E 321: Shakespeare  
Prof. Alan Friedman

Shakespeare was a man of the theater who wrote plays to entertain a wide audience, from the groundlings who stood in the pit to the aristocrats who sat in the galleries; a player as well as a creator of many roles; a member of an acting troupe. His plays, which both derive from and express their historical moment, were written to be performed rather than read. Taking its cue from Shakespeare, this course focuses on performance -- staging, acting, and directing -- in order to foster understanding of both the text of Shakespearean drama and its historical and theatrical context. We will read, see, and discuss five or six plays staged in Stratford, London, and Oxford by such companies as the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Globe Theater Company, and the National Theater; perhaps meet with actors and directors from those companies who will help us to understand the theatrical choices that shape a production; and visit both backstage and the Shakespeare sites in Stratford.

E 349S: Zadie Smith  
Prof. Heather Houser

Novelist Zadie Smith (1975- ) is not only an award-winning chronicler of 21st-century life—from multiracial identity and female friendship, to texting and genetic engineering—she's also a leading chronicler of London as a diverse, global city. Her novel NW (2012) takes its title from the North-West London postcode while the vibrant and vast cast of characters in White Teeth (2000) crisscross the city on foot, by bus, and by car. In this course, we'll study three of Smith's novels—White Teeth, On Beauty (2005), and NW—and one of her great inspirations and the model for On Beauty, E.M. Forster's Howards End (1910). Learning about her contributions to contemporary fiction, we'll also explore the sites in London and its surroundings that feature in and influence her novels.

E 350R: War & Literature in 20th Century Britain  
Prof. Minou Arjomand

The First World War changed the political map of Europe, but it also did more than that: it changed how writers, artists, and philosophers thought about what it meant to be human. The philosopher Walter Benjamin describes how soldiers returned from the War unable to tell stories about their experiences, “A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of forces of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human life.” When human life becomes so tiny, and so fragile, how is it possible to continue to write literature? We will read novels, essays, and poetry about life in the aftermath of war, including Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, D.H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover, and Evelyn Waugh's Brideshead Revisited. Class trips will include a walking tour through central London following in the footsteps of Mrs. Dalloway, visits to Oxford sites featured in Brideshead Revisited, and a theatre performance linked to the themes of the course.