

Writing the 21st Century

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Harriet Davidson, SAS - English

MW 01:10-02:30P

Honors College Seminar Room S124

College Ave Campus

Will Count Towards SAS - English Major

Will Count Towards SAS - English Minor

The 21st century has brought changes that many older people never could have imagined or never dreamed to see in their lifetimes: ubiquitous social media and internet culture; a black U.S. president; the increasing acceptance of gay marriage; the politics of terror and the neoliberal state; accelerating globalization; climate crises and the rise of the idea of the anthropocene showing the deep interrelations of the human, animal, vegetative, and geologic worlds.

This seminar will study major trends in literature and narrative art that evolve from these shifting technologies, politics, and cultures of the 21st century. Art responds in both form and content to this new millennium and often offers prescient glimpses of changes that can barely be articulated in conceptual language. We will read articles from different fields about the way computers change human thinking, about the impact of climate change on our understanding of the human, about the cultures of inequality and terror so permeating our current culture. In tandem we will be looking at examples of poetry, fiction, visual narrative, and new media forms that actively involve the reader/viewer.

We will study some wonderful and sometimes strange poetry being written recently, but we will also look at works of fiction, visual narrative forms such as the graphic novel and new media, as we set forth debates about the changes in human thinking and self-understanding under these new historical conditions. Class members will be asked to respond to reading in a variety of creative ways; also, students will develop a project that will require an oral presentation and a substantial essay.

HARRIET DAVIDSON is Associate Professor of English and of Women's and Gender Studies. She has chaired the Department of WGS and also was interim Dean of Douglass Residential College. She has published on many 20th century poets and is interested in art and politics as a way to think about how humans both respond to and create social change, as well as a way to understand changing definitions of the human. She teaches courses in poetry, new media, art and politics, women writers, and feminist theory.