Département de littérature, théâtre et cinéma
Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines

Professeur : Corinne Bancroft
Session : Automne 2026

ANG-7153 : Special subjets II: Novel Pleasures

Territory Acknowledgment

We acknowledge with respect the Wendat Nation on whose land the university stands and the Abenaki, Innu, and Wolastoqiyik Nations who also have traditional relationships with this place.

Course Description

From the 20th-century thinkers who analyzed the pleasures of plot and text to the radical women of color feminists who understood the erotic as a vital source of knowledge and power, theorists have conceived of the acts of reading and writing in terms of love and lovemaking. If as Audre Lorde reflected, "there is, for me, no difference between writing a good poem and moving into sunlight against the body of a woman I love" (The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power), then this course asks what is it about reading that gives us so much pleasure? While Lorde focused on poetry, this course will center on novels written by African American, Asian American, Indigenous, and other authors. Even setting aside the genre of the romance, the western canon is populated and punctuated with texts about love (Romeo and Juliet, Pride and Prejudice, etc.). But this course will focus on what is novel or new—not so much in terms of the kinds of love depicted, because surely people have been loving each other every which way since before we've had words for the ways, but in terms of the impulse to always find new language to describe and proclaim the many ways people can love. The texts we will read give narrative voice to the contours and complexities of contemporary relationships; they engage the sort of love felt between lovers, among family and friends, and even for strangers and non-human things. By reading diverse narratives alongside cultural, literary, and queer theory, we will engage the following questions: What is love? What is the relationship between love and being human? What role do words and language play in love? Why do we love literature in general and narrative in particular? And finally, if there is some relationship between reading and loving, what does it mean to teach literature or practice literary criticism?

Tentative Reading List

Primary Texts (you will be able to purchase these texts from La Maison Anglaise):

Octavia Butler *Fledgling* (2005)
Louise Erdrich *The Plague of Doves* (2008)
Nicole Krauss *The History of Love* (2005)
Maggie Nelson *The Argonauts* (2015)
Ocean Vuong *The Emperor of Gladness* (2025)
Joshua Whitehead *Johnny Appleseed* (2018)

Theoretical Texts (I will provide excerpts from these texts on Brio):

Old Thinkers

Roland Barthes *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973)

Peter Brooks *Reading for the Plot* (1984)

Kenneth Burke “Psychology and Form” (1925)

Radical Women of Color

Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981)

Audre Lorde *Sister Outsider* (1984)

Cherríe Moraga *Loving in the War Years* (1983)

Narrative and Ethical Theory

Wayne Booth *The Company We Keep* (1988)

Martha Nussbaum *Love's Knowledge* (1990)

Dorothy Hale *The Novel and The New Ethics* (2020)

More Contemporary Theory

Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman *Sex, or the Unbearable* (2013)

Qwo-Li Driskill: “Stolen From Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic” (2004)

Bettina Judd *Feelin: Creative Practice, Pleasure, and Black Feminist Thought* (2022)

Wayne Koestenbaum *Figure It Out* (2020)

Imani Perry *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation* (2018)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: *Touching Feeling* (2002)

Tentative Assignments

15%	One brief, informal presentation on a theoretical text
30%	Term paper
10%	Term paper abstract
10%	Term paper outline and sources
15%	Presentation of the term paper argument
20%	Class participation