

Topic: “Native American Pop Culture”

Dr. Carrie Sheffield

Course Description: This course investigates issues facing Native American and First Nations peoples today via the lens of pop culture. We will read dystopian novels, graphic novels/comics, poetry, and short fiction, and even play a video game, in order to get a sense of not only how Native peoples are impacted by things such as racism, historical trauma, and genocide, but also how they are using popular culture as a means of both resistance and healing. Graded work will consist of 3 short papers, participation in online discussion forums, quizzes, and exams.

Topic: “Freaks, Supercrises, and Angels: Disability and the Unusual Body in Literature”

Dr. Rob Spirko

Course Description: What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be normal? For people with disabilities, the answers to these questions can determine how well they are included in society—or sometimes mean the difference between life and death. In this class, we’ll look at representations of people with disabilities over the past couple of centuries, some written by disabled people and some by the non-disabled. We’ll range from the pamphlets of a radical abolitionist Quaker dwarf in the 18th century to a documentary about full-contact quadriplegic rugby in the 21st. We’ll cover a variety of genres in between: fiction (both regular and science-), non-fiction, graphic novel, poetry, plays, and film. We’ll work together to collect some of our reflections (as well as some interviews with disabled people) on a website that can serve as a resource for others interested in depictions of disability.

Topic: “The Idea of Japan in the United States-1818-2018”

Dr. Sam Turner

Course Description: This class will examine the role that the American idea of “Japan” (which is related to but distinct from Japan itself) has played in the United States over the past two hundred years. While focusing on literary works by American authors, the course will also examine some Japanese works in translation, especially the cinema (e.g. *Godzilla*) by which Japan represented itself to the west in the decades after World War II and the anime that has constituted an increasingly important segment of global culture over the past thirty years. Students will also design a research project that examines some aspect of Japanese culture as it is experienced by Americans. The course requires no previous knowledge of Japanese culture, language, or history.