

Edie Meidav

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Eng. 450/June 2025

Advising: South College W365

Office-hour meeting required in first 2 days of program; sign up on first day

SUSTAINABILITY: LISTENING TO THE STORIES OF PLACE

At this point we can see a little better
how the use of speech
was established or imperceptibly
perfected itself in the bosom of each family; and one can further conjecture
how various particular causes could have extended the language
and accelerated its progress
by making it more necessary.

Overview: a hybrid faculty-led IPO course collaborating with SiPN/FLAD and UMass Amherst

Lead: Edie Meidav, provost professor, MFA for Poets and Writers

Graduate TA: Joseph Fritsch, MFA for Poets and Writers/Environmental Humanities/Architecture

DIVERSITY:

- The goal of the methodology used in this global course is to employ anthropological and natural observation as a means of understanding diverse perspectives from a broad span of sociocultural position.
- Within the island city of São Miguel, citizens are using strategies of accommodation and resilience to deal with climate change which has had disproportionate effects on both diaspora and livelihood.
- Using Bhanu Kapil's work as a model, students learn how individual perspectives and biases influence ways of seeing the world.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will learn disciplinary or interdisciplinary theories and knowledge necessary to comprehend the diverse social, cultural, and political perspectives on the ground in São Miguel.
- Students will develop the ability to understand, articulate, and critically analyze diverse social, cultural, and political perspectives.
- Students will demonstrate critical awareness of how individual perspectives and biases influence ways of seeing the world.

- Students will gain knowledge of structural and cultural forces that shape or have shaped discrimination in São Miguel based on factors such as language, class, religion, ability, nationality, sexuality, and gender.
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- Students will demonstrate the capacity to listen to and communicate respectfully with others of diverse perspectives.
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- Students will explore and address questions that reflect multiple perspectives to develop a complex understanding of the world.
- Students will learn to listen to and communicate respectfully with others of diverse perspectives

GENERAL EDUCATION/Social World:

This course aims to offer students the toolkit so that they might be responsible citizens in a new environment, making reasoned, sensitive judgments in terms of methodology as they find information to expand their own and others' worldview. The goal is that students emerging from this course find their field of referents expanded, understanding in an interdisciplinary fashion the ways different communities find strategies to deal with climate change, as well as ways to be a thoughtful observer and narrator.

Using the method of the social sciences (interviews with locals), geohistorical awareness (lectures by university faculty), cultural inquiry (learning the values of Sao Miguel culture through direct exchange and readings), and literary/theatrical output (a public-facing performance), students learn the powers of observation, improve their critical and analytical thinking, and acquire the skills necessary to discover, manage, and effectively communicate knowledge as informed citizens of our world.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the course's completion, students will be able to:

- **Understand their roles as global citizens in a new environment and proceed with care**
- **Understand systemic issues of climate change affecting livelihood and diaspora in the Azores**
- **Find a way to create an ongoing field research log**
- **Find a way to meaningfully learn, observe, interact with, and record climate change's impact on sociocultural and environmental issues relevant to São Miguel**
- **Find a way to meaningfully present work through writing or theater in a public-facing culminating project**

EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to be punctual with attendance and assignments, participate fully within in-class exercises and peer review, field research observation sites, and final performance projects.

Participation/peer workshop/punctuality (25%)

Daily logbook and monthlong exchange with instructors (25%)

Longer writing/theatrical project (Week III-IV) (25%)

Revision submitted (Week IV) (15%)

Final reflection/peer-based literary imitation (10%)

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Students must alert the instructor before class via email if there is going to be any tardiness or absence for an excused reason accompanied by a doctor's note.

EXAM SCHEDULE AND MAKE-UP RESCHEDULING POLICIES

Final performance/presentation counts as final exam.

(Should there be any extreme reason for missing this performance, students will create a 30-minute Zoom presentation to be shared publicly within the three weeks following the course.)

ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Student work should be original and unaided by AI/ChatGPT, and will be vetted.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University, including online courses. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty

DISABILITY STATEMENT

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to making reasonable, effective and appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of students with disabilities and help create a barrier-free campus.

SUSTAINABILITY/CLIMATE CHANGE: Listening to the Stories of Place – 3 credits

Categories: Gen Ed (Honors College pending)

Gen Ed category: Social World:

- Potential linkage to English (450), Stockbridge School, School of Sustainability, Environmental Humanities, Writing Program, Theater
- Linkage to the Art Sustainability Activism series

To me it seems that the theme that gives rise to a good story is always exceptional, but I don't mean that a theme should be extraordinary, out of the common run of things, mysterious or unusual. Just the opposite; it can be a perfectly trivial, everyday anecdote. What's exceptional is a magnetlike quality; a good theme attracts a whole system of interconnecting links; for the author, and later for the reader, it "gels" a vast amount of notions, half-glimpsed things, feelings and even ideas that were virtually floating around in his memory or sensibility; a good theme is like a good sun, a star with an orbiting planetary system, that, often, goes unnoticed till the writer, an astronomer of words, reveals to us its existence. Or rather, to be both more modest and more modern, a good theme is somehow atomic, like a nucleus with its orbiting electrons; and all that, when it comes down to it, isn't it a proposal of life, a dynamic that urges us to come out of ourselves and enter into a more complex and beautiful system of relations?

-Julio Cortázar

Micronarrative is a **bounded and situated concept answering the need for a unit of analysis for dynamic multi-participant talk**. Language is an inherently multimodal phenomenon, which constructs meaning through various modes: verbal, vocal and gestural.

-Anna Jelec/ Małgorzata Fabiszak

Course description:

We all carry with us epigenetic, historic, and lived memories. How can we best learn from a position of creative respect when entering a new place? How do we best understand features of the environment, whether they be socioeconomic, social, historic, or geologic? How do we begin to understand what features of our greater environment will allow for the sustainability of what matters to a culture or bioregion? Using environmental observation, archival research, and oral interviews in this writing-intensive course, participants both observe and write daily toward a culminating piece for performance, podcasting, or publication.

Calendar overview [as confirmed by SiPN]:

June 1: Arrival

June 2: Orientation/group-building

June 3: First in-person workshop (to be repeated weekly: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 1-3 pm)

June 4: First site visit/field trip (9-12 Wednesdays/Fridays, some joining with FLAD/University of Azores/SiPN)

This schedule repeated weekly, with the exception of the last week (see below):

June 23: Full-day revision/rehearsal workshop

June 24: Public presentation (in conjunction with Anda & Fala/art space)

June 25: Site visit

June 26: Group review

June 27: Field trip

June 28-30: Summation

Basic course structure:

1) Daily research log: seen by you/your pod/instructors

2) Weekly: creative work: 500 words on our Canvas/Learning Management System posted by 5 pm Sunday.

3) Generative/thematic/reading-based workshops on Tuesdays

4) Research/field trip/workshops on Thursdays and Fridays

Week I – Origins: Socioeconomic, Cultural

Tuesday:

- Introductions
- Connect to your “why”
- Understand your assumptions
- Discussion of anthropological, journalistic, and narrative methods for learning a place
- Discussion of narrative and theatrical learning outcomes
- Writing as a means of finding new ways of thinking: new techniques
- Discussion of reading: *Mushroom, Vertical*
- Community-building.

Thursday:

- Guest visitor from UoA with overview of Azorean environment: natural, cultural, historical, and current challenges
- Project formulation; initial contracts
- Student-led presentation of reading: *Mushroom, Vertical*
- Guided observation and continued orientation

Week II – Different Modes of Learning a Place: Challenges, Risks, Opportunities

Tuesday:

- Prompts
- Guided observation
- Student-led presentation of reading: *Sustainability*
- Workshop

Thursday:

- Field trip: university library, archives, fishing village, fading industry, feminist sites

Week III – Narrative Expression: workshop

Tuesday:

- Peer and classroom-guided discussion and theater work
- Students revise their work toward public exchange
- Local and university actors may be tapped to dramatize student work

Thursday:

- Peer and classroom-guided discussion and theater work
- Refinement

Week IV – Narrative Refinement: process of revision and public reading/performance

Tuesday:

- Final reading
- Final reflections and literary imitations turned in

Thursday:

- Public performance and workshop
- Next steps: discussion of actions for future

Work required/grading:

Daily logbook and monthlong exchange with instructors (25%)
Longer writing/theatrical project (Week III-IV) (30%)
Revision submitted (Week IV) (10%)
Final reflection/peer-based literary imitation (10%)
Participation, peer workshop (25%)

If done for graduate credit, graduate students write a twenty-five-page final project submitted on the last day; if done for Commonwealth Honors College, students submit a twelve-page final project.

Initial meetings and throughout the program

Required: Sign up on the first day for a brief beginning-of-the-program with me.
Know that my office hours will be available to you after class and at other points if you are unable to meet. Please email me possible other times. Always feel free to talk with me at any point about anything throughout our program, or with our TA Joseph Fritsch. I am truly available: e.g., whether you need direction or attention to some greater scholarly or writerly concern or whether you wish to know how to explore a topic with greater depth or breadth.

Correspondence:

Please write SUSTAINABILITYMICRO in your subject heading; I am at emeidav@umass.edu.

Required books at Amherst Books (write books@amherstbooks.com)

All other readings will be given you in class or via Canvas.

Canvas:

Daily, share in your logs your research questions and observations.

By Sunday at 3 pm, post your creative work writing for the week; at least 500 words, which may help you in your construction of your longer piece. We will project and read aloud your work each week.

Presentations of Theory/Meme:

To each class, bring our coursebooks: *Mushroom*, *Vertical*, or *Sustainability*.
Each week, we will discuss our reading.

If it is your week to present:

If you are presenting, you are responsible for meeting with your colleagues outside of class, and feel free to use slides/Powerpoint.
The goal of this is to get you to think deeply in collaborative manner about our assigned readings and, for your own professional development, have the ability to present work: you know the worth of such collaboration and development
When you meet with your colleague, you might consider a piece and its ambitions. It helps to create and have handy a graph of the work: a concept map. Isolate a few key passages which exemplify a

writer's point, strategy, and sensibility, and lead us in some close reading. Another way might be to consider one or more aesthetic or sociopolitical choices a writer makes: e.g., rhetorical gestures, persona, reversals, moral argument, metanarrative devices, the rupture of or adherence to initial contracts. Come up, at the end, with a question for us to consider in our more free-form conversation.

You will be doing this at least once in our program.

Even if it's not your week to present, do be responsible for representing to us, at any point during any point in our conversation, the published work we have read for that week.

Handouts:

Each week I will let you know what asks for the majority of your focus. The goal is to stimulate your thinking. The moral: listen well in class when we are discussing which assignment or reading needs your focus.

Grading:

Everyone, even and especially in your academic career, depends on you for this: your punctuality, preparation, attendance, as well as your good faith in attending to your colleagues' work and your own. The progress you will make will be your gift to us and to yourself. This class has been designed to help stimulate, in our brief time together, your thinking and generativity, and to expand the toolkit of your possibilities when you think about yourself as a student, creator, and citizen in our current times. My goal is that you leave with at least one short piece close to being publishable, and that you have had the chance to explore your ideas. It still is useful for you to think this way: if you come on time, prepared, and ready to participate, your grade will be exactly what you wish it to be. Absent/late/unprepared – grades descend.

Standards:

I refer you to http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/downloads/CodeofStudentConduct.pdf: and https://www.umass.edu/dean_students/campus-policies/classroom#:~:text=Student%20behavior%20or%20speech%20that,unwarranted%20interruptions -- these are the standards to which we will adhere in our class. As the code states, these standards are necessary, and if a student cannot respect them, s/he/they may lose the right to be enrolled in a class. We will also adhere to university policy regarding health and safety regarding masks and Covid. If you cannot make it to class, please contact me ahead of time. To summarize: please do not come to class if you are sick, but if you are going to be absent, please let me know via email ahead of time. We encourage you to be in class in person, and/but will do our best to create the possibility for remote learning should there arise the need. Please always speak to me about any concerns. We are here to help you learn! In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that prohibits gender-based discrimination in educational settings that receive federal funds, the University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students, free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and retaliation. This includes interactions in person or online through digital platforms and social media. Title IX also protects against discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, or related conditions, including recovery. There are resources here on campus to support you. A summary of the available Title IX resources (confidential and non-confidential) can be found at the following link: <https://www.umass.edu/titleix/resources>. You do not need to make a formal report to access

them. If you need immediate support, you are not alone. Free and confidential support is available 24 hours a day / 7 days a week / 365 days a year at the SASA Hotline (001+) 413-545-0800.

Trust:

In order to allow all the greatest freedom in our community, all conversations, written or other, within our class structure are not to be shared in any medium, social or other. We are creating a chrysalis for a certain trust together so that later in your career you can fly with confidence in a more visible, public manner.

Class dynamic:

Among other traits, I am sensitive to our class dynamic and ask you to bring concerns to me. The vision we will share in this class is one of trust: free and respectful communication allowing for the highest possible learning for all. You know this already, but it bears repeating: your ease, comfort and progress in this chosen community are essential, and are also very important to me, making up a large part of my own motivation in teaching. I ask you to come first to me, to give me a fair chance to help address any and all of your concerns. That said, let me know if you need more assistance and we can discuss other pathways within the BA program and the English department. Please consider this request (to come first to me) to be part of our course requirements.

Field trips:

We will be partnering with SiPN/FLAD for some of our field trips: we will be abiding by their parameters on any such trip.

End-of-class performance:

We will have a community-oriented end-of-class reading and publication of your work, and I ask you to early on begin considering what short piece might be most interesting for you to share in a public domain.

To help you start to generate even prior to our program, I encourage you to consider the following list:

- unrealized dreams, historical or other
- rants you would like someone to make
- apologies you secretly or openly wish to make
- betrayals to which you have paid attention
- significant triangles in your life
- favorite obsessives
- confessions you can imagine making or hearing made, by those you know and those from another time/place about your life or others'
- moments of surrealism in your life or another's
- fables you have loved at odd moments or those you could invent and could imagine being useful
- significant objects in the lives of difficult or easy people

- horrors of your hometown or paradise

In other words: please make many lists and, as ours will be a generative workshop, these will be your trove.

REFERENCE LIST

Resources:

Your vision: <https://x.com/frumpenberg/status/1180478581551616000>

Story Structures:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_story_structures

<https://nelsonagency.com/2022/01/kishotenketsu-and-non-western-story-structures/>

<https://jamigold.com/for-writers/worksheets-for-writers/>

<https://youneekstudios.com/african-storytelling-techniques-in-creative-writing-rethinking-the-3-act-storyline/>

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