



EN125: Islands

A seminar series with the Center for the Arts and Humanities

Fall 2026 | Mondays 7:00 - 8:00pm | Bixler 219

Co-organizers:

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Course Description

This course explores the island as both a physical space and a conceptual framework, inviting students to think through its complexities beyond stereotypes of isolation. Far from being marginal, islands have long been sites of cultural exchange, migration, and innovation, while also bearing the weight of colonization, environmental vulnerability, and geopolitical struggle. By decentering continental perspectives, the course highlights how archipelagic thinking offers new ways of understanding relationality, power, and identity. Drawing on global histories from the Pacific to the Atlantic, we will examine how islands illuminate pressing contemporary issues, from climate change to cultural hybridity. Indigenous and diasporic epistemologies challenge us to reconsider boundaries, belonging, and responsibility, while oral traditions such as Turtle Island and Oceania's "sea of islands" expand our understanding of connection and interdependence. Islands also reveal the entanglements of empire, slavery, tourism, and militarization, while simultaneously offering models of resistance, solidarity, and creativity. Students will engage with interdisciplinary perspectives—literature and language, history, anthropology, classics, cinema studies, art, and biology—to explore how islands enable fluid, interconnected ways of thinking. Ultimately, this course positions islands as generative sites for reimagining our shared futures, emphasizing exchange over isolation and creativity over constraint.

Course Objectives

This course has three goals: (1) to learn more about the annual humanities theme for 2026-27 by engaging some of the important conversations on this broad issue; (2) to intellectually engage with our guest speakers; (3) to build a closer, better informed community of faculty, staff and students who are able to think together about Islands.

Course Requirements

There are only a few requirements for the course: attendance, participation, and reflection.

- Attendance. Students enrolled in the course are expected to attend every meeting. We understand that some absences are avoidable; you may miss one class without penalty, but after that you will be in jeopardy of not receiving credit.
- Participation. A good seminar can thrive or struggle depending on the investment and engagement of its participants. Please come to the seminars ready to listen, engage with the speaker, and discuss the topics at hand. Please do not use your computers or other technological devices during the seminar.
- Journal. During each session, you will be required to take notes about your observations on the speaker's presentation and discussion or activities. At the end of the session, you will freewrite for 5-10 minutes, reflecting on the session. Questions to consider include: What did you learn from the speaker? What if anything surprised you? What new questions do you have? What connections did you see between this speaker and others? We will distribute journals at the beginning of each session and collect them at the end.

Course materials

The seminar discussions will have little to no prior reading, though you are encouraged to familiarize yourself briefly with the upcoming speakers.

Class Format

This is a seminar, and though each speaker may address the format differently, our goal is to always have ample and open space for discussion.

Calendar

September 14: **Course Introduction**

September 21: [Esteban Crespo](#), "Trans Islands: Mapping Difference and Possibility in the Early Modern World"

September 28: [James Taylor](#), "Cyclopedes and Siren Song: Islands in Homer's Odyssey and Greek Culture"

October 5: No class

October 12 - Fall Break

October 19: [Seth Kim](#), “The Dialectic Flows of the Filipino Martial Arts”

October 26: [Serena Ferrando](#), “The Sea Between Us: Poetry, Islands, and Archipelagic Thought”

November 2: [Mihku Paul](#), (and [more about Paul’s work here](#)) title TBD

November 9: [Cathy](#) and [Louis](#) Bevier, “Vertebrate Natural History of the Island Campus”

November 16: [Eloy de Guzmán Romero Blanco](#), “Cuba is a Revolutionary Atlantic: Steamers, Filibusterism, and U.S. Expansionism”

November 30: [Jessamine Batario](#), “Curating Islands: *Imagining an Archipelago* at the Colby Museum”

December 7: [Jorell Meléndez-Badillo](#), title TBD