

## PAVILION SEMINARS – FALL 2018

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### **Eco Projects (Kath Weston)**

The world is littered with small-scale projects undertaken to heal, sustain, or otherwise care for what we have taken to calling “the environment.” Many of these projects are inspired by community organizing or ideas generated by students such as yourselves. A new design turns a window into a windmill. Soccer balls scavenge enough energy to power a lightbulb. Art invigorates the way people inhabit a landscape. Villagers contour the land to bring back a dying river. Why do some ecologically beneficial projects wither away or fall apart while others thrive and inspire emulation? What motivates people to make such modest, even utopian, gestures instead of becoming overwhelmed by dire warnings about ecosystem collapse and climate catastrophe? Are the answers to these questions different depending on where and how you look?

### **From Tragedy to Horror (John Lyons)**

Is the tragic dead? Or is it hidden, disguised in some way? No one writes “tragedies” any more, though we honor the works of antiquity and of the late Renaissance. It would seem that tragedy is a museum piece, something to admire from a distance. But let us consider the second hypothesis, that somehow, at some time, the name “tragedy” was appropriated for a certain kind of “high cultural” writing and that the age-old tradition of tales of violence and murder among friends and family members continued in “low culture” under other names, such as the fairy tale, the “Gothic,” the Schauerroman, and even the horror film? This seminar proposes a somewhat iconoclastic view of the “tragic,” tracing stories that reach from Aeschylus to Alfred Hitchcock and beyond, with examples along the way from the “tragical histories” of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, dramatic tragedies of Shakespeare’s time, tales of the fantastic and the Gothic from the nineteenth century, films of psychological horror, and critical writings about the Uncanny and the Sublime. On this view of the tragic, neither nobility nor human freedom are the thematic core but rather certain forms of violence: murder of family members and friends; inadequate performance of the requirements for proper burial; the fearsome return of the dead. In extending our understanding to include the “Gothic,” the seminar will offer participants the chance to do research in the Small Special Collections Library, which holds what is perhaps the world’s largest collection of Gothic fiction. This course cuts across departmental and disciplinary boundaries, juxtaposes high and low cultural objects from different epochs and cultures, and will require both careful description of textual and visual material and the synthesis of examples and concepts across the historical spectrum.

### **Science and Politics (Seung-Hun Lee)**

More often than not, Science is intertwined with Religion and Politics. This course will provide students with an opportunity to study the entanglement of Science, Religion, and Politics, and how they have driven national and international policies. Examples will include the Galileo’s affair, Evolution, the Imperial Japanese Army’s Unit 731, Nazi Germany’s eugenics, and the Syphilis experiments in Guatemala, the Manhattan project and nuclear weapons, and drone and cyber warfare. Truth, reality, ethics and the anthropology of those involved will be examined in several exemplary cases. Books, movies, videos, memoirs, and case studies will be used as course materials. The class is open to scientists and non-scientists alike.

### **How will Artificial Intelligence change Humanity? (David Evans)**

Artificial intelligence has made remarkable advances in the past decade, leading to machines that can out-perform humans on many of the tasks that once defined what it means to be human: understanding language, recognizing images, playing games, and even creating art. According to many prognosticators, within just a few decades we may reach a world where the traditional purposes of human existence, and the work the preponderance of humans do today, will no longer exist. This seminar will explore the validity of such predictions, and consider what the future of humanity is in a world that may not need us. We will explore these issues from a variety of perspectives, spanning economics, politics, philosophy, computer science, and anthropology. We will include both historical and fictional readings to understand how humanity has adapted to past dramatic shifts, technical readings to understand the present and future of artificial intelligence, philosophical and political readings to understand how society might adapt to increasingly intelligence machines, and various other media including computer simulations, music, and movies.

### **Capitalism and the Human Good (Tal Brewer)**

It has become clear that our current levels of economic productivity and growth are altering the climate in ways that put the well-being of future generations at grave risk. This has led many thinkers to conclude that current generations are under a moral obligation to make painful sacrifices for the sake of future generations. Yet this conclusion rests implicitly on the supposition that our frenetic devotion to getting and spending is indeed making our own lives go better rather than worse. If this supposition is false, then perhaps there are opportunities to moderate this getting and spending in ways that would be beneficial both to current and to future generations. The aim of this course is to assess the plausibility of this supposition. To this end, we will be taking a close look at contemporary (i.e. global, “post-industrial”, technologically sophisticated) capitalism with an eye to assessing the contributions it makes, and the obstacles it presents, to good or well-lived human lives. We will look at three general aspects of our current economic practices: how we work, how we consume, and how technological change shapes our daily lives. These phenomena lie at the intersection of a large number of academic disciplines, so the syllabus will include writings by philosophers, historians, anthropologists, sociologists, economists and political theorists.

### **Ideal Cities (Katya Makarova)**

The tradition of the ideal city is fascinating for its attempt to imagine and to define – through the vision of the city – an ideal form of society for any given time, and to conceive alternative social arrangements. In this way urban utopias and anti-utopias can be seen both as a critique of an existing social order and as a blueprint for social change and political action. The course explores some of the most formative moments of this tradition as expressed in literature, film, art and architecture, with a particular focus on the rise and development of specifically modern society (from the turn of the 19th century to contemporary times). We will consider both the visions themselves and the attempts to realize them in practice; who produces the vision and for whom; and the broader implications of these visions for the society as a whole. The course will draw not only on the scholarly sources that explore the specific historical, political and social contexts of particular visions of the ideal city but also on a wide range of visual and literary material.

### **What is Knowledge? (Caitlin Wylie)**

We tend to think of scientific knowledge as true, universal, and based on indisputable evidence. But is it really? Before we criticize or defend science, we should first understand what research is, how it is done, and why we believe it to be credible. To learn about the realities and the rhetoric of making knowledge in the 21st century, we'll visit research spaces on Grounds and talk to researchers across a variety of disciplines. After all, we rely on knowledge produced by research in the social sciences and humanities—as well as the sciences—to shape our society and ourselves. We'll apply theories from the disciplines of sociology of knowledge, history and philosophy of science, and science and technology studies to make sense of today's knowledge production. For example, we'll pose questions about how qualitative and quantitative methods, controlled and uncontrollable variables, and expert and non-expert practitioners influence the everyday labor of doing research. We'll collect evidence about how people produce knowledge in different fields, such as by observing in laboratories and art workshops, interviewing researchers, and analyzing publications to compare how different fields claim credibility for their conclusions in writing. We'll also consider our own research practices: Are they reliable? Why or why not? What assumptions undergird researchers' and our own beliefs about “good” evidence and “true” conclusions? By conducting our own study of research practices across disciplines, we will explore the powerful social forces that shape evidence, research, and our beliefs about the natural and social worlds.

### **Myth (Emily Ogden)**

When we call something a myth, we either mean that it is a foundational story that grounds and unifies a culture's values—or we mean that it is the kind of implausible statement that only an idiot would believe. How did human beings' highest aspirations and our most childish foibles come to be combined in this single word? We will approach that and other questions by taking a historical view of a term that has at various times been central to literature, anthropology, and religious studies. We will delve into the theory of myth, considering its role in German and British Romanticism (Johann Gottfried Herder, Samuel Taylor Coleridge); in the birth and development of anthropology and psychoanalysis (E. B. Tylor, Sigmund Freud); and in twentieth-century anthropological and literary-critical theory (Franz Boas, Roland Barthes, Claude Lévi Strauss, Northrop Frye). And we will consider some specific instances of modern myth-making and myth-collecting drawn mostly from the US, including the Book of Mormon and the folklore collections of Zora Neale Hurston. We will touch on fundamental issues such as the role of narrative in culture; the difference (if there is any) between myth and art; the possibilities and problems of the “primitive;” and the possibilities and problems of the “modern.”

### **The Worlds of Toni Morrison (Lawrie Balfour)**

When Toni Morrison observes that “modern life begins with slavery,” she not only reorients Western traditions of thinking and theorizing, but she also intimates how struggles over the meaning of modern freedom are global and ongoing. This seminar will examine these remakings of modern life through four of Morrison's novels: *A Mercy*, *Beloved*, *Jazz*, and *Home*. We will move forward in time from the 17th century to the 21st; explore places as far apart as Barbados, Kentucky, Korea, and Ghana; and trace connections between freedom and slavery, culture and politics, past and future, peace and war, mobility and rootedness. For each of the historical periods that Morrison's fiction brings to life, we will discuss companion texts from a range of fields, including history, legal studies, political theory, and literature. Although our focus will be

the work of a single author, the aims of this course are anything but narrow. Instead, Morrison's retelling of the birth and legacies of modern slavery/freedom opens a window onto larger questions about aesthetics, ethics, and politics in the modern world.