

ENG 400 Seminar Descriptions

Fall 2023

Race & Representation in Youth Literature **Dr. Gabrielle Halko**

An investigation of the state of diversity in children's & YA literature, particularly around race and Whiteness. We will use both qualitative and quantitative research to examine past & current conversations about representation, access, and equity in literature for young readers. Interested students can learn more about Dr. Halko's research on the English Department website.

Neoliberal Fairy Tales **Dr. Erin Hurt**

Neoliberal fairy tales are pop culture 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 a neoliberal rationality, one that prioritizes individual responsibility and agency, where one's success results from an ability to perfectly commodify ourselves and our talents, and where failure lies in one's lack of the skills to do so. Neoliberal rationality, as it appears in these texts, ignores and erases any sense of structural inequality or systemic oppression. 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. Example texts include influencer culture and the attention economy, burnout, the gig economy, monetizing hobbies, Annie (2014 version), Maid in Manhattan, Queer Eye, Girls Trip, and more. Interested students can learn about the seminar instructor's research interests from the English Department homepage.

The Professions in Comics/Comics in the Professions **Dr. Patriarca**

Why does it matter that Peter Parker, the classic alter ego of Spider-Man, is a photographer for the Daily Bugle (or, sometimes, a scientist)? What do these choices say about how we have collectively viewed these professions over time?

In this seminar, we'll examine how public attitudes have shaped representations of certain professions (journalist, scientist, doctor, and more) in comics, as well as how comics have

shaped those representations in turn. We'll also address how some of these very professions have used comics to communicate vital information to colleagues and to public audiences alike.

Sexuality, Identity, and Desire: A Sociolinguistic Approach

Joshua Raclaw

Over the past thirty years, linguists have examined the various ways that language works to construct 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 different linguistic practices throughout the lifespan? How do we use language and discourse to ascribe social meaning to the body? How do speakers from different social and linguistic communities reproduce or resist normative understandings of sexual subjectivities? 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 course we will examine how researchers in sociolinguistics and other allied disciplines have investigated these and other questions across global communities and contexts.