

# Fall 2022 ENG 400 Seminar Descriptions

## *Who's "Brothers' War?:" Civil War Public Memory & the Struggle for Racial Justice*

**Tim Dougherty**

This seminar will ground students in the scholarly conversation of public rhetorics as practiced at public memory sites. It will focus on especially on memory sites of the Civil War, particularly those memorials erected at its Centennial. We'll begin by immersing ourselves in scholarship on public rhetoric, public memory, and Civil War memory, and we'll apply those insights to an analysis of a public memory site in the region. We'll then focus on a case study of the Phoenixville Civil War Centennial Memorial, which is currently being re-designed. Working as a team, we'll research and produce content for two public memory sites: 1) a museum exhibit of Civil War public memory to be mounted the following semester by Dr. Michael DiGiovine's museum studies students in honor of the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation; 2) a redesigned Phoenixville Civil War Centennial Memorial, including both physical and digital content. Students will produce tangible public rhetorics projects suitable for inclusion in their academic portfolios.

## **Pandemics and Plagues in Text and Image**

**Kristin Kondrlik**

The spread of infectious disease within local communities and across the world makes visible the myriad ways in which our bodies belong to a larger body politic, as well as the many risks and rewards engendered by communal living. Our lives are intimately interconnected, tied together by sewer lines and subway schedules, global travel, international trade, doorknobs, handshakes, and the very air we breathe. Epidemic and pandemic illness forces us to contend with these interconnections—to recognize our vulnerability and our responsibility to care for others, because our own health and wellbeing depends on it. The way we write about epidemic illness, whether real or imagined, also betrays our fears and frustrations with the current social and/or political order. Like ancient, Biblical plagues, epidemic may be perceived as a punishment for individual sin, social immorality, or political corruption—a sign of a coming apocalypse.

Looking to purely imagined plagues and fictional interpretations of historical epidemics—the Black plague, the “Spanish” influenza pandemic of 1918, HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and COVID-19—this course explores the broad social and symbolic implications of epidemic illness. Approaching “pandemics,” “outbreaks,” and “plagues” as both a biomedical and narrative events, it places a strong focus on close reading and purposeful writing.

Interested students can find further information about Dr. Kondrlik on her website ([kekondrlik.wordpress.com](http://kekondrlik.wordpress.com)) or the English Department website.

## **Another World Is Possible: Social Movement Rhetoric for Earth and Elsewhere**

## **Ben Kuebrich**

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 through creative action. 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. You will also look to fictional worlds for inspiration, including the moon Anarres in Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* and a dystopian near-future in Alfonso Cuarón's 2006 film *Children of Men*.

## **Language, Literature, and Cognition** **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.

## **Toni Morrison Seminar: The Trilogy** **Cherise Pollard**

Toni Morrison is perhaps the most popular contemporary African American woman novelist and cultural critic. Morrison's work has garnered multiple high profile prizes and honors, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, The Nobel Prize for Literature, and The Presidential Medal of Freedom and her novels and criticism are widely taught. The primary focus of this seminar will be Toni Morrison's Trilogy: *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992), and *Paradise* (1997). This trilogy is not defined by any shared character or plot line; instead, the connection is thematic. Issues related to American culture, history, memory, spirituality and religion unite these texts. Throughout this seminar, we will ask the following questions: what commentary do these texts make individually and as a group? How might we situate these novels in relation to Morrison's larger body of work, including literary criticism and cultural commentary? How might we position Morrison's late twentieth century work in relation to African American and American literary history?