

Fall 2025 ENG 400 Seminars

Selling the Earth: Literature and Storytelling in the Age of the Climate Crisis

Hannah Ashley

This course focuses on both hearing stories about climate change as told by climate writers, creative writers and artists, scientists, and members of frontline communities, and telling these stories ourselves. We will examine storytelling as it works across mediums and genres from literature to film to scientific reports, and students will produce their own. How do we make sense for ourselves and communicate to others the essential science and human impacts of the climate crisis? Whose ways of knowing and lived experiences do we privilege? How can the stories we tell move society towards just climate justice, resilience, and adaption? As a comparative literature course, most of the reading and theory takes its cues from non-Western perspectives; the course will include cross-cultural, cross-genre and cross-era linkages and contrasts. This is an alternative format course, meeting every other week in person (eight 4-hr class meetings/ 85% of meeting time) plus 15% asynchronously. Therefore, you should plan to be at every face-to-face class, since they are limited.

Grassroots Journalism

Ben Kuebrich

In ENG: 400, Grassroots Journalism, we will look at how journalists have held people in power accountable and have brought underground stories into the mainstream. We will examine how digital tools have allowed independent voices to reach wide audiences without relying on traditional media infrastructure, such as in the Movement for Black Lives and the #MeToo movement. We will also learn from how journalists such as Ida B. Wells, I.F. Stone, Shireen Abu Akleh, and Amy Goodman have exposed systemic injustice.

Sexuality, Identity, and Desire: A Sociolinguistic Approach

Joshua Raclaw

For over thirty years, linguists have examined how language constructs our understanding of human sexuality. Some key questions within this domain of research have been: How do speakers use language to articulate sexual identities and desires, and how are we socialized into these practices throughout the lifespan? How do speakers from different social and linguistic communities reproduce or resist normative understandings of sexuality? How do politicized and medicalized discourses about the nature of sex affect trans and nonbinary individuals? And how does a focus on language highlight how sexuality intersects in meaningful ways with gendered, racial, national, and religious identities and positionalities? Throughout this seminar we will examine how researchers in sociolinguistics and allied disciplines have investigated these and other questions across global communities and contexts. Interested students can learn about the seminar instructor's research interests from the English Department's website.

"It's All Fun and Games until Someone Gets Hurt: Parody and Fake News in a 'Post-

Fact' Society"

Vicki Tischio

The prevalence of fake, false, and/or misleading information constitutes a crisis in education and society. Several recent political events have been inspired, at least partly, by fake and misleading information. This has been true throughout history, as well: the "wicked sonnets" from 16th-century Rome and the canards from 18th-century France are prime historical examples of fake news. In the 21st century, technology has made it possible for information (reliable and false) to spread farther and faster than ever before and has made it more difficult to detect. How can individuals navigate this new world of dis/misinformation? We will dive into this question, breaking down the current information crisis into three topics: plagiarism, fake news, and parody. We will critique and historicize the practice of disseminating misinformation, emphasizing critical information literacy as the best tool for combatting the storm of misinformation we currently encounter. Students will engage in self-reflective, research-based, and observation-based projects and will have the opportunity to engage in scholarly activities alongside the professor as part of this seminar.