

# ENG 400 Descriptions

Fall 2020

## **Beyond Walden Pond: Contemporary Environmental Writing**

### **Dr. Jacqueline Alnes**

This class will focus on a current idea of environmental writing, one that suggests that we live in a world where the effects of human consumption, legislation, and lifestyle are inseparable from the natural world. Even in our natural parks, for example, which we sometimes perceive to be “untouched” and “natural,” we as humans have labeled their features, built structures, and written regulations that impact the ecology. What, then, is nature? What does it mean to be a human in this world? How can nonfiction writing help us connect to, interact with, and impact this world?

By looking back briefly to classic works of nature writing such as Thoreau’s *Walden*, studying contemporary texts of environmental literature, Skyping with writers, and in our own writing of memoir and researched essays, we will seek to understand how our actions – as citizens, writers, and humans – impact our environments.

## **Diversity & Representation in Children’s & Young Adult Literature**

### **Dr. Gabrielle Halko**

This seminar will investigate the state of diversity in children’s & YA literature particularly, though not exclusively, around race and Whiteness. How much diversity exists in books for young readers, and what are the limitations? Can all young readers find themselves in youth literature, and if not, who is missing and what are the remedies? Who writes and illustrates for young readers, and how does the overwhelming Whiteness of children’s publishing intersect with writers and illustrators from marginalized groups? We will use both qualitative and quantitative research to examine the longstanding, ongoing conversation about representation, access, and equity in literature for young readers. Students will have conduct directed research, including opportunities related to the scholarly journal *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature*. Interested students can learn more about Dr. Halko’s research interests on the English Department website.

## **Reading Neoliberal Fairy Tales**

### **Dr. Erin Hurt**

Neoliberal fairy tales are narratives that convey the challenges that contemporary people face in today’s capitalist society while also offering solutions to these challenges that are rooted in an ideology that prioritizes individual responsibility and agency; success results from our ability to perfectly market ourselves and our talents while failure lies in one’s lack of the skills to do so. This course sets out to define the economic and political concept of neoliberalism, then illustrates the ways in which neoliberal thought has insinuated itself into our culture and the ways in which US popular culture, and we as readers, have internalized these neoliberal logics. Interested students can learn about the seminar instructor’s research interests from the English Department homepage.

## **The Rhetoric of Community Organizing: Persuasive Tools for Our Political Moment**

### **Dr. Ben Kuebrich**

Those of us who do our work in writing and rhetoric have an important role in social movements. From the making of protest banners to the writing of speeches to the details of a policy demand, writing and organizing go hand-in-hand. This course brings all the tools that you've developed in coursework through the English major to bear on the important, collective work of transforming our social institutions.

You will analyze and apply lessons from a variety of social movements and activist organizations, include the Civil Rights Movement, ACT UP, the Movement for Black Lives, the labor movement, #MeToo, Occupy Wall Street, the Global Climate Strike, the Zapatistas, and more.

Interested students can learn more about Professor Kuebrich's research interests from the WCU website.

## **Literature and Colonial Conflict in the Polycentric Transpacific**

### **Dr. Will Nessly**

This seminar is targeted toward students interested in experimental fiction, US ethnic literature, race, imperialism and the complication of traditional binary conceptions of domination and subjugation. The course takes as its starting point a polycentric or multilateral conception of the transnational, which shifts our critical perspective from US-centric and Black-White notions of power and oppression to the identification of multiple networks of power that overlap and interconnect. Our geographical field of inquiry will be the "transpacific," and we will examine popular and/or experimental works by various Asian and Pacific Islander American authors and artists, including R. Zamora Linmark, Jessica Hagedorn, Milton Murayama, Craig Santos Perez, and the makers of the film *Crazy Rich Asians*. Students will also explore new approaches to postcolonial studies, critical race studies, settler colonial studies, queer studies, gender studies, narratology, and postmodern fiction.

To learn more about Dr. Nessly's research interests, please view his faculty profile on the English Department website.

## **#YesAllWomen, #SolidarityIsforWhiteWomen, & #MeToo: Women and Social Media**

### **Dr. Ashley Patriarca**

Despite the stereotypes, identifying as a woman on social media is not all pinning recipe ideas to inspiration boards. Rather, it's a complex performance of identity and navigating communities that may or may not be welcoming to folks who identify as anything other than straight, white, or male. In this class, we'll analyze how women (including trans and cis women) and nonbinary folks use social media to establish and maintain connections, develop activist networks, etc. We'll examine the discussions about the present and future state of feminism that have developed through hashtags such as #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen. We'll also address the risks associated with female identity presentation on social media, such as the potential for harassment.

You can learn about Dr. Patriarca's work and research interests on the English department website and from her personal website, <http://www.ashleypatriarca.com>.

## **Investigating Race**

### **Dr. Cherise Pollard**

In ENG 400: Investigating Race, we will explore the genre of the passing novel written by Twentieth Century African American authors. We will focus on the plight of mixed-race characters, using an African Americanist critical lens that will be sharpened with Feminist and New Historicist theoretical approaches. In particular, we will analyse the ways that the passing protagonists' struggle for equality challenges Twentieth Century definitions of race, class and gender and, in doing so, highlights deeply American racial and sexual anxieties. Students will be pursuing these lines of critical inquiry as they write three research papers (two short 5 page research papers and one long final research paper). One of the goals of the course is to give students practice with writing in the genre of the literary research paper, especially the process of finding and incorporating appropriate secondary sources into their analysis of the texts. To this end, the professor has planned for several writing workshops.

## **Making, Cultural Production & The Underground Press**

### **Dr. Yanira Rodriguez**

This seminar course is designed for students interested in the history and current influence of the underground/alternative press and the cultural production tools used by social movements and community journalists to respond to pressing social justice issues. We will dive into the archives and consider the embodied geopolitical exigence that informs the content and aesthetics of alternative newspapers from the 60's and 70's. We will read Black, Indigenous, Chicanx, Queer, Feminists, Counterculture, and Anarchist newspapers such as Basta Ya!, El Marcriado, and Triple Jeopardy with an emphasis on local publications such as Lysistrata, Philadelphia Gay News, and Radicalqueen. We will also engage in politically grounded cultural production practices such as printmaking, zines and collaging toward the creation of our own alternative publication and as a multi-modal component of our seminar papers. Students can learn more about the instructor's research interests through the English Department's website.

## **Boys on the Road: The Young Adult Road Trip Story**

### **Dr. Jason Vanfosson**

Driving, automobile culture, and the American road trip have become inextricably linked to the United States teenager since the simultaneous rise of teen culture and the increased accessibility of the automobile in the 1940s and 1950s. This course examines the phenomenon of the teenage road trip in young adult literature (YA) through the frameworks of childhood geographies and theories of (auto)mobility to understand how marginalized, teen boys experience the road. By examining the dominant American road narrative established by canonical authors such as Mark Twain and Jack Kerouac, we will explore how young adult authors rewrite that narrative to challenge common ideas of the road trip in the United States. We will investigate the representation of the YA road story through reading, discussing, and researching books that feature Hispanic, queer, and trans protagonists on road trips around the nation.

Students interested in learning more about Dr. Vanfosson's research interests and the topic of this seminar can visit the English Department's website.

