Course Title: Volcanoes and Human Populations  
Instructor: John Creasy

Catalog Description
Volcanic eruptions such as Thera (1654 B.C.E.), Vesuvius (79 A.D.), Krakatoa (1883), and Pinetubo (1991) are devastating to human populations and profoundly affect social and cultural histories. Consequently, volcanoes and volcanic eruptions are central themes of myth, legend, contemporary description, and current scientific study. Volcanism is also an integral and inevitable part of the global tectonic cycle, ensuring that Earth remains a habitable planet. Students explore the scientific knowledge and human dimensions of volcanism through readings, writing assignments, and discussions drawn from varied literature and visual media. Small group projects assess the volcanic hazards for populations living near major volcanoes, such as in Mexico City, Seattle, and Jakarta.

Extended Description
Of the many natural hazards affecting humankind, volcanoes have captured the interest of modern scientists and ancient scholars and through the devastating effects of their eruption are embedded in the social and cultural histories of indigenous populations around the modern and ancient world.

This seminar incorporates several inter-related themes:
♦ scientific aspects of volcanoes, such as global distribution, tectonic settings, eruptive processes, eruptive styles, and eruptive products;
♦ volcanic hazards, that is, local- to global-scale effects of volcanic activity on human populations, such as volcanic mud flows (lahars), ash flows, particulate and gaseous emissions;
♦ contemporary accounts and modern analyses of specific eruptions such as Thera (and demise of Minoan culture, 1654 B.C.), Vesuvius (and destruction of Pompeii, 79 A.D.), Laki eruption in Iceland (1783), Tambora (1815), Krakatoa (1883), Mount Pelée (1902), Katmai (1912), St. Helens (1980), Ruiz (1985), Pinetubo (1991);
♦ place of volcanoes in differing cultures, for example, current Indonesian culture, Native American cultures (Hopi and Navajo), and Greek and Roman myths;
♦ societal response to current and potential volcanic activity, in particular risk assessment, monitoring, and mitigation by federal agencies, for example in the US, Mexico, and Indonesia.

The text (noted below) provides background material and conceptual integration of the themes outlined above. But, most weekly reading assignments will be drawn from the wide variety of literature and visual media suggested by these themes. These materials serve as the basis for class discussion of the themes and as a starting point for writing assignments. Students complete 4-5 writing assignments ranging from 1-2 pages to 6-8 pages in length over the course of the semester. All papers undergo peer review prior to submission, receive timely input and comment from me, and for selected papers, revision and re-submission. Topics for writing assignments are drawn from the themes and require additional literature research. As in my past seminars, the library and information services and the writing workshop staffs provide ‘practical’ workshops (6 or so) for the students during the first half of the semester. Topics might include how to find relevant magazine and journal articles or how to conduct peer review.

A project in the latter part of the semester examines the volcanic hazards to populations living near active or potentially active volcanoes, such as the greater Seattle area, Mexico City, Quito, Jakarta, or Sicily. Students work in teams of 4 or 5 to gather data on current and past volcanic history of the region, the likely volcanic hazards, and status of monitoring, mitigation, or risk analysis by governmental agencies. The results are presented orally and in written form, although I have not decided what the format of the presentations may take.

There will be no exams; grades are based upon contribution to discussions, quality of writing assignments, and the project.

In my dreams, I envision a 4 day field trip during October break to the Cascades Volcano Observatory (USGS, Vancouver WA), Mount St. Helens and Mt. Rainier. I am trying to make this a reality-the only snag being money (about $10-12K total)-but at present this is an uncertain course component. [P.S. Dreams come true! Field trip added…☺]


Library Resources:
Ladd Library has an extensive selection of books, periodicals, government documents, films and videos, slide sets on CD-ROM, and access to most popular literature to support all of the themes described above. In addition, many governmental agencies in the US and abroad (e.g. Indonesia, Mexico, Italy, and Japan) maintain excellent web-based resources regarding all aspects of volcanism, but are particularly relevant for hazard analysis, monitoring, and mitigation. I will subscribe students to the free weekly electronic newsletter of current volcanic activity prepared jointly by the USGS and the Smithsonian Institution.
Course title: A Walk in Your Own Footsteps       Name of instructor: Georgia Nigro

Catalog description: Why is it easy to find one’s way around one’s hometown after a 30-year absence? Why is it difficult to retrieve memories of one’s first three years? Are “flashbulb memories” always accurate? In this seminar, we explore these and other questions about autobiographical memory. Topics may include childhood amnesia, memory for real and imagined trauma, the disruption of autobiographical memory, and the role of memory in ethnic conflict. In addition to reading and writing, students collect data about their own and others’ autobiographical memories. One Sunday afternoon field trip is scheduled in September.

Extended description: Autobiographical memory is an attractive topic for a first-year seminar because it is studied in every area of psychology, including cognitive, developmental, personality, social, clinical, and neuroscience; moreover, it enjoys the attention of scholars in many other disciplines, including literature and history. My tentative organizational scheme for the seminar calls for the following six units, each of which will last two weeks: (1) childhood amnesia, (2) culture and autobiographical memory, (3) courtrooms and therapy rooms, (4) self, identity, and autobiographical memory, (5) autobiography in print, and (6) historical memory. I will probably choose four units from among these six before fall and reshape the seminar accordingly.

A volume recently translated from the Dutch will serve as a primary text (Why life speeds up as you get older: How memory shapes our past, by D. Draaisma, published in 2004). Selected readings will come from two collections (Remembering our past: Studies in autobiographical memory, edited by D. Rubin, published in 1996 or Memory observed: Remembering in natural contexts, edited by U. Neisser & I. E. Hyman, published in 2000) as well as from journal articles. In the last few years, entire issues of several journals (among them Social Cognition and Review of General Psychology) have been devoted to autobiographical memory. In addition, I will let students choose an autobiography or memoir to read (from a selection I generate). Finally, I will select a volume on writing from a few under consideration. My old favorite, Style by Joseph Williams, has lost its appeal in newer editions.

Seminar meetings will include discussions of readings, writing exercises, in-class data collection or planning for out-of-class data collection, opportunities for peer editing and leading discussions, and visits to the library and Writing Workshop. Students will write four papers; length will vary from 3 to 10 pages, depending on the topics assigned, and opportunities for revision will be offered. A sample assignment during the unit on culture and autobiographical memory might call for students to interview a bilingual person about his or her autobiographical memories, utilizing a short interview protocol developed in class. In their papers, students would summarize the interview and discuss it in relation to readings on bilingualism and autobiographical memory. A sample assignment during the historical memory unit might begin with a visit to the Wilhelm Reich Museum in Maine. Upon return, students would conduct further research into Reich’s place in history, with their papers reflecting upon the ways in which the museum succeeds or fails to create a sense of memory.
Course Title: Literature Talks Back  
Instructor: Carole Anne Taylor, English

Catalog description:

Writers create new worlds not only out of their own historical conditions but also out of the literary legacies thrust upon them, and they may be most original when most artfully responding to these literary sources. This seminar encourages students to enjoy the detective work of tracking down how and why late 20th-century texts may appreciate earlier works as precursors and yet “talk back” to their assumptions about the world. Students explore such cross-cultural dialogues as those between Derek Walcott's Omeros and Homeric epic, Maxine Hong Kingston's Tripmaster Monkey and Walt Whitman's poetry, Jeanette Winterson's Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit and the Book of Leviticus, John Wideman's Philadelphia Fire and Shakespeare's The Tempest, and the Osage Carter Revard's poetic ecology and Wallace Stevens's symbolist poetics.

Extended description:

Students meet twice a week for class discussion and once a week to work in smaller groups. Both formats encourage students to enjoy the detective work of tracking down different aspects of carefully constructed literary relationships across the cultures (on the level of allusion, figurative frames of reference, structure, or sustained levels of ironic reference). In each case, students learn to juxtapose Euro-American sources with texts that both appreciate and allude to these sources while resisting many of their naturalized presumptions (what they take as “natural” or “the way the world is”) They will examine the complexity of these relationships and what critical questions they raise for readers (e.g., about Winterson’s “queering” of Leviticus, Walcott’s down-home Caribbean analogues to Homeric figures, Wideman’s focus on Caliban’s curse rather than Prospero’s power, Kingston’s deployment of the Chinese American trickster Wittman Ah Sing, or the Osage poet Revard’s “rewriting” of “Sunday Morning”). Students will refine intellectual tasks that become short weekly writing assignments that are discussed in small groups but written individually. As revised, a couple of these shorter writing assignments will inform two more sustained pieces of writing (6-8 pages) worked through in peer groups at each stage of the writing process.

Some combination of the following texts will be used (probably only five pairs):

Derek Walcott's Omeros and Homeric epic (either The Odyssey or The Iliad or a compilation of both)
Jeanette Winterson’s Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit and the Biblical Book of Leviticus
Jean Rhys’s Wide Sargasso Sea and Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre
John Wideman’s Philadelphia Fire and Shakespeare’s The Tempest
Maxine Hong Kingston’s Tripmaster Monkey and Walt Whitman’s poetry.
Carter Revards’s How the Songs Come Down and Wallace Stevens’s poetry