Studies (Lynn Spigel, Mimi White)
- Theatre & Performance (E. Patrick Johnson, Soymi Madison, Ramón Rivera-Servera, Harvey Young)
- Visual Culture (Huey Copeland, Christina Kailer, Krista Thompson)