Honors Seminars Spring 2023

Latin America in Translation
HNRS 4000, section 1001, 17355; W: 2:30pm-3:20pm (1 credit)
Instructor: Dr. Valeria Grinberg Pla

Description: This Honors seminar invites students to engage with key literary texts from 20th and 21st century Latin America in English translation as a way to discover the region’s complexity and diversity through literature. Literature serves as a gateway into ways of thinking and seeing the world that make the Latin American social and cultural landscape, as literary texts are a window into the dreams, passions, ideas, and shared experiences of peoples. Through them we can travel in time and space and discover Latin American locations of thought and feelings. On the one hand, we will explore how, as an art form, literature works to articulate knowledge about the world and dreams about the future alike. On the other hand, we will reflect on translation itself as a practice that enables and impacts the cultural transfer of ideas.

We will read modern classics such as short stories by Felisberto Hernández in Esther Allen’s translation and some of Alejandra Pizarnik’s Selected Poems, translated by Cecilia Rossi, as well as contemporary short novels such as David Foster’s rendering of The Enlightened by David Toscana, Katherine Silver’s translation of Senselessness by Horacio Castellanos Moya, and Blood of the Dawn by Claudia Salazar, translated by Elizabeth Bryer.

No previous knowledge of Latin American literature is required, just the desire to engage with Latin America through its literary production and curiosity to critically reflect on literature and translation as cross-cultural communicative practices.

This seminar includes a workshop and an open interview with Katherine Silver, who will visit BGSU as part of the World of Translation Series on April 13, 2023. Katherine Silver, is an award-winning literary translator specializing in Latin American literature and the former director of the Banff International Literary Translation Centre.

Indigenous Wisdom and Global Perspectives on Western Science
HNRS 4000, Section 1002, 17356; Thursdays 4pm-5pm (1 credit)
Instructor: Dr. Gordon Wade

Description: We take a critical look at the sometimes-subtle ways in which scientific thought and practice is influenced by unexamined Western cultural assumptions and hidden biases. In this course we explore ways of seeing and communicating that benefit us by helping to
illuminate these potential blind spots. These ways of seeing include traditional indigenous knowledge, perspectives from other cultures, and insights originating in feminist standpoint theory. We examine ways in which recent insights and discoveries in nonlinear dynamical systems theory (e.g., the “butterfly effect”) have, in many cases, been integral to nonwestern knowledge traditions all along.

In the first part of the course we lay the conceptual groundwork—the philosophical background and tools of language—which can help us see our hidden cultural assumptions. We draw on notions coming from the Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) movement, the Participatory Action Research (PAR) movement, feminist standpoint theory, and the notion of “pluriversality.”

The main part of the course consists of a series of one-week “modules” in which we examine writings by selected indigenous and other non-Western scientists as well as feminist thinkers; examples may include Robin Kimmerer, Tyson Yunkaporta, Toshiyuki Nakagaki, and Suzanne Simard, among others. As Sandra Harding, feminist and philosopher of science puts it: “The project here will be to envision keeping both eyes open—one on contemporary Western sciences and their philosophies and the other [eye] on other cultures’ scientific practices and legacies. ... What possibilities appear if we open both eyes, not just the one that has been fixed on the West?” In addition to considering work of Western thinkers, we shall also consider work of non-Western thinkers embedded within their respective cultures.

In final part of the course, students will produce a short paper extending the inquiry which we began with the modules, in a direction of their choosing. These papers will be presented to the class, either in brief talk/discussion format, or as poster presentations.

Because of the extent that our culture values science, both as a methodology and as a worldview, it is essential for well-educated citizens to understand its philosophical foundations and hidden assumptions. What we do depends upon what we think; developing awareness of our underlying assumptions and exploring their implications provides us with opportunities to reformulate them in ways that better serve our individual and collective needs. This can be a transformative process. Scientists, science educators, medical professionals, sociologists, and psychologists will all benefit by learning about the different ways of thinking behind the science. The goal of the course is that students emerge from the course comfortable with the complexities arising from interaction with different worldview and cultures, and an understanding of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its knowledge systems.

**Daoism and Arts of Healing**

HNRS 4000, Section 1003, 17357; First Seven Weeks-W: 6pm-7:50pm (1 credit)
Instructor: Dr. Min Yang
Description: Seeking healing from disease perhaps was early humankind’s first self-awareness and self-consciousness of being, regardless of geographical regions, cultures and races. The varied arts of healing that were invented in pre-history and the ancient world can reflect important aspects of world civilizations in that they often are entangled with religion, philosophy, social and political conditions, and most essentially, social psychology in response to illness and diseases. Hence, studying arts of healing develops our understanding of other cultures, and equally important, identifies us.

This seminar takes the healing arts in ancient China as an example to explore how the practice of healing arts emerged and developed and how the healing arts are entangled with Daoism - one of the greatest philosophical/religious systems in China. Most importantly, we will identify the trajectory by which the healing arts in China originated and developed and its connection with the formation of the Chinese cultural and individual identities.

This seminar will meet two hours per week in the first half of the semester. Each week the seminar will cover one specific topic. Students will be assigned reading materials related the topic before seminar meeting. Each seminar meeting will center around discussions regarding assigned reading materials and additional visual materials related to the specific topic. Participation in seminar discussions is strongly encouraged and evaluated.

Additional Seminars:

Animal Behavior
PSYC 4400H, section 1101, 17360; this is a combined class. Psychology Seminar
Monday nights: 6-9pm (3 credits)
Instructor: Dr. Verner Bingman

Do animals experience mental states like humans? This is a question we can not answer, but we can explore the remarkable range of intelligent animal behavior, such as communication, problem solving, tool use, social cognition and spatial navigation, and its underlying nervous system control. The intent of this SEMINAR-LIKE course is to provide students an opportunity to explore their interests in some aspect(s) of animal intelligence. After two weeks of lecture by Dr. Bingman, each student, or perhaps pair of students, will be required to prepare a thorough ppt presentation on a topic of their choice. All students will need to participate in a subsequent discussion of the student presentations. Grades will be based on student ppt presentation, independent research paper on the ppt topic and class participation (no exams will be given).