

# ENG 400 Descriptions, Spring 2020

## Examining Girlhood Studies through Barbie

Dr. Emily Aguiló-Pérez

This seminar is designed for students who are interested in studying the position of Mattel's™ iconic doll Barbie in the feminist world. The course focuses on exploring feminism through Barbie – the doll and texts about her. The main goal of the course will be to discover and critically analyze what we learn about feminism by studying critiques of Barbie that focus on race, culture, sexuality, capitalism, and motherhood, among other topics and by studying the doll and other Barbie objects as well. Students can learn more about the instructor's research interests through the English Department's website and the instructor's academic website: <https://wcupa.academia.edu/EmilyAguiloPerez>.

## Superheroes & Social Justice

Dr. Amy Anderson

This course will closely examine how depictions of comic superheroes have intersected with issues of social justice from the 1930s to today. From Superman to Wonder Woman, Ms. Marvel, the X-Men, and Black Panther, superhero stories have engaged with issues of nationalism, feminism, religious bias, and racism. In this class, we'll learn a basic vocabulary for talking about visual narrative, and we'll turn our attention to a series of comics superheroes who engage with social justice issues on the pages of comic books and in movies and tv shows, as well. Interested students can learn more about Dr. Anderson's research interests from the English Department's website.

## Race(ing) the Archives: Genealogical Memory and Unforgetting the Lives of Black Students

Dr. Michael Burns and Dr. Randall Cream

(2 sections, co-taught)

What happens to the forgotten past? Is remembering more constitutive than forgetting? Race(ing) the Archives unites archival theory, critical race theory, and current digital archival practices to help students become effective composers and critics of the historical now. This seminar grows out of the Black Students' Lives Project, a student-centered digital archive project at WCU that seeks to build a community of engaged and empowered Black and pro-black students and their allies. Uniting theories of the archive (Foucault, Derrida, Benjamin, Kirsch and Rohan) and critical race theory (Crenshaw, Bell, Delgado, Villanueva) with digital archive production (Omeka, Neatline, WordPress), audiences include those interested in: archives/archival studies; issues of race in education; and using digital practices to address contemporary social justice issues. Students will work individually and collaboratively to

conduct hands-on research and build archives that matter, producing public digital research projects (archive exhibits) and reflective curators' statements that theorize those exhibits. While content will largely be determined by each individual's selection, we'll work locally (WCU and spaces near here) to situate the archives in ways that affect the now.

*Note: this seminar is a paired two-section offering with ample opportunities to collaborate. Interested students can learn about the seminar instructors' research interests from the English Department's website.*

## The Body, Our Bodies, and Other Rhetorical Problems

Dr. Sherri Craig

Events in recent years have put the spotlight on "bodies." Specifically, the violence to our bodies (e.g. Black Lives Matter, the #MeToo Movement, immigration at the US southern border, the Roman Catholic Church controversy) and our relationship to each other and our spaces has created a rich dialogue on presence, accountability, and responsibility. Further, the impact of the material world and the resulting neglect to the environment has shifted our human/animal relationship to the world and to our bodies. In this seminar we will read texts on topics such as gender, sex, environment, race, power, privilege, materiality, technology, and death from theorists such as Plato, Audre Lorde, Judith Butler, Gloria Anzaldúa, Michel Foucault, and Debra Hawhee. We'll also tap into literary works (e.g. Machado's *Her Body and Other Parties*) and film (e.g. *Ghost*) to produce short informal writing assignments, micro studies of the self, and a formal seminar paper.

## Truth & Authenticity in Contemporary Creative Nonfiction

Dr. Kristine Ervin

This course will explore the slippery nature of the creative nonfiction genre, with its blurred and blurring boundaries; with its swirling questions surrounding Truth/truth, facts, memory, subjectivity, and aesthetics; and with its often-implied contract with its readers. Students will engage with contemporary creative nonfiction texts (memoir and the personal essay) and with current scholarship regarding the central questions of the genre. Additionally, students will investigate the ways in which the postmodern perspective, with its attention to multiplicity and fragmentation, informs the genre's definitions and complexities. Along with exploring the subject of truth and authenticity through a formal research project, students will also practice in the art of writing creative nonfiction, thereby pushing the line of inquiry through multiple lenses to answer or to complicate the question: "What does truth in nonfiction mean and does it even matter?"

## Language, Literature, and Cognition

Dr. Eirini Panagiotidou

This course focuses on the interface between language and cognition and investigates the impact of a range of linguistic features on the reading experience. It draws on methodologies developed in the field of cognitive poetics, a relatively recent development in the area of literary criticism. Cognitive poetics brings together linguistics, psychology, and advancements in the field of cognitive sciences to study how meaning is constructed in literary texts. Students will be introduced to a number of cognitive poetic frameworks including blending theory, conceptual metaphor, deixis, prototype, frame, and schema theory. We will also investigate the relationship between literary texts and reader engagement and address a series of questions related to why we are moved by literature. Using a number of literary texts from a variety of genres, students will be encouraged to reflect on how meaning is constructed through linguistic and stylistic choices and on the role of the reader in the meaning construction process.

## Reading James Joyce's Ulysses

Dr. Graham MacPhee

James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* is often described as the greatest novel ever written in English, yet many potential readers are put off by its reputation as an especially "difficult" and "inexplicable" book. Don't be intimidated by the scare stories—this seminar will give you the keys to understanding this brilliant, funny, and ground-breaking novel. We will look at the historical context within which Joyce was writing and trace how these events shaped the humor, insights, and experimentation of his fascinating novel. Understood in relation to the momentous events of the time—war and revolution in Ireland, racism and imperialism in the British Empire, and new ways of seeing gender relations and sexuality in the modern world—you'll find a real sense of achievement in taming a text that has (sadly) scared off less courageous readers.

Interested students can learn about the seminar instructor's research interests from Dr. MacPhee's faculty listing on the English Department's website.

## Campus Novels and the Changing University

Dr. Eleanor Shevlin

This seminar will focus on novels whose settings are universities and whose themes concern academic life and higher education. Written often by "insiders" – that is, those who are directly involved in higher education such as faculty members and, at times, students – these works can be further subdivided into novels that serve as a comedy of manners, biting satire, murder mystery, or some combination of these types. What so many of these variations of the academic novel share, however, is a decided interest in exploring and critiquing the function and purpose of the university as a sociocultural institution dedicated to the production of knowledge. That campus novels, especially those operating as satires, proliferate in times of transformations within universities and society points to the potential significance of their

representations as commentary on shifting values and social change. We will examine these works through the lens of contemporary cultural theories and ethical criticism and will interrogate what sorts of worlds they create within the context of historical developments affecting higher education and to what ends these created worlds serve.

## English Language Arts for a Sustainable Planet: Environmentalism, Equity, & Prosperity

Dr. Cheryl Wanko

How can English language Arts contribute to a more sustainable future for all human beings and the other species with whom we share the planet? This seminar will introduce you not only to the basics of sustainability, but will also help guide you to ways you can incorporate sustainability content and experiences into your unit and lesson plans as you move from pre-service to employed teachers of English Language Arts. We will examine the [PA State Standards for Grades 6-12 English Language Arts](#) to see where sustainability education can be infused. We will read and evaluate texts (such as Joseph Bruchac's Native American dystopian novel *Killer of Enemies*) and films (such as Disney's *Pocahontas*) that can be incorporated into lessons, as well as participate in high-impact practices to experience and model what we can do for secondary students: we'll try to live a "no impact" lifestyle for a week. The final projects will give you a researched unit plan that you can add to your portfolio, as well as allow you to teach a short lesson in an open forum.

Regular WCU classes can be taught up to 15% via distance education methods. Some of our on-campus Friday classes will be replaced by synchronous distance meetings via Zoom or by asynchronous class formats such as discussion boards.