

AIA 32 Conference

BOOK OF SEMINARS

Paper proposals for a specific seminar should be sent to convenors by 23 April 2025. Please submit your abstract as a word file following the given template. Format your in-text and bibliographic references according to APA7. Papers may be single or multiple authors (fully paid-up AIA members).

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Seminar n. 1. Shakespeare and the re-invention of the human

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Abstract

In his provocative *Shakespeare and the invention of the human*, Harold Bloom controversially posits that Shakespeare is the true inventor of the human. More radically, we ask: Is the concept of 'the human' still a valid category in Shakespeare studies? Can the idea of the human—along with its various denials, approximations, extensions, and inversions—be re-invented by considering the dual meanings of 'inventing', both as creating anew and as discovering? How does the human intersect with vaguer, more indistinct concepts, and how is this (re)discovery portrayed in Shakespeare's works? We encourage contributions that examine how Shakespeare's texts challenge or reinforce early modern notions of humanity, explore the relationships between humans, nature, and other beings—such as monsters and aberrations—and investigate how his writings shape the conception of the human. Additionally, we welcome discussions on the contemporary relevance of Shakespeare's portrayal of humanity, considering how these early modern perspectives can inform modern debates about identity, agency, and the environment.

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Seminar n. 2. Humanism in motion: Travel literature, salon culture, and cosmopolitan networks

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Abstract

This seminar proposes an exploration of the importance of humanism within travel writing from the Anglosphere, focusing on salon culture and the social role of travel writing. The chronological focus of the seminar broadly encompasses works from the 17th-19th centuries. Recent historiography has investigated the complex relationship of salon culture to the public sphere (Habermas, 1989), and, more importantly, the role of women in shaping such a culture (Landes, 1988; Pekacz, 1999), while other scholars, such as Dena Goodman (1994), have highlighted the value of salons as spaces where ideas could circulate across national and cultural boundaries. Travel writers often operated within complex networks of patronage and sociability, positioning their works as mediators of cultural dialogue and as reflections of humanist ideals.

By situating travel writing within these broader frameworks, this seminar seeks to investigate its dual role as a representation of individual human experience and as an instrument for collective understanding. In order to promote a wide engagement on the topic, and invite a truly transdisciplinary style, we welcome methodological approaches varying from literary criticism, cultural studies, discourse analysis, historiographical approaches, and digital humanities.

We invite topics focused on, but not limited to:

- the influence of humanist principles and how they are articulated by travel writers
- travel writers as mediators of culture(s)
- the role of salon culture in the production and dissemination of travel writing
- salons as networks of cross-cultural dialogue and as sites for exchanging ideas
- the importance of the role of women in travel writing.

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Seminar n. 3. “In behalf of the human race”: Reviving *The Liberal* and liberalism

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Abstract

The Liberal: Verse and Prose from the South was a short-lived but influential literary and political periodical published in London in 1822–23 and co-edited in Pisa and Genoa by prominent intellectuals including Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley led by Leigh Hunt. This publication emerged in the early 1820s as a platform for the trio’s shared vision of artistic freedom, political reform, and social justice. Reflecting the radical ideals of the time, *The Liberal* advocated for liberty, individual rights, and the critique of political and social institutions, particularly those representing authoritarianism and oppression. It featured original poetry, essays, translations, short stories, and commentary, and its contributors included not only Byron, Hunt, and Shelley but also other figures such as Mary Shelley and the radical journalist William Hazlitt. Though made up of only four issues, the periodical is a pivotal, yet often overlooked, historical document, useful for understanding early 19th-century intersections of political thought and literary innovation, as it provided a critical space for the circulation of ideas central to Romantic-period debates and the early phases of liberalism in Britain.

This seminar aims to bring together a range of scholarly perspectives on *The Liberal* in order to reconsider how it reflects both the ambitions and limitations of Romantic political radicalism, as well as its broader literary and cultural implications for European liberal culture. The seminar intends to illuminate the complex relationship between literature and politics in the early 19th century, focusing on the ways in which, through *The Liberal*, Byron, Shelley, and Hunt engaged with contemporary debates over liberty, authority, and the role of the artist in effecting social change.

Objectives:

- to examine *The Liberal* as a collaborative work that reflects the distinct political and poetic visions of its contributors
- to reposition *The Liberal* in 1820s culture in Britain and Italy
- to investigate its relationship to the political and social context of post-Napoleonic Europe, particularly in regard to radicalism and liberal culture
- to consider its legacy in the broader context of Romanticism, of Anglo-Italian relations, and its continued relevance to contemporary discussions of literature and politics.

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Seminar n. 4. British Romantic Literature as Cultural Heritage: Texts, Objects and Places

Convenors

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Abstract

The seminar intends to explore the many ways in which British literature of the Romantic period becomes a site of cultural heritage when writers, texts, and places become objects of material enquiry. Key to this are two concepts: on the one hand, the idea of literature as ‘heritage’ finds its rationale in the recently redefined guidelines of the UNESCO Convention (2017), which introduces the notion of ‘cultural landscape’ as one that is able to trigger specific associations in the human mind, connecting a number of artifacts, literary texts included, with places. On the other hand, the idea of the humanities, and therefore literature, as cultural heritage puts institutions, places and practices at a centre stage for materialist and neo-materialist investigations (Gillman, 2010). This perspective is especially crucial at present in an attempt to account for the complex interplay between tangible and intangible elements in a world dominated by digital practices.

A practice grounded in this perspective is certainly literary tourism (Palmer & Tivers, 2019), which traditionally designs destinations and shapes itineraries, conflating the tourist's gaze (Urry and Larsen, 2011) with the expectations of the readers. Romantic literature offers many an example of this, both in the UK and abroad. The period witnessed the rise of a new attention to natural and cultural sites that promoted conservatism, and the institutionalization of places such as Dove Cottage, Chawton House, Keats House at Hampstead, and the Keats-Shelley House in UK and *Golfo dei Poeti* in Italy further demonstrate this (Castellano, 2013; Bevan, 2023). In their role as sites of memory (Nora, 1989), these places give new meanings and realities to the literary text, often suggesting alternative stories as in the case of Chatsworth House, which lives in the popular imagination as ‘the real’ Pemberley owing to the success of the BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (1995). At the same time, the role of institutions is crucial in reshaping the transmission of Romantic literature as cultural heritage, bringing about new scenarios where the complex relationship between material textual holdings, and the cultural practices in which they are entangled, invites novel investigation (Sommer, 2025). The Convenors invite proposals for papers exploring the ways in which British literature of the Romantic period redefines the role of the humanities in contemporary context by becoming cultural heritage.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- literature as material heritage
- tourist itineraries and experiences connected with British Romantic literature in the UK and abroad
- textual materiality
- sites of memory and the role of institutions
- literary mementos and souvenirs.

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Seminar n. 5. U/Dys/Eco-topias: Hope and despair in anthropocenic literature

Convenors

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Abstract

Since Moore's *Utopia* (1516), ideal nowhere lands envisioning a "redeemed future" (Garrard, 2004: 37) have often morphed into dystopian stories that "frighten and warn, [engaging] with pressing global concerns" (Basu, Broad, & Hintz, 2013: 1). From Wells and Perkins to Dick and Atwood, from *The Matrix* and *Avatar* to *Wall-e*, imaginary futuristic scenarios increasingly address climate change, environmental disaster, and humanity's destiny.

In today's Anthropocene era, eco-anxiety dominates, with young adult dystopias like *Uglies*, *The Hunger Games*, and *Divergent* becoming blockbuster films, and post-apocalyptic tales like McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) earning literary prizes and worldwide acclaim. Recent studies, however, question dystopic narratives' effects. Rather than alerting readers to urgent environmental needs, the doom-and-gloom rhetoric (Arnold, 2018), by undermining people's *locus of control* (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002), often triggers flight, fight, or freeze responses (Wakeman in Young, 2022), generating inactivity, escapism, or aggression. Ecotopias and solarpunk fiction, instead, inspire positive emotions like hope and desire. These narratives portray "future worlds that [are] not depressing but instead so enticing that they might lead us to yearn for a new way of being" (Weik von Mossner, 2017: 163), encouraging activism and change.

This seminar invites contributions on classic or recent works read through the lens of Climate Change and the Anthropocene, Petrocultures and Energy Humanities, Posthumanism, and Ecocriticism. Moreover, we are interested in papers that apply affect studies to explore how these imaginary worlds influence readers' reactions and behaviour.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- U/Dys/Eco-topias and Ecoanxiety and Solastalgia
- U/Dys/Eco-topias, Affect Studies and Empirical Ecocriticism
- U/Dys/Eco-topias, Petrocultures and Energy Humanities
- Cyberpunk, Solarpunk, & co.
- Eco-Apocalypses and Cli-fi
- U/Dys/Eco-topias, Ecocriticism, Ecofeminism, and the Environmental Humanities
- U/Dys/Eco-topias, Posthumanism and New Materialism
- U/Dys/Eco-topias rhetoric, stylistics, and discourses
- U/Dys/Eco-topias and children's literature, picturebooks, games, and films.

References

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Seminar n. 6. Contemporary narratives of humanity in a dystopian world

Convenors

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the 20th century, dystopias have been far more popular than utopias: all contemporary forms of storytelling seem to compete to imagine a negative, if not catastrophic, future for humanity. Both utopias and dystopias have always constituted a critical mirror of contemporary society, but while the former project – in another place or time – a better version of reality, as in an inverted mirror (reality as it should be), the latter tend to act as a deforming mirror of a present that finds itself reflected in its worst version (reality as it should not be or become).

The seminar's objective is to explore the reasons behind the contemporary unabashed preference for the genre of dystopia. As Krishan Kumar noted in 1987, fictional dystopias frequently do not signify a sense of pessimism and resignation, but rather, they function as a form of caution, motivated by an aspiration to avert potential political, ideological, or technological scenarios that could result in adverse consequences. Consequently, dystopian narratives aim to provoke awareness and galvanize individuals to act ethically before the most unfavourable outcomes materialize. The prevailing threats to liberal democracy, the looming catastrophe of climate change and environmental collapse, along with the apprehensions engendered by the transhumanist vision of hyper-technologized bodies and lives, within a milieu increasingly dominated by algorithms and artificial intelligence (Harari, 2018), could collectively provide ample rationale for the pervasive presence of dystopian, if not apocalyptic, narratives.

However, should we totally surrender to the idea that the world will persist in being envisioned solely as it ought not to be, or to be recounted retro-topically, as Bauman (2017) laments, rather than explore the options for a better society? Might we consider alternatively Fredric Jameson's (2005) perspective, which emphasizes the importance of resuming utopia as a political instrument and an in-depth reflection on the future of humanity, intended to counteract dominant discourses that may seek to divert attention from any aspiration for change?

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Seminar n. 7. Monstrous bodies: Deviance, transformation, and belonging in contemporary British fiction

Convenors

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Abstract

This seminar will explore how contemporary British fiction (2000–2025) portrays monstrous or deviant bodies as sites of cultural anxieties and resistance. The works of authors such as Ian McEwan, Jeanette Winterson, Ali Smith, Julian Barnes, Zadie Smith, Guy Gunaratne, Mohsin Hamid, and Deborah Levy often challenge and redefine humanity's boundaries, examining intersections with disability, gender, queerness, race, and social marginalization. They also engage with disembodiment and transformation through emerging technologies, the metaverse, and cyborg identities.

Building on Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's seminal *Monster Theory* (1996), which frames monstrosity as a cultural construct reflecting societal fears and desires, the seminar will focus on how British fiction reimagines these ideas in response to sociopolitical and technological changes. These shifts disrupt traditional understandings of embodiment and reshape human interaction, creativity, and labour. The notion of monstrosity, often associated with the othering of bodies and identities, is reconfigured amidst evolving cultural anxieties. Theories by Donna Haraway, Lennard J. Davis, Rosi Braidotti, and Avtar Brah underpin the examination of monstrosity's intersections with migration, displacement, diasporic identities, and disability.

The seminar also addresses how contemporary British fiction interrogates the impact of Brexit and UK immigration policies on cultural narratives of belonging and exclusion, critiques evolving definitions of humanity, and examines how 'new monsters' emerge in an era of globalization, technological disruption, and ecological crisis.

Possible topics include:

- Brexit, migration, and diasporic displacement
- Monstrosity, agency, and resistance
- Representations of physical and cognitive disabilities as they intersect with monstrosity
- Gendered and queer embodiment as resistance or marginalization
- Posthuman transformations: cyborgs, digital bodies, and virtual identities
- Monstrosity and ecological crises as human failure narratives
- Empathy and compassion in depictions of deviant bodies
- Reworking classical monstrous archetypes

References

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Seminar n. 8. Questioning the *anthropos* in anglophone anthropocene narratives

Convenors

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Abstract

Since its emergence in 2000, the concept of the Anthropocene – which identifies our epoch as the one in which the human species has become a geological agent – has catalyzed a heated intellectual discussion. In the humanities, the Anthropocene has brought to the forefront crucial challenges such as global climate change, alterations in the water cycle, soil degradation, accelerated loss of biodiversity, and pollution from toxic and non-biodegradable substances. It also raises biopolitical issues, like overpopulation and new forms of authoritarianism. In this light, the contentious interpretations of human responsibilities towards the environment – tackling who is truly responsible for environmental collapse and thus questioning who is the *Anthropos* in ‘Anthropocene’, with its implications of undifferentiated responsibilities – have generated intense debate (Haraway, 2016; Chakrabarty, 2021). Several alternative definitions have been put forward to illuminate the contradictions of the human impact on the planet, such as, among many others, Capitalocene (Moore, 2015) and Plantationocene (Barua, 2024). These contradictions are particularly evident in discussions surrounding the postcolonial Anthropocene (van Amelsvoort, 2024), which seeks to highlight the multifaceted and uneven nature of human impact on the planet. Importantly, and in parallel to these discussions, the proliferation of cli-fi and other cultural expressions that address the new realities brought about by the Anthropocene highlights the growing significance of climate change in today’s cultural landscape: the Anthropocene, in short, can be argued to be the unconscious of the art and literature of our time (Bould, 2021).

Starting from this premise, in this seminar we invite scholars to expand this narrow understanding of the ‘human’ by engaging with the multiple forms of the human impact on the planet as represented in Anglophone literatures and other media (novels, poetry, drama, personal essays, memoirs, films, TV series, and other storytelling practices).

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- climate migration
- critiques of sustainability and mainstream environmental discourses
- postcolonialism and ecojustice
- hydrocolonialism
- nuclear cultures
- intersections of gender, class and ethnicity in relation to environmental or climate crises
- the posthuman condition and the future of the human species
- indigenous and/or marginalized ecological discourse; environmentalism of the poor

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Seminar n. 9. Ecology, affect, and young adult literature

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Abstract

According to Greg Garrard (2012: 5), “the widest definition of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human” in culture. In the last few years, a small number of studies have tried to map the complex and articulated field of children and YA ecocriticism (Dobrin & Kidd, 2004, Massey & Bradford, 2011), as well as the representation of environmental crises and climate change in these texts (Basu et al., 2013; Curry, 2013). Donna Haraway (2016), for instance, imagines young ecocitizens as “the symbiont children” who “developed a complex subjectivity composed of loneliness, intense sociality, intimacy with nonhuman others, specialness, lack of choice, fullness of meaning, and sureness of future purpose” (149).

The potential of literature to promote hope for humankind in the post-Anthropocene is the subject of intensive research that stresses the central role of young generations in addressing anthropogenic changes in Earth’s ecosystems (Oziewicz, 2022). With regard to YA literature, Alexa Weik von Mossner (2017) argues that reading a literary text is a form of mental simulation that engages readers’ bodies in a way similar to their interaction with the real world. This seminar explores how young people’s encounters with nature shape their embodied sense of being in the world, their spatial and temporal (dis)locations, and their affective experiences. We invite reflections on climate change and affective ecologies in young adult literature in times when cultivating the belief in the possibility of better realities is becoming increasingly difficult.

Key questions:

- How does YA literature represent nature, non-human actors, and environmental justice, and what roles do these elements play in shaping young protagonists' relationships with the environment?
- What kind of climate change emotions should YA literature convey?
- How does YA literature foster ecological citizenship, convey fears and hopes about the future, and inspire creative thinking and long-term environmental action?

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Seminar n. 10. New gender perspectives in the literary Anglosphere: A more inclusive view of the ‘human’

Convenors

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Abstract

Since the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792, feminist thought has developed over the centuries not only as a response to gender inequalities but also to assert a concept of ‘human’ and ‘human nature’ all the more inclusive and multifaceted. Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. Equity leads to equality. Where gender inequality exists, it is generally women who are excluded or disadvantaged in relation to decision-making and access to economic and social resources. More recently, gender studies have connected the term ‘gender’ to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. Gender thus differs from sex in that it is social and cultural in nature rather than biological. While emphasizing the masculine bias in scientific culture, Donna Haraway back in 1985 dismantled the ‘antagonistic dualisms’ or dichotomies that order western discourse, among which male/female, self/other, culture/nature, human/nonhuman, with the metaphor of the ‘cyborg’, which rejects rigid boundaries, even that between human and machine. Judith Butler (2006) has offered a further critique of any binary division by seeing gender as a reiterated social performance rather than the expression of a prior reality and Rosi Braidotti (2021) claims that feminism is one of the precursors of the present posthuman turn. Finally, gender is inflected according to race, ethnicity and religion in contemporary multicultural societies and postcolonial countries. Non-western cultures and ontologies include different paradigms in gender relations and issues. The seminar will include papers dealing with new inflections of feminisms, new gender representations, and new gender perspectives that redefine the concept of ‘human’, in English and postcolonial literary works.

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Seminar n. 11. Gender-ed representations and/in migration

Convenors

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Abstract

The seminar seeks to explore the narratives and literary representations of migration and diaspora, spanning across both the temporal and geographical boundaries of the Anglosphere. By examining these stories with particular attention to the gendering of migrant identities, the seminar intends to investigate how migration experiences are portrayed and re-imagined. It brings together interdisciplinary fields such as travel writing, gender studies, and diaspora and migration studies to critically analyze how human migration is represented in various literary genres.

Incorporating the concepts of 'humane' and 'human' interaction, the seminar will consider how literary works about migration reflect the complexities of migrant experiences and identity formation. These literary texts often capture the struggles, resilience, and transformation of individuals as they face the challenges of displacement. With reference to the field of gender studies, the seminar will interrogate how gender shapes and redefines migrant identities.

Prospective speakers are invited to submit proposals that address the diverse modes of migrant identity formation and reformation, considering how these identities are circulated across different genres and cultures. By intersecting gender with diasporic and migration studies, the seminar will explore the various issues that arise from the representation of migrant identities, questioning the power of these portrayals to shape public perception and policy, as well as the ethical responsibility of representing such profoundly human experiences.

The aforementioned issues are represented in writings by a large variety of authors. Examples include diasporic writers from the global South such as Samuel Selvon, George Lamming, Buchi Emecheta and Imbolo Mbue. Their works show how, in relocating in their host societies, migrants are not only challenged to overcome ethno-cultural boundaries but also have to cope with thorny gender questions that complicate their identities and sense of belonging.

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Seminar n. 12. Empathy in aesthetic experience: Themes, genres, forms

Convenors

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Abstract

Empathy is one of the most defining experiences of the human condition. It is no coincidence that both literary and non-fiction works on posthuman and human-machine interactions often highlight the question of whether these new ‘beings’ can experience emotional engagement, not only with other machines but also with humans themselves (Braidotti, 2013; Winterson, 2021). Moreover, the theme of empathy and its limits has long been central to works of fiction which deal with experimentation with human life and nature. From Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) to its more recent reinterpretations, such as Winterson’s *Frankissstein* (2019), the failure of empathy has been a key theme in examining the complex relationship with new forms of otherness.

Empathy is a feeling that is also involved in the aesthetic experience, especially if we consider it as a form of encounter and dialogue with the other. From Nussbaum (1990) to the more recent insights from neuroscience (Keen 2007), numerous contributions over the past few decades have enriched the debate on the role of literature and art in fostering empathy and enhancing the exercise of “putting ourselves in another’s shoes” (Chavel, 2012). Not only can artistic fruition be seen as an exercise in empathy, but the creative process itself can stem from this feeling. In literary genres such as biography and narrative medicine, empathy is crucial, but also plays a significant part in various forms of rewriting and intermedial reuse – such as transpositions and fanfictions – where empathy for minor characters can lead to a revision of canonical works from postcolonial or gender perspectives. At the same time, art serves as a privileged space for exploring various forms of empathy. It often presents negatively connoted figures and spaces that foster ambivalent, destabilizing relationships – simultaneously invoking both attraction and repulsion. This dynamic is what Ercolino & Fusillo (2022: 10) term “negative empathy”, which allows one to test “the limits of the ethical positioning of the user of the work of art”.

This seminar aims to engage with the latest discussions surrounding the role of empathy, with a particular focus on investigating the limits of this experience in both aesthetic fruition and production. It invites proposals that explore this topic across a range of domains, including – but not limited to – the following:

- the role of empathy in the reading experience
- the role of empathy in aesthetic fruition (theatre, cinema, tv series, graphic novels)
- the role of empathy in the writing experience (including both original texts and rewritings and adaptations from the perspective of minor characters)
- empathy as a theme
- empathy and literary genres (e.g. biography, narrative medicine, posthuman)
- negative empathy.

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Seminar n. 13. Innovative approaches to the teaching of literature between theory and practice

Convenors

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Abstract

As scholars and teachers of English literature, we want to emphasize the value of literary studies in the Humanities. Despite the challenges of substantial cuts in the field and the impact of A.I. as a substitute of critical thinking, we vindicate the importance of getting to grips with the flexibility and ambiguity of the literary texts. In C. S. Lewis's words, "Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides".

Our aim is to explore and expand the range of ways in which literature can be taught and discussed inside a university classroom. Prospective contributors are invited to share their own experiences in organizing classroom activities that engage students at diverse levels, fostering the development of skills that comprise critical and interdisciplinary thinking, narrative and fictional creativity, teamwork, public speaking, forms of performance. The idea is that of using the classroom as a space in which instructors and students creatively interact among themselves and with the literary texts, within a wider historical, cultural and linguistic context.

Also building on the experience that the recent pandemic has enforced, this seminar welcomes and aims to foster practical and theoretical reflections concerning the teaching of literature through active learning and related instructional strategies such as flipped classrooms, rewriting and adaptation strategies, remediation from the verbal to the visual and problem-based learning – all teaching possibilities that can be enhanced by the use of dedicated online platforms.

The seminar itself is meant as a springing board for new reflections as well as a site for sharing teaching experiences across different generations of instructors. We welcome submissions that showcase firsthand teaching experiences, offering insights into practical classroom strategies and challenges. Additionally, we encourage papers that delve into theoretical perspectives on literature instruction, examining pedagogical frameworks, methodologies, and innovative approaches to engaging students with literary texts.

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Seminar n. 14. Weaving voices: Collaborative creativity in literature and culture

Convenors

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Abstract

Literary theory and book history have increasingly questioned the notion of individualistic authorship, given the multitude of factors influencing the processes of writing, editing, and publishing. Stone & Thompson's (2006: 19) heterotextual model frames the author as a composite entity "incorporating different subjectivities and speaking in multiple voices"; similarly, Van Hulle (2022: 75) considers creativity as an "ecology" involving the manuscript's physical environment, the author's literary influences, dialogic exchanges with peers, and other non-human agents of change. However, a tendency persists to regard modifications deriving from non-authorial sources as forms of impurity, contamination, or unnatural hybridization; as Stillinger (1991: vi) observes, "where others besides the nominal author have a share in the creation of a text, we ... call it corruption and try to get rid of it". Arguably, standard editorial practices continue to adhere to what McGann (1984: 8) characterizes as "ideas ... which so emphasize the autonomy of the isolated author as to distort our theoretical grasp of [creativity]".

This seminar invites investigations into diverse forms and modes of joint creativity – ranging from overt co-signatures to silent revisions – across literary and non-literary contexts, from antiquity to the present day, in traditional and digital spaces, and encompassing interactions both among humans and between humans and computers.

Potential topics include:

- Gendered perspectives on collaboration and authorship
- Manuscript studies, archival work, and textual variance
- Editorial practices, textual authority, and the history of the book
- Translation as a collaborative process
- Digital humanities and its evolving practices
- AI-human collaboration and its implications for authorship
- Scholarly co-writing and knowledge-making.

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Seminar n. 15. “P raises his head”: Acts of resistance in Samuel Beckett

Convenors

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Abstract

Despite the fact that it is often characterized by nihilistic interpretations, Beckett’s oeuvre depicts several acts of resistance, from Word’s final sigh in *Words and Music* (1962) to the upward gaze of the Protagonist in *Catastrophe* (1982). The weight and inescapability of mortality marks Beckett’s work since its very beginning, as testified by his first poetry collection, *Echo’s Bones* (1935). Beckett’s meditation on finitude is nonetheless accompanied by an enquiry into the residual possibilities of language, even when his goal is to dissolve “that terrible materiality of the word surface” (Beckett, 1937), testing the limits of the linguistic medium. Beckett’s postwar considerations on painting are imbued with explicit ethical undertones, as clearly indicated in the “obligation to express” which concludes *The Three Dialogues* (Beckett, 1949). The intermedial experiments that follow often stage acts of domination and torture, frequently alluding to contemporary historical events, from the Algerian War to the Cold War. Strongly opposed to the idea of writing as a repository of a political message, he conveys his ethics by means of a rigorous reshaping of form. The aim of this seminar is to examine the presence and meaning of resistance in Beckett’s corpus.

Proposal may address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Beckett and Resistance
- Beckett and Testimony
- Beckett and Anti-Totalitarian Dissent
- Beckett, Nationalism and Internationalism
- Beckett and Censorship
- Beckett and Ethics
- Political Interpretations of Beckett
- Philosophical Interpretation of Beckett
- Modalities of Resistance: the Dissolution of Identity
- Modalities of Resistance: the Dissolution of Form
- Modalities of Resistance: the Dissolution of Language
- Beckett as a Director: Freedom and the Marketplace
- Beckett and his Publishers: Freedom and the Marketplace
- Alienation, Commodification and the Marketplace in his Prose, Plays, Essays, Poetry.
- Alienation, Commodification and the Marketplace in Beckett’s Correspondence
- Hybrid Bodies in Beckett
- Ecocritical Interpretations of his Work
- Beckett and Popular Culture
- Acts of Resistance in Beckett and his Contemporaries
- Political Reappropriations of Beckett
- Postcolonial Rewritings of Beckett

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Seminar n. 16. Italian approaches to stylistics

Convenors

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Abstract

Stylistics is the systematic study and analysis of texts, grounded in precise and comprehensive linguistic description, and characterized by a meticulous close reading and interpretation of the texts under examination. As a discipline within the humanities, stylistics is primarily concerned with the linguistic composition of texts and the central role of language in textual construction. Over time, the field has developed a robust theoretical framework along with a diverse array of linguistic and analytical methodologies that enable the critical, scientific, and systematic interrogation of not only language, texts, and textual meaning but also the interpretive contexts of readers. In this sense, stylistics extends beyond linguistic meaning-making processes and textual features to enlarge the focus to human subjectivity in order to examine the cultural and social ideologies, perspectives, and belief systems embedded within individual texts and their broader social and cultural frameworks.

Within this context, this seminar will explore how geopolitical, ideological, and ecological challenges and crises are represented in texts and discourses, as well as how these texts and discourses engage with, respond to, and critique such issues. Aligned with the objectives of the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA) and the Centro di Ricerca Interuniversitario di Argomentazione, Pragmatica e Stilistica (ARGO), the seminar contributions will analyze a range of literary and non-literary texts, through the application of theoretical frameworks and methodologies advanced by contemporary stylistics. In doing so, the seminar will offer a comprehensive mapping of current stylistic approaches embraced by Italian scholars and the analytical methodologies presently employed within the Italian stylistics research community, reinforcing the integral role of stylistics within the humanities.

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Seminar n. 17. The grammar of silence: Cross-disciplinary, transmedia echoes

Convenors

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Abstract

“Nor was the Silence and Emptiness of the Streets so much in the City as in the Out-parts, except just at one particular time, when, as I have mention’d, the Plague came East; and spread over all the City”
(Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*).

During the coronavirus pandemics, perceptions of silence and sound changed forever. They embodied a sonic dystopia in which the two etymological meanings of the lemma ‘silence’ – the Latin verbs *silēre* and *tacēre*, denoting now the absence of sound (*silēo*), now the absence of speech (*tācēo*) – interplayed. Silence may be reticent, dissembling, or imposed by others. Voluntary or enforced, it might be the silence of women, of marginalized social and religious groups, of communities that are denied the right to speak. With these considerations in mind and moving from the recent experience of Covid19, this seminar aims to reconceptualize the historical, textual and literary forms of silence, including the silence of individuals and cultures, of the physical voice or the written word and of information erased from the page.

We invite proposals addressing the many voices of silence, including erasure, reticence, pauses, ellipses, discretion, *omertà* in the Anglosphere from conterminous vantage points. The period considered is from 1700 to the present days. Proposals using multimodal, Film Sound and Media Studies approaches are also welcome.

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Seminar n. 18. Framing the feminine: Language, crime, and cultural narratives

Convenors

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Abstract

This seminar explores how language and cultural narratives frame representations of women in crime, examining how linguistic choices and storytelling conventions shape perceptions of gender, agency, and justice. By analyzing the intersection of language, crime, and culture, we aim to uncover the discursive and narrative strategies that construct women's roles as victims, perpetrators, and consumers of crime across media, legal texts, and fiction. Drawing on methodologies from corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, frame theory, and feminist literary criticism, the seminar will analyze how gendered stereotypes are perpetuated or challenged in crime narratives.

Crime narratives, whether factual or fictional, reflect and reinforce societal attitudes toward gender and justice. Women's roles in these narratives are often framed in ways that perpetuate patriarchal norms, with female criminals portrayed as emotional or deviant and female victims depicted as passive or vulnerable. These representations are not merely descriptive but performative, influencing how society perceives and responds to women involved in crime. The seminar will investigate how language and cultural narratives intersect to produce these gendered portrayals, as well as how audiences engage with and interpret them.

We invite papers that examine the representation of women in crime across a variety of contexts, including true crime media, courtroom discourse, crime fiction, and social media discussions. Potential topics include the lexical framing of female criminals, the narrative construction of women's agency or victimhood, and the cultural tropes that shape readers' perceptions of women in crime. By bridging the gap between linguistics, cultural studies, and literary analysis, this seminar aims to offer new insights into how language and cultural narratives perpetuate or challenge societal norms.

This seminar will provide a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue, bringing together researchers from linguistics, literary studies, media studies, and gender studies. By examining the intersection of language, crime, and cultural narratives, we hope to contribute to broader discussions about justice, representation, and equality. Join us in uncovering the linguistic and cultural mechanisms that frame the representation of women in crime narratives, and in exploring how these representations influence societal attitudes and behaviors.

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Seminar n. 19. Discourses on memory: Cultural, literary and linguistic perspectives

Convenors

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Abstract

“...there are stores in the archives of collective memory
of symbolic wounds that need to be healed”
(Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*)

This seminar seeks to explore memory through a diverse range of approaches, methodologies, and objects of study across different literary, cultural, and linguistic disciplines concerned with discourse in society. It aims to investigate how linguistic perspectives, both epistemologically and methodologically, can deepen our understanding of how collective and cultural memories are formed, represented, and transmitted across generations and communities. The ways in which we talk about the past can alter the very content of those memories, influencing collective identity and cultural narratives. Simultaneously, memories themselves are embedded in the cultural and historical contexts from which language emerges, shaping its usage and evolution.

Memory can also turn into a politically and culturally contentious issue as regards those who have been relegated to the margins of official history and narratives: from (post-)colonial subjects to women, from the so-called ‘freaks’ to all those individuals who did not conform to social standards. In this respect, oral histories, archives, novels, poems, journals, graphic novels, and audiovisual texts can become fundamental in rediscovering and recovering submerged stories.

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Seminar n. 20. Reframing human(e) voices: Exploring contemporary British identities through cultural studies and the multimodal toolkit

Convenors

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Abstract

Drawing on a theoretical paradigm integrating the interpretative tenets of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis and Cultural Studies, this seminar investigates the complex identity negotiations that permeate the (re)configurations of contemporary Britishness as portrayed in cultural products of the first decades of the new millennium which converse with multimodal textualities and cross-digital platforms (such as TV adaptations, theatre transpositions, song playlists, podcasts, blogs, etc). More specifically, the seminar aims to disclose the transformative role of storytelling in constructing, challenging, and re-signifying British cultural identities within a conflictual glocal sphere so as to foster possibilities for social justice and renewed human(e) relationships.

In this context, the investigation of the interplay of the inherent affordances of the cultural texts under scrutiny through the analytical lens of MCDA reveals how their sociopolitical constructs evolve, are shaped, challenged, and redefined across different media and over time, reflecting broader shifts in the understanding of Britishness in contemporary society. Inasmuch as the multimodal analytical perspective enables the examination of meaning-making practices within complex intertextual and cross-media networks, the critical framework adopted here helps interrogate how cultural products engage with and reframe key concepts such as language, (classed/racialized/gendered) identity, community and belonging. Thus, this seminar explores how the theoretical porosity between the culturalist and the multimodal paradigms provides new opportunities to scrutinize the complexity of today's British meaning-poietic arenas. Against this backdrop, the English language is viewed as a carrier of (oppositional) semiotic resources and a vehicle for decentred/excentric discursive practices, interwoven with performances of cultural identity.

Aiming to reflect on the perceptions and self-perceptions of an ever-evolving Britishness in the context of contemporary socio-political events and historical/cultural shifts, the convenors welcome abstract proposals centred around (but not necessarily limited to):

- revisited perspectives on and intersections of class, race/ethnicity, gender, etc., in contemporary British (multimodal) storytelling, particularly within urban and suburban settings
- the analysis of hybrid narratives and storytelling across transmedial circuits
- the (problematized) depiction of migration, cultural relocation, and multiculturalism in contemporary British cultural products
- the engagement of artistic expressions, such as Artivism, with political and social discourses surrounding British cultural identities.

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Seminar n. 21. “It’s the end of the world as we know it”: Politics of the apocalypse in literary and cultural studies

Convenors

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Abstract

This seminar will explore the apocalypse as a hermeneutic framework for literature and cultural studies, focusing on how queer theory, postcolonial studies, and ‘post-historical’ perspectives engage with apocalyptic narratives as sites of ideological conflict, historical rupture, and cultural transformation. Apocalyptic imagery shows a productive ambivalence in elaborating the crucial issue of *whose* world is under threat or disappearing. In postcolonial contexts, for example, apocalyptic tropes are often reflective of colonial and postcolonial anxieties, where the apocalypse represents both the demise of imperial authority and the uncertain emergence of new, often fragmented, identities and realities. In queer theory, on the other hand, the apocalypse harks the end of the compulsory gender binary, which may be hailed as empowering or cataclysmic according to different positionalities. Through the lens of post-history, apocalyptic discourses disrupt linear historical narratives, offering a critique of the capitalist, heteronormative, and colonial systems that perpetuate cycles of oppression. We propose that apocalyptic scenarios provide a powerful and even heuristic tool for understanding how histories of oppression and resistance are interpreted and reimagined, and that apocalyptic narratives not only envision ends but also offer avenues for reinterpreting the possibilities of new beginnings.

We invite proposals that discuss the apocalypse as hermeneutic framework in literary and cultural studies, looking at specific case studies or, more widely, at methodologies and their own crises.

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Seminar n. 22. Literary songs. Literary voices: English literature and popular music

Convenors

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Abstract

Our goal is to throw light on an enthralling and internationally expanding horizon in Cultural Studies, namely the relationship between English literature and popular music. From Early Modern music to Twenty-first century pop, literature and popular music often engage in fascinating dialogues; songs combine a musical composition and a verbal/narrative text, hence we could define pop songs as ‘miniature’ novels, thus paraphrasing Iain Chambers, or we may think of them as poems set to music, highlighting their lyrical aspects. Be as it may, songs related to literature bring the human voice centre stage through singing, thus breaking the silence of the printed literary page. In this perspective the interplay between literature and popular music can also break silence as indifference, expressing themes of humanity, empathy and interconnectedness, as witnessed by Linton Kwesi Johnson giving voice through his words and music to the oppressed Caribbean community in early 1980s London.

Contemporary British popular music is profoundly fascinated by this intermedial dimension and is very often defined by a contamination between the musical and the literary, whether as transmutation of literary works, or as fresh and often experimental forms of song-writing which use literature as an aesthetic prospect from which to construct meaning. The first category implies the translation/adaptation of literary works into songs: David Gilmour, among others, turns Shakespeare’s poems into songs, as did Syd Barrett with James Joyce, and Gavin Friday with Oscar Wilde. The latter category includes songwriters who conceive their music in terms of literary themes and imagery, nourishing their writing with poetic and narrative resources. This approach defines The Smiths’ Morrissey’s poetic songwriting, with his debts to Wilde and Shelagh Delaney, and David Bowie who, besides being fascinated by science fiction, released in 1974 the album *Diamond Dogs* largely based on George Orwell’s *Nineteen-Eighty-four*. Other committed artists working both as poets and singers – from L. K. Johnson to Kae Tempest – have established intriguing dialogues between the two languages inviting their fans to inhabit the threshold between the musical, the literary and the human, turning listening into a critical and ethical process. We invite submissions dealing with, among other possibilities: intermediality in contemporary popular music; writers (from Shakespeare to Rushdie and beyond) and popular music; music, literary orality and the human; pop, rock and intertextuality; literature, music and interconnectedness.

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Seminar n. 23. The human factor in audiovisual translation history

Convenors

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Abstract

Audiovisual Translation is a complex intersemiotic practice whose historical developments are closely intertwined with the introduction and diffusion of novel screen technologies (Cornu, 2014; Cornu & O'Sullivan, 2019). The 20th century has witnessed the professionalization and specialization of a diversely skilled workforce, including linguists, script translators, dialogue adapters, voice actors and directors, subtitlers and editors, who have been engaged in various degrees in the linguistic adaptation of filmic, video, and digital content.

Catering to diverse tastes and sensibilities around the world, AVT work has been impacted by policies that control the production and circulation of screen media across national and linguistic borders, norms and regulations that have in turn shaped the socio-cultural and legal status of AVT professions throughout the 20th century. The more recent introduction of generative AI is now challenging the professional standards of a translation industry that has relied on technological innovation since its inception and thus poses new challenges for both highly specialized practitioners and those who are training and wish to enter the AVT field.

Taking a historical perspective, the proposed seminar aims to investigate the human element in audiovisual translation. It will host a selection of case studies which highlight continuities and disruptions in the *modus operandi* of audiovisual translators at key points in the history of screen media. Based on the analysis of archival materials and extant translations, this seminar ultimately aims to unravel the tension that exists between the human factor and technology-driven practices, assessing how this tension has in turn impacted AVT policy, quality standards and linguistic output.

Specific lines of investigation might include:

- Historical and archival approaches to AVT
- Diachronic perspectives: (shared) translation practices and their evolution
- Agents in AVT history
- Historical approaches to AVT reception: the role of audiences
- Developments in AVT policy and impact on linguistic output
- Changes in artistic, aesthetic and quality standards in AVT
- Becoming an audiovisual translator (linguistic and technical training, market forces etc.); Processes of professional specialization in a historical perspective
- The interplay between technological innovation and professionalization of the AVT workforce

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Seminar n. 24. AI and human audiovisual translation and media accessibility: Ethical and practical challenges for translators and language learners

Convenors

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Abstract

In recent years, the rise and application of sophisticated technologies and tools powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) have become increasingly pervasive in training audiovisual translation professionals and facilitating second language acquisition, particularly in English as a lingua franca. Among these are speech-to-text applications for subtitling (e.g., Speechmatics, Turboscribe, Broadstream), machine translation tools (e.g., Google Translate, DeepL), machine learning applications (e.g., ELSA Speak, Loora, Talkpal, TalkMe), and language-learning platforms (e.g., Duolingo, Babbel, Rosetta Stone, Pi). More recently, ChatGPT has also become an integral part of interlingual communicative processes.

Within Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility training and practice, several studies have highlighted the advantages that AI can offer (cf. for instance, Georgakopoulou, 2019). However, this more-than-human agency has raised not only methodological but also ethical concerns among practitioners and scholars (cf. the AVTE Statement 2024; Oziemblewska & Szarkowska, 2020). In the realm of language learning, conversational AI tools that simulate real-life conversations with learners can enhance the learning process (Sone et al., 2023), regardless of their economic situation (Dugošija, 2024). These tools offer ubiquitous access, foster learner autonomy, and often employ gamification principles (Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021), thus making it more enjoyable and rewarding. However, their limitations include the (in)ability of chatbots to interpret and respond to user inputs in a manner resembling human interaction (Rapp et al., 2021), as well as difficulties in recognizing and accommodating language variations (e.g., accents, British vs. American English, etc.).

In this light, this seminar seeks to address the following key issues:

- What are the benefits and limitations of using AI tools and technologies in training and learning contexts?
- How effective are these tools and methodologies in improving learners' skills?
- What appreciable differences can be detected in the comparison of human vs. more-than-human agency?
- Can any theoretical and methodological lessons be learned? If so, can such lessons be systematically conceptualized to enhance AVT teaching and/or language learning?

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Seminar n. 25. Artificial intelligence and media accessibility: New frontiers and emerging challenges

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Abstract

The rapid rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies is profoundly reshaping the field of media accessibility, defined as the practices, tools, and technologies aimed at making media content accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities or other special needs (Remael, 2012). In this evolving landscape, AI-powered technologies are increasingly being integrated into specific domains of media accessibility (Pereira & Duarte, 2023), ranging from traditional forms such as cinema and video games to streaming and digital platforms. More recent innovations, including virtual and augmented reality (Gluck et al., 2021), as well as interactive tools like chatbots and virtual assistants, are further transforming how media is accessed and experienced. These advancements prompt critical discussions about the future of creativity, the restructuring of traditional workflows, and the role of AI in learning processes, particularly in relation to accessibility (Huang et al., 2022). Additionally, they raise questions about the potential for these technologies to revolutionize user engagement and the ethical considerations surrounding AI-driven systems (Rane & Choudhary, 2024). While AI can contribute to democratizing access to media content and enhancing personalized experiences, it also carries the risk of inadvertently reinforcing existing biases due to the data used to train AI algorithms.

This seminar aims to explore the transformative potential of AI and other emerging technologies in reshaping media accessibility across media environments. It seeks contributions that explore innovative tools, theoretical approaches, and ethical considerations to ensure these advancements foster equitable and accessible outcomes. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- AI-driven innovations: theoretical and practical studies on AI-powered tools for enhancing accessibility
- automation and creativity: investigating how AI is transforming creative and technical work in the media landscape
- linguistic and cultural accessibility: the role of AI in breaking down language and cultural barriers in media content
- ethical challenges: ethical implications of AI use for media accessibility
- personalized media: studies on AI's role in tailoring content delivery to meet individual needs.

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Seminar n. 26. Language, ecology, and artificial intelligence: A critical eco-linguistic perspective

Convenors

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Abstract

As artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes our world (Brown et al., 2020, Bender & Koller, 2020, Bowman & Dahl, 2021), its role in framing and influencing environmental perceptions demands exploration. This seminar examines the intersection of Ecolinguistics and AI, emphasizing how AI discourse shapes ecological understanding. As language influences attitudes toward environmental crises, Ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2021) provides tools to assess how AI narratives reinforce or challenge ecological values (Vallego, 2023). Research may examine how AI reproduces or contests dominant discourses, promotes sustainability or unsustainability, and the ethical implications of AI-generated ‘natural’ experiences.

A central premise is that language does not merely reflect reality but constructs it. Halliday observed how Western languages, particularly English, encode an anthropocentric worldview, positioning nature as passive rather than autonomous. Grammar limits nature’s agency yet frames destruction actively, as in “the earthquake destroyed the city” (Halliday, 1992: 85). If AI is trained on data reflecting these patterns, it risks reinforcing an instrumentalist view of nature, perpetuating its subordination to human interests. Lexical choices in AI-generated texts shape public perception, either reinforcing or mitigating environmental urgency.

This seminar explores AI’s potential to disseminate environmental awareness, reduce ecological footprints via virtual simulations, and enhance digital communication. Conversely, AI could enable greenwashing, subtly manipulating consumers who equate technology with environmental salvation. It may also present simulations as substitutes for direct contact with nature. As ecolinguists, we must ask whether AI can advance the ecological agenda by fostering ethical discourse. Could it amplify voices advocating sustainability or deepen nature’s commodification? We invite contributions addressing these questions and further establishing Ecolinguistics as central to environmental and linguistic studies. We welcome contributions on:

- Virtual vs. real nature experiences
- AI and ecological imaginaries
- AI in environmental politics
- AI and environmental justice
- AI and greenwashing
- AI and sustainability discourse
- Ecological representations in digital media
- AI and green identities
- AI in environmental risk prevention
- AI and biodiversity
- AI for ecological advocacy
- AI and ecological narratives
- AI in human–more-than-human relations

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Seminar n. 27. Beyond human exceptionalism: Social and ecojustice perspectives in climate crisis discourse

Convenors

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Abstract

The climate crisis is not solely an environmental issue but also a profound social, cultural, and political challenge, exacerbating vulnerabilities related to gender, disability, poverty, age, place of birth, and indigeneity (IPCC 2023). Moreover, dominant discourse frequently marginalizes, silences, or renders invisible more-than-human participants, processes, and entities (Stibbe, 2021; Bortoluzzi & Zurru, 2024). Given that language and discourse play a constitutive role in shaping ecological realities (Steffensen, 2024), language and discourse analysis can contribute to raising awareness of ecojustice issues, fostering equitable relationships within life-sustaining ecosystems, and challenging the hegemonic ideologies of growth and consumerism (Lakoff, 2010; Fløttum, 2017; Russo, 2018; Caimotto, 2020).

Following this line of thought, this seminar invites scholarly contributions that propose innovative theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, or in-depth investigations examining environmental and climate crisis discourse from an eco- and social justice perspective. In particular, we seek analyses that explore the representation, positioning, and agency of marginalized voices – both human and more-than-human – that are frequently backgrounded or excluded from mainstream environmental narratives. Ultimately, this seminar aspires to advance the scholarly debate on how language and discourse can foster alternative perspectives, stimulate transformative action, and promote social and ecological justice in response to the ongoing climate emergency.

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Seminar n. 28. Revisiting affect: The emotional turn in discourse analysis in the age of technologies. Linguistic, intercultural and translation perspectives

Convenors

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Abstract

Emotions play a fundamental role in the state of being human and being humane; so they inevitably filter – whether implicitly or explicitly – into language and account for a huge part of human interaction through discourse. Emotions influence how individuals and groups relate to one another, driving mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Given their centrality to human interaction, emotions – often referred to in their complex as ‘affect’ – have increasingly attracted scholarly attention across various disciplines, including sociology, visual analysis, linguistic anthropology, and ethnography (cf. Mackenzie & Alba-Juez, 2019; Milani & Richardson, 2021; Scherer et al., 2001). This growing interest has contributed to what social and cultural theorists describe as the ‘affective turn’ (Clough, 2007).

In the more linguistically-oriented area of discourse studies, however, emotions seem to have received comparatively less attention. Even within the Appraisal model (Martin & White, 2005), which has been instrumental in highlighting the role of emotions in linguistic communication, ‘affect’ – the linguistic resources used to convey emotional reactions – has been somewhat overshadowed by other analytical categories which are now well-established and more extensively relied on (e.g. attitude, engagement, appreciation, graduation, etc.). Yet, the study of emotions in discourse is more essential than ever, particularly in technology-mediated communication, where profiling and algorithm-driven content curation ensure that contents proposed are in line with the reader’s preferences, creating a sort of emotion-driven loop. Moreover, the increasingly multimodal nature of communication, where concise textual content is often paired with images, relies on emotions as cognitive shortcuts, conveying meaning in ways that would otherwise require more elaborate and more explicit reasoning. The study of linguistic resources involved in the encoding of affect, as the direct expression of emotional responses, is key to promoting an awareness that can help foster a more humane approach to communication. In today’s digital and multimodal landscape, it provides linguistic resources that enable writers and speakers to express empathy and respect diverse perspectives.

Building on these insights, this seminar explores the emotive dimension of meaning, i.e. affect, in Discourse Analysis and related disciplines, and in Rhetoric/Argumentation studies (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1956; van Eemeren, 2010), in a context where research has often tended to focus more on the negotiation of values than on the encoding of emotions for expressive and/or perlocutionary purposes. This involves testing theoretical constructs and analytical tools for identifying and interpreting emotional elements in discourse, while also examining case studies across various domains and genres where such elements can be identified. These include social media, corporate communication, scientific research articles, conference presentations, journalism, and political debates, etc., particularly when dealing with critical issues such as climate change, trade policies, war and conflict, vaccination, and other socially and politically charged topics.

Contributions will be welcome especially, although not exclusively, on the following topics:

- Affect in public discourse (political, institutional, media, etc.)
- Emotional resources in public debates on sensitive issues (migration, climate change, race and ethnicity, etc.)
- Affect in specialized discourse (scientific, technological and popularizing)
- Affect in legal discourse (judgements, pleadings, etc.)
- Encoding of emotions in movie dialogue and in its translation (dubbing, subtitling)
- Affect in an intercultural perspective and its translation
- Affect model refinements (or reappraisal)
- Emotions, argumentation and persuasion
- Affective engagement of the audience
- Triggers of emotion in discourse

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Seminar n. 29. Women represented: Investigating gender dynamics in political discourse

Convenors

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Abstract

Ensuring women's visibility, influence, and voice in the public sphere is a hallmark of democracy. Women's representation in politics grew steadily throughout the twentieth century, as they gradually overcame structural barriers and accessed more domains of public life. However, in 2025, the outlook for women's political participation appears grim. Conservative, authoritarian, paternalistic leaders, under the pretence of "protecting women", are increasingly re-framing women's rights (e.g., bodily autonomy, education, equal pay, political participation) not as universal human rights but as "special" rights tied to pro-life, pro-family and pro-marriage values. Recent backlash and pushback against gender equality, amplified by social media platforms, the growing reach of the so-called manosphere, and political developments such as Trump 2.0, further underscore the urgency to examine how gender is constructed, contested, and instrumentalized in the public sphere.

Drawing on theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches that have examined how language reflects and shapes gender dynamics (Angouri & Baxter, 2021, Esposito, 2023, Lazar, 2005, Romaniuk & Ehrlich, 2018, among others), this seminar seeks contributions that explore political discourse focused on women as politicians, advocates, and subjects of mediated narratives. It considers discourses surrounding women's political representation and issues such as reproductive rights, gender-based violence, and objectification, through a range of frameworks and approaches, including (M)CDS, feminist CDA, narrative analysis, pragmatics, and corpus linguistics, to investigate intersections among language, gender, power, agency, and ideology.

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Seminar n. 30. A house is not a home? Discursive representations of contemporary households

Convenors

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Abstract

Diverse family formations and practices are at the forefront of contemporary societal debates (Balirano et al., 2024) as issues of representation, inclusivity and equity continue to shape the cultural, political and digital landscapes. In this seminar, we explore the discursive representation of different family forms, i.e. households which come together in ways that steer away from the traditional cisgender, heteronormative, binary, monoethnic matrix. From queer (Mackenzie, 2023) and multiethnic (Riboni, 2024) families to the evolving portrayal of diversified households, discourse plays a pivotal role in both perpetuating and challenging traditional norms (Fruttaldo, 2024; Zottola, 2024).

We invite scholars to submit research proposals that explore the heterogeneity of households in contemporary linguistic representations. In particular, we welcome contributions that investigate how discursive practices construct, contest, or redefine kinship identities in and across media, policy and specialized domains. Topics of interest include but are not limited to:

- Intersectionality in discourses of families and households: gender, sex, race, class, disability, age
- The role of language in perpetuating or dismantling discrimination and bias
- Discursive constructions of family and parenting in different cultural contexts
- Queer linguistics and the evolution of language surrounding different household formations
- The impact of digital and multimodal platforms on family and household representations
- Policy, education and institutional discourses shaping contemporary households
- Legal and medical discursive practices that frame contemporary families and households.

We encourage interdisciplinary approaches, drawing on critical discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, queer theory, corpus linguistics, pragmatics, and multimodal discourse analysis. Papers addressing current events, emerging societal issues, or intersectional (in)visibility are particularly welcome.

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Seminar n. 31. De-/Re-humanizing the language of global fears: Crises, extremisms, terrorisms

Convenors

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Abstract

The new millennium has brought forth an escalating series of global challenges including mass migration, climate change, pandemics, AI development, acts of terrorism and wars or conflicts (e.g., Russia-Ukraine) – which have contributed to a heightened sense of global fear. These crises are not only material, but also profoundly discursive, as they are framed and reframed in public discourse. At the heart of these representations lies the strategic construction of humanity and its boundaries, which shapes how crises, extremisms, and terrorisms are mediated, understood, and responded to (Cap, 2017; Demata, 2018; Wodak, 2020 [2015]).

The seminar critically examines how language both dehumanizes and rehumanizes in times of crisis. While dehumanizing strategies strip individuals or groups of their agency and moral worth – reinforcing fear and legitimizing exclusion – rehumanizing discourses work to restore dignity, agency, and empathy, often serving as counter-narratives to dominant fear-based frames (Entman, 1993). We invite contributions that explore these discursive processes across political speeches, media discourse, and other public texts, analyzing both the linguistic mechanisms that construct fear-driven Othering and those that attempt to reclaim shared humanity.

While embracing diverse linguistic approaches outlined in the AIA call for seminars, the proposal prioritizes critical perspectives that analyze how language shapes meaning, constructs identities, and influences worldviews (possibly also considering the interaction with semiotic resources, e.g. Machin, 2013; van Leeuwen, 2014). By examining the processes of de-humanization and rehumanization in political and media discourse, the seminar seeks to uncover pathways for fostering more ethical, inclusive, and empathetic narratives in an increasingly polarized world.

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Seminar n. 32. Intersectional hate speech in the digital age: Media, power, and resistance

Convenors

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Abstract

The proliferation of Social Media Sites (SMSs) in recent years has intensified hate speech targeting specific identity markers, including gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, physical aspect and political or religious beliefs (Balirano & Hughes 2020; Rasulo 2023). This phenomenon manifests both online and offline, often escalating into hate crimes (European Parliament, 2024).

Rooted in harmful mental models, hate speech serves to dehumanize, stigmatize, and marginalize individuals, thereby reinforcing social divisions and undermining fundamental human rights. Recognizing this threat, global institutions such as the Council of Europe (2022) have implemented monitoring mechanisms and legal frameworks to address its spread.

While hate speech has been widely studied, research on intersectional discrimination, the compounded effects of “interlocking systems of oppression” (ENAR, 2020), remains relatively underexplored (Council of Europe, 2023). This seminar seeks to advance scholarly discussions by investigating the intersectional dimensions of hate speech in media environments, with a particular focus on digital discourse and SMSs (KhosraviNik, 2024). Adopting a critical lens (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2020), we invite contributions that examine how intersectional hate speech shapes power asymmetries, influences identity construction, and triggers resistance strategies.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- Limitations of current hate speech theories
- Identifying and classifying hate speech
- Intersectional hate speech in digital communication and SMSs
- Intersectional representation in the media (e.g., news, cinema, television, advertising)
- Media policies and regulatory responses to intersectional discrimination
- Resistance and counter-discourse strategies in SMSs
- Forms of intersectional discrimination in institutional and political discourse
- Intersectional hate speech in specialized discourse
- The role of humour (e.g., irony, parody, satire) as a tool for intersectional hate speech
- Building in-group and out-group identity through hate speech
- Multimodal representations of hate speech
- Intersectional hate speech in AI
- Rhetorical tropes (e.g., metaphors, metonymy) and discursive strategies in intersectional discrimination

We welcome papers employing diverse methodologies, including (critical) discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, multimodal (critical) discourse analysis, ethnolinguistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, comparative studies, translation studies, media studies, and communication studies.

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Seminar n. 33. Addressing hate speech and promoting digital citizenship in English studies

Convenors

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Abstract

In alignment with the objectives of the ECHOES (English Studies to Contrast Hate Online and Enhance Solidarity) PRIN project (project ref. number 2022KZFT24) led by the University of Naples L'Orientale in cooperation with the University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, the University of Messina and the University of Naples Parthenope, this seminar seeks to advance research on responsible digital citizenship in and through discourse (Balirano & Hughes, 2020) as advocated by UNESCO's principles (2016). We aim to explore creative and critical engagement with today's multimodal digital products and environments in Virtual English as a Lingua Franca (i.e., VELF, Sindoni, 2023), that is conceptualized as the English language of international communication used within digital scenarios and beyond.

The seminar invites proposals that investigate research methodologies and pedagogical practices, including, but not limited to, studies on multimodal digital literacies (Lim & Tan-Chia, 2022), within educational settings and broader social contexts. These proposals should help develop knowledge dissemination and awareness regarding the identification of hate or harmful online speech and practices, particularly within English multimodal digital texts that threaten individuals, communities, and societal cohesion. To incorporate diverse perspectives and address a range of research questions, we invite submissions employing quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches to the analysis of multimodal digital texts and practices in VELF. Our aim is to advance research on the mechanisms through which hate is triggered within and through digital discourse and to explore strategies for its mitigation in the context of peace education.

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Seminar n. 34. Edible narratives: Multidisciplinary representations of novel and traditional foods

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Abstract

An interesting notion in the context of food studies has been developed by Montanari (2006): any food can be associated with the values of 'natural' and 'edible' as long as these notions are associated by the specific community that consumes that food. For instance, in the context of digital communication, food blogs in English are a case in point: in these virtual communities, the construction of food-centred discourse and the cultural values that the members of the community come to associate with the food that is presented in the food blog are determined and mediated by the food blogger who acts as the leader of the community itself (Cesiri, 2020).

Therefore, the difference in terms of traditional and novel foods is essentially cultural and has very few to do with their nutritional content. However, it has received early attention by the European Union that has proceeded with the definition and regulation of novel foods for human consumption in the Regulation No. 258/97, which dates back to 1997. Since then, novel foods have been used in the media in association to different kinds of food, from GMFs, to cultivated meat, to insects as food (Patinho et al., 2021), whose communicative potential in the general public's psyche is regularly exploited by political propaganda (Domaneschi, 2024).

Drawing on (critical) discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2014), multimodal analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; van Leeuwen, 2008) and conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the seminar explores how traditional and novel foods challenge the notions of 'human' and 'humane'. Furthermore, it examines the linguistic and narrative representations of traditional and novel foods in English and how these food practices are discursively constructed across institutional, medical, marketing, corporate, and tourism domains.

By analyzing these contexts, the seminar highlights how traditional and novel food narratives stimulate human responses to ecological crises, cultural change, and ethical dilemmas. Finally, it will critically examine these discourses to explore how food is used as a means to reflect and reshape contemporary cultural and environmental paradigms.

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Seminar n. 35. Crafting comfort: The rhetorical and linguistic representation(s) of well-being in late modern newspapers and magazines

Convenors

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Abstract

The Late Modern period witnessed an unprecedented surge in print media production in Britain and its colonies, catering to a growing readership eager for information, entertainment, and self-improvement (Brownlees, 2023; Finkelstein, 2020; King, Easley & Morton, 2016; Shattock, 2017). Newspapers and magazines of this era not only reflected societal values, but also actively shaped them, offering rhetorical and linguistic blueprints for navigating the complexities of modern life and human experience. Among those blueprints, themes of well-being, happiness, comfort, and leisure emerged prominently, encompassing as diverse domains as fashion, food and drink, travel, music, dance, sports, and games (Oishi et al., 2013; Glatzer, 2019; Mazzi, 2023). Those representations served as cultural touchstones, reflecting and constructing notions of individual and collective well-being.

This seminar seeks to explore how well-being and comfort were rhetorically and linguistically crafted in Late Modern newspapers and magazines published in Britain and its colonies. We invite contributions that examine those themes through a variety of methodological lenses, including corpus linguistics, historical sociopragmatics, and historical discourse analysis. By investigating the textual and contextual strategies employed in those representations, we aim to uncover the ways in which comfort and well-being were constructed, contested, and commodified during that pivotal historical moment. Papers might address questions such as:

- How were activities like food and drink consumption, travel, or sports linguistically framed as pathways to well-being?
- What rhetorical strategies were used to persuade readers of the benefits of leisure and self-care?
- How did representations of well-being intersect with issues of gender, class, or national identity?
- In what ways did Late Modern media contribute to the commodification of comfort and well-being?

By bringing together diverse perspectives, this seminar aims to foster a nuanced understanding of the cultural and linguistic underpinnings of well-being in the Late Modern period, shedding light on their lasting impact on contemporary discourses of health, comfort and leisure.

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Seminar n. 36. Language, health and wellbeing: Individual and collective perspectives from past to present

Convenors

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Abstract

From Early and Late Modern medical texts to contemporary public health campaigns, the language of wellbeing has evolved alongside scientific advancements and social transformations producing a variety of texts and discourses which deserve close examination for the role they have in popularizing and disseminating information, and directing individual and collective choices.

The seminar will examine the multi-faceted relationship between language and health, with a focus on wellbeing across both historical and contemporary contexts. Drawing on a range of texts and discourses, the contributions will address how the English language has evolved in its representations of health and illness, offering insights into the socio-cultural contexts that have informed these discourses. Employing methodologies such as corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, and (historical) pragmatics, this seminar will investigate how English has been employed to conceptualize, communicate, and negotiate health and wellbeing. By integrating diachronic and synchronic perspectives and highlighting both personal and collective experiences, contributors will analyze linguistic shifts in medical discourse and the ways in which language shapes, and is shaped, by changing understandings of health.

Potential topics may include:

- Life course health, old age, midwifery, mental and public health.
- Linguistic representations of health and illness in historical and contemporary medical discourse.
- The role of metaphor and framing in shaping perceptions of wellbeing.
- Medical writing and the evolution of health-related terminology.
- Public health campaigns and their linguistic strategies.
- The impact of digital communication on health discourse (e.g., social media, telemedicine, etc.).
- Narrative structures in patient experiences and medical case reports.
- Gender, identity, and power dynamics in medical discourse.

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Seminar n. 37. Tourism discourse at the human-digital interface: Technology, regeneration, storytelling

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Abstract

Contemporary tourism spans a hybrid continuum, from market-driven digital representations of destinations to embodied travel experiences, increasingly mediated by technology. Tourists navigate virtual and real routes through an array of digital tools which include tourist board websites, travel portals and blogs, social media platforms, smart wearable devices, geo-tracking apps, QR codes and augmented reality. These technologies not only guide experiences but also shape expectations, generating vast amounts of data that feed into industry algorithms to personalize and optimize digital tourism offerings and flows.

While such tools enhance customization, they also raise ethical concerns, particularly as overtourism continues to contribute to global inequalities and environmental degradation. Unless aligned with sustainability and social justice principles, the integration of technology into tourism risks perpetuating the same extractive logics.

In response, alternative discourses and practices are emerging in which digital technologies actively contribute to making travel more sustainable in its deepest human-centric articulation of cultural, social, environmental and economic issues. Whereas ecotourism has traditionally emphasized the preservation of natural environments and low-impact travel, these newer trends go further by incorporating social dimensions and digital innovation to reimagine the relationship between visitors and destinations. On the one hand, regenerative tourism reframes destinations as living ecosystems, encouraging eco-sensitive value co-creation and respect for local communities by promoting active involvement in the restoration of natural resources and ensuring fair income distribution. On the other, storytelling in various forms – participatory, community-based, ethical – educates locals and visitors about pluralism by uncovering often neglected perspectives on heritage and tradition beyond the mainstream. Amid differences and similarities, the common anthropological foundation of these approaches arguably lies in the use of digital technologies not just to enhance the tourist-as-consumer experience but to cultivate awareness and stimulate critical participation in the ethical values of justice, peace, and social engagement.

This seminar, framed within the theoretical and empirical scope of Critical Discourse Studies, welcomes contributions that examine recent trends and experiments aimed at integrating digital innovation with human-centric values. Particular emphasis is placed on linguistic, discursive and multimodal strategies that foster ethical engagement, responsible travel and sustainable perspectives.

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Seminar n. 38. Tourism and digital communication in online spaces

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Abstract

The digital turn has significantly reshaped the tourism industry, with social media, websites, and AI-driven platforms playing central roles in framing how destinations are represented, marketed and experienced. These digital spaces not only facilitate the dissemination of information but also actively influence tourist expectations, decision-making, and experiences, often blurring the lines between reality and digitally constructed narratives (Can et al., 2025).

Web 2.0 has democratized access to information by fostering participation, interactivity, and user-generated content (Herring, 2013). Websites, social media, blogs, and review apps serve multifaceted functions in tourism communication, acting as tools for information retrieval, consumer engagement, and destination promotion (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). These platforms amplify individual voices and potentially challenge traditional destination imageries, allowing tourists to construct, negotiate and challenge the image of a destination (Van Nuenen & Scarles, 2021). At the same time, these platforms shape linguistic and multimodal representations of destinations, influencing perceptions of authenticity, cultural identity and heritage (Federici 2018); and offer new possibilities for accessibility, leveraging multimodal features such as videos, subtitles, and interactive content to reach diverse audiences (Domínguez Vila et al., 2024; Katan & Fina, 2024).

Drawing on this theoretical background, the panel explores how language, multimodal strategies, and translation practices shape digital tourism communication. Specifically, we aim to foster discussion among scholars on key issues related to digital storytelling of tourist destinations (Katan, 2022), tourism discourse in digital media (e.g., social media, websites, blogs, etc.), human interaction with digital platforms, digital humanities approaches to tourism communication, and the role of AI and emerging technologies in tourism communication. As to new insights we will investigate how AI can be used by linguists to analyse tourism discourse, and in particular we will focus on new and evolving technologies to analyse the semiotic interplay between text and image both intra and interlingually.

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Seminar n. 39. Glossing and translanguaging as conceptualizations about trans-semiotizing practices, identity construction and humane culture

Convenors

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Abstract

Glossing and translanguaging have long been pivotal in the study of language contact, offering insights into how multilingual speakers negotiate meaning and construct their linguistic identities. From Middle English to the present, glossing has served as an interpretive tool in contexts of linguistic hybridity, mediating between Latin, French, and English in medieval texts such as *Ancrene Wisse* and *Piers Plowman* (Machan, 1994; Burrow & Turville-Petre, 1996).

Glossing has historically enabled EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners to position themselves as active interpreters of meaning, engaging with language as a dynamic and socially embedded phenomenon (Kim, Lee & Lee, 2024). Whereas, translanguaging supports “[...] language users entextualize meaning in situated and embodied interactions, drawing on neural, bodily, and situational resources” (Wei, 2023). In particular, translanguaging challenges the monoglossic view opposing the deterministic one: it entails spontaneous human languaging as a multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource for sense- and meaning-making. Translanguaging pedagogies may empower learners by validating their linguistic resources, challenging rigid language hierarchies, and promoting metalinguistic awareness (García & Wei, 2014).

Two questions arise: 1) Can historical glossing practices prefigure the translanguaging strategies observed in contemporary multilingual contexts? 2) Can glossing and translanguaging be based on common ground in trans-semiotizing practices in multilingual contexts? Glossing and translanguaging foster critical cognitive and identity-building skills and underscore their shared role in shaping multilingual subjectivities to cultivate linguistic flexibility, critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding (Aloni & Weintrob, 2017)

Additionally, digital technology has introduced new spaces for translanguaging, whereas online glossaries, digital annotations, and machine-assisted translation tools function as modern glossing mechanisms favouring multilingual negotiation (Pérez-Llantada, 2020). Digital platforms amplify translanguaging by enabling real-time, multimodal exchanges across linguistic boundaries, reinforcing the interplay between historical and contemporary multilingual practices (Androutsopoulos, 2015). Contributions from linguistic and humane education studies, including ongoing research, are encouraged.

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Seminar n. 40. Specialized knowledge dissemination and international communication in the digital age

Convenors

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Abstract

The dissemination of specialized knowledge in the digital age plays a crucial role in shaping international communication, particularly within the Anglosphere (Incelli et al., 2022; Salvi & Turnbull, 2017). It is well recognized that digital platforms have transformed the ways in which specialized knowledge is transferred, raising both opportunities and challenges for communicators across disciplines (Bondi & Cacchiani, 2021). This seminar explores how digitalization affects specialized discourse in professional and academic domains (Gotti, 2011).

One key aspect is the increasing role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in facilitating cross-border communication. Additionally, the dominance of English as the lingua franca of international communication influences the way specialized knowledge is disseminated, often marginalizing local and minority languages in digital spaces (Crystal, 2019). Social media, webinars, and digital repositories serve as spaces for knowledge dissemination, but they also challenge traditional notions of authorship and credibility (Hyland, 2021). However, they have influenced international communication, creating hybrid discourse styles that blend formal and informal registers. This affects knowledge dissemination, particularly in fields like medicine, law, and business, where accuracy and clarity are critical (Garzone, 2020).

This seminar aims to address these developments by bringing together scholars to discuss the evolving landscape of digital specialized discourse. It will explore strategies for effective communication, the impact of emerging technologies, e.g. AI-powered tools, and the role of discourse analysis in understanding digital communication practices. By examining these dynamics, we can better navigate the complexities of international communication in an increasingly digital world (Bhatia, 2017).

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Seminar n. 41. Separate opinions: The human and the humane in judicial discourse

Convenors

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Abstract

Judicial reasoning provides fertile ground for exploring the possible human and humane dimensions of legal discourse, especially when attention is given to separate judicial opinions, which allow judges to voice individual perspectives (Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2020). These often diverge from the majority narrative, thus highlighting the human element of judicial deliberation: the values, empathy, and personal convictions that shape legal reasoning and, at least for the time being, seem to elude AI-generated interventions.

Separate opinions represent a form of specialized discourse that embodies the challenges of multilingual communication and cross-cultural understanding. Judges in international courts must navigate the complexities of drafting in non-native languages, most frequently in English. Separate opinions are also human artifacts where the precise language of the law intertwines with the need to reflect the voices, values, and intellectual struggles of their authors. For this reason, they feature rhetorical creativity, polyphony, dialogical argumentation (Garzone, 2016) as well as metadiscursive means such as hedging, boosters, etc. (McKeown, 2021).

This seminar invites proposals exploring the human and humane dimensions of separate judicial opinions as instances of specialized discourse and international communication, with emphasis on human rights discourse (Nikitina, 2025).

Topics may include:

- Empathy, ethics, and humane values
- Pragmatics (e.g. stance, evaluation, politeness)
- The rhetoric of dissent and the human voice
- Representations of sensitive topics (e.g. gender, race, and class) (Peruzzo, 2024)
- Creativity and metaphors in judicial discourse (El-Farahaty, Biel & Seracini, 2026, forth.)
- Dialogism and polyphony

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Seminar n. 42. “It's personal – it's (also) business”: Business communication's interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary

Convenors

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Abstract

The kaleidoscopic nature of business communication allows corporate actors to interact with a number of expert and non-expert interlocutors through an extensive range of traditional and innovative modes, content and forms of online and offline presence. In contrast with the common perception of business communication as “just business” - and therefore objective, results-driven and “self-less” - it increasingly encompasses the “human” (the identity of a person or representative of an organization), “humane” (inclusivity, ethics, cultural diversity) and “humanities” (studies of interactions and relations within a professional discourse community) (Jameson, 2022; Darics & Koller, 2019).

Research has explored and continues to probe into the human aspects of conducting business, including trust and relationship building, face giving and threatening, brand and professional name, identity and communities, teamwork and collaboration, active listening and power (a)symmetry, customer service and satisfaction, responsibility and sustainability. This increasingly personalized corporate and business culture is reflected in its language and discourse in relation to technological advances and tempers the hype of intense, high-quantity online communication (e.g. spam emails, standardized chatbots and routine automatic phone calls) with a greater focus on quality interaction, customized offers, gestures, understanding of others' circumstances and word of mouth/mouse about personal experiences and feedback, with the intent of “keeping communication human” and being credible, accountable and trustworthy by any audience.

The seminar endeavours to create the ideal setting for an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary debate, starting from examples of and reflections on the linguistic and discursive aspects of and strategies surrounding the personal and human face of business communication. Such studies involve the boardroom and workplace, the classroom (Doerr, 2023) or the office itself (be it traditional, mobile or shared, Doerr, 2018) and the plethora of multimedia channels and approaches at company's disposal to productively - but also humanely - interact within and outside of the organization.

Possible topics for contributions include, but are not limited to:

- trust and relationship building in in-house and out-house business communication and correspondence (e.g. e-mails, press and news releases, websites)
- brand identity and strategic stance (e.g. CEO letters, institutional and financial communication)
- human presence and personal/professional identity in traditional and multimodal business communication via social media
- marketing communication and promotion (e.g. advertising, sponsorship, crowdfunding, appeals to stakeholders and business angels)
- human and humane storytelling of and by authentic self-made leaders, family businesses and testimonies (e.g. assistants, customers, employees)
- inclusion, diversity and equality in small talk and other instances of interpersonal cooperation and networking
- enforcement and/or violation of traditional politeness standards and etiquette in business and organization communication (e.g. hiring, firing, empowerment, appraisals, reprimands, complaints).

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Seminar n. 43. A human and humane approach? Metaphor, argumentation and (counter)institutional discourses.

Convenors

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Abstract

Are the metaphors underlying institutional discourses on current burning issues reliable predictors of the “human and humane” (Panebianco, 2021) approaches they advocate and claim to incorporate in their policy-making processes? Are the metaphors used to criticize the dominant institutional discourse effective in creating counter-discourses that challenge the dominant ones? Do dominant discourses and counter-discourses use the same metaphorical frames (Kövecses, 2009; Burgers, Konijn & Steen, 2016)? If so, what are the different properties selected to build their arguments?

We call for contributions that address these questions –both from the perspective of metaphor theory (Charteris-Black 2011; Musolff & Zinken, 2009; Lakoff, 1993) as well as from the perspective of argumentation theory (van Poppel, 2021, Wagemans, 2016) – and thus investigate the role of metaphors in relation to their argumentative function in both dominant discourses and discourses that produce a resistance to the dominant ones. We especially encourage the submission of papers that explore issues related to sustainability, health and well-being, economic and social policies concerning and influencing the public debate as well as the personal sphere.

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Seminar n. 44. Exploring the interplay between Artificial Intelligence (AI), English-Medium Instruction (EMI) and Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education (ICLHE) settings

Convenors

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Abstract

AI's integration in EMI settings can transform pedagogy, learning processes, and classroom dynamics, particularly in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. By pushing the boundaries of conventional practices and accelerating trends toward digitization, AI can be used to foster a more dynamic, inclusive, and student-centred learning environment. ChatGPT, for example can have a transformative role in overcoming language barriers, fostering a confident EMI teacher identity (Tsou et al., 2024) and boosting students' learning progress (Kikuchi, 2024).

AI technologies can help with the introduction of individualized scaled solutions, the improvement of disciplinary content comprehension, and an improvement in academic success. However, these benefits bring along challenges with respect to ethical guidelines, critical evaluation skills, academic integrity of AI-assisted learning and assessment and potential digital inequality (Wanyu Ou & Malmström, 2023). Despite these premises, the interplay between AI and EMI or ICLHE contexts remains significantly underexplored in research studies as highlighted in the only existing systematic review on the topic (Bannister et al., 2023).

This seminar invites contributions that critically explore the intersection between AI and EMI or ICLHE contexts from a wide range of perspectives, including but not limited to:

- the use of generative AI tools by students and educators to enhance learning and teaching outcomes within the EMI/ICLHE framework
- the role of AI in promoting inclusivity and multilingualism in diverse EMI or ICLHE contexts
- the impact of AI on language assessment literacy and ethical considerations in EMI or ICLHE contexts
- the practical applications of AI in adjunct instruction, translanguaging practices, and disciplinary writing.

This seminar aims to open up a discussion on how AI can help in the evolution of EMI and ICLHE in higher education through both opportunities and challenges. We welcome innovative and interdisciplinary proposals that present theoretical insights, empirical findings, or practical strategies regarding the integration of AI into EMI or ICLHE practices.

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Seminar n. 45. English Medium Instruction (EMI) as a catalyst for humane and equitable education... or not?

Convenors

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Abstract

While English Medium Instruction (EMI) has become a dominant strategy in higher education globally, there are critical concerns about linguistic equity, implementation policies, teacher professional development and effective language learning (Dearden, 2014; Galloway & Rose, 2021). Often seen as a globalization tool, can EMI be reimaged as a catalyst for promoting linguistic equity, sustainable global dialogue and more positive attitudes towards English and multilingualism (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009)? This seminar aims to explore EMI's potential to embody human and humane values from a critical perspective. EMI can bridge linguistic and cultural divides, promoting empathy and collaboration. Its implementation may also, however, highlight inequality, privileging those with access to English proficiency while marginalizing others. Indeed, a greater emphasis on student translanguaging and multilingual practices may be beneficial (Dalziel, 2021; Zheng & Qui, 2024). We invite scholars to present contributions to highlight these areas in relation to EMI: the question of equality, multilingualism and multiculturalism, as well as practical issues of internationalization and lecturer professional development.

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Seminar n. 46. English language teaching and learning in the digital era: Exploring challenges, opportunities and ethical concerns

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Abstract

The “Law of Accelerating Returns” posits that technological progress shows an exponential, rather than linear, growth rate (Kurzweil, 2004). Such an increasingly ‘smart’ world is opening up new horizons for English language teaching (ELT) and learning, blurring the boundaries between what is human(e) and what is not (Kohnke *et al.*, 2023). In this emerging context, language educators and students must develop complex skills such as digital literacy/fluency – combining digital and critical skills to evaluate AI tools for their real benefits and ethical concerns (UNESCO, 2025).

We invite scholars, practitioners and experts to explore with us the complex intersections of Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis (Kumaravadivelu, 1999), educational linguistics, ELT and technological progress, by examining key themes including:

- challenges and opportunities for teachers, learners and institutions in the digital turn of ELT
- best practices resulting from empirical investigations into new digital literacies
- ethical issues concerning brand new technological developments in educational environments and their *fair use*
- the impact of digital tools on quality education, social justice, inclusion and well-being
- metaphorical representations of AI emerging from, e.g., classroom discourse analysis, questionnaires and interviews, which can impact on the way AI is perceived and conceptualized by teachers and/or students.

The seminar will foster collaborative discussions merging theoretical and practical insights with critical perspectives, to increase awareness of the fast-evolving landscape of language education in the digital era.

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Seminar n. 47. AI and English as a foreign language: Bridging classroom practice and research

Convenors

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Abstract

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly adopted across various fields of education and research, revolutionizing how knowledge is created, shared, and applied (Chen et al., 2020; European Commission, 2023). Within the specific domain of teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), a growing body of work has shown the potential of tools like ChatGPT and other Large Language Models for diverse applications, including writing assistance, automated assessment and creation of language exercises (Khonke et al., 2023). Existing studies have demonstrated substantial positive effects of AI-based tools in controlled settings, focusing on cognitive and behavioural outcomes such as improvements of students' language competence (Bibauw et al., 2022) and motivation to learn (Fryer et al., 2020). Another line of research has relied on surveys among students and lecturers, shedding light on the pedagogical affordances of these tools (Slamet, 2024). However, significant theoretical and methodological gaps remain to be addressed. These include the need to establish more precise definitions of the very notions of AI and AI-based tools, to conduct empirical studies bridging AI research with practical EFL teaching applications, and to further explore the impact of AI use on learners, educators and the broader contexts in which they are immersed (Hockly, 2023). Against this backdrop, the seminar invites theoretical and empirical contributions that explore topics including, but not limited to:

- Using AI in the EFL classroom: applications of AI and digital technologies to EFL teaching, including (creative) writing; tutoring; time planning
- The human factor: students' and/or teachers' attitudes towards technology in learning/teaching; digital literacy of students and/or teachers
- AI and EFL linguistic data: explorations of learners' language, AI-generated language and learner-AI interactions, e.g. drawing on corpus and/or experimental methods
- AI, EFL, and normative discourses: explorations of normative discourses in AI output, including assumptions about language proficiency, correctness, and underlying biases
- Digital technologies, EFL and sustainability: EFL teaching/learning and ecological issues, e.g. with reference to mobility and distance reduction and/or waste of energy provision.

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Seminar n. 48. In contact with English: Informal language learning practices and processes in Italy

Convenors

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Abstract

Nowadays, technology, globalization, mobility and multilingualism have brought about a scenario in which English language learning is moving beyond the classroom, propelled by informal, uninstructed practices ‘in the wild’ (Dressman & Sadler, 2020; Toffoli et al., 2023). This shift reflects a transformation in the contemporary linguistic landscape, where contact with English is increasingly embedded in real-life experiences, driven by entertainment, social and information-seeking purposes. English-language media and digital tools now serve as linguistic models and sources of authentic input, forming part of the complex web of online and offline interactions that shape present-day communicative practices (Benson, 2021). In these multimodal, immersive and fluid environments, second language acquisition (SLA) develops naturally as a ‘by-product’ of informal contact with English. An up-to-date ecological paradigm is thus needed to explain the dynamic and multifaceted nature of SLA in today’s media-saturated cultures, in which learner-users can attain high levels of proficiency in English without crossing geographical borders or having extensive contact with native speakers.

Inspired by the results of the 2020 PRIN project “The Informalization of English Language Learning through the Media” (Pavesi & Bianchi, 2024), this Seminar explores the evolving, but largely uncharted, patterns of learner-users’ informal contact with English in Italy. It welcomes contributions that investigate how informal exposure to English is reshaping SLA in the contemporary digital age. Topics for discussion include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Types, modes and degrees of media-based exposure to English outside of the classroom;
- Longitudinal studies of media-related/digitally-induced, out-of-class SLA, along such parameters as complexity, accuracy and fluency;
- Emic perspectives on learner-users’ experiences with English in informal contexts;
- Role of media and digital tools in the development of English language proficiency at the level of grammar, lexis, pragmatics, register awareness, etc.;
- Informal and formal English language learning against the background of the digital turn in education.

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Seminar n. 49. Human connections in growing online communities: Redefining English teaching and learning in digital contexts

Convenors

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Abstract

The use of new technologies, generative AI and digital approaches to online English teaching and learning is constantly evolving, with variable degrees of success and satisfaction for lecturers and students (e.g., Padley, 2020 and Luppi, 2022). Despite enduring stigma and skepticism (Formiconi, 2016), English has been taught and learned through online platforms for several years at Italy's digital universities, offering exclusively distance learning programmes in a variety of subjects to increasing numbers of students, along with recent recruitment of English teaching staff at unprecedented rates (Minerva et al., 2024).

The seminar intends to encourage an open and bias-free debate on the issues, opportunities and challenges involved in teaching and learning English online at Italy's universities, be they traditional or digital. We invite theoretical, methodological, pedagogical and applied contributions, case studies and position papers with a strong research component that examine fully digital, hybrid and blended courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level, including Masters' and doctoral programmes, and those delivered online in English (Campagna and Pulcini, 2014).

Topics of particular interest to be addressed in relation to teaching and learning English online in Italian academia include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Innovative curriculum and syllabus design
- Revisiting methodologies such as peer education, cooperative learning, group work, task-oriented learning, project- and portfolio-based activities, etc.
- Technologies, tools, apps, platforms, virtual environments, immersive and augmented reality
- Gamification approaches
- (Generative) AI, Large (and Small) Language Models, Chatbots
- Standard varieties, world Englishes and ELF/EFL/L2 varieties in relation to speaking (including pronunciation) and writing
- Digital genres, online language use and multimodality
- The role of (audiovisual and multimedia) translation from and/or into English
- Promoting inter- and cross-cultural competence
- Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)
- Protocols and applications of ELFtextualization
- Optimizing the benefits of synchronous and asynchronous online lectures
- Accessibility and inclusion strategies for students with disabilities and special educational and learning needs
- Developing learners' autonomy, self-assessment skills and reflexivity
- Informal learning outside the (digital) classroom
- Rethinking University Language Centres for digital universities
- Formative and summative evaluation, assessment, testing and feedback
- Monitoring the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning

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Seminar n. 50. English Linguistics for Academicians and Professionals (ELAP): New paths and updated trends in specialized discourse and communication

Convenors

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Abstract

This seminar will provide a forum for discussion on a new and innovative area, identified with the acronym ELAP, which is conceived as a place between Higher Education and the professions. For many decades, English has been the primary medium for the dissemination of specialized and non-specialized knowledge as well as a prerequisite for personal and professional fulfillment in all non-English speaking countries, including Italy (see, for instance, Boggio & Molino, 2018). Notwithstanding the extensive emphasis on the significance of English in both academic and professional domains, there persists a notable absence of scientifically validated resources that empower trainers and learners in academia and the workplace to access linguistic study with confidence. This seminar will therefore focus on collecting the theoretical and applied aspects of studies and best practices, thus facilitating a multifaceted examination of the fundamental principles of specific disciplines and providing a comprehensive analysis of English language communication in academic and professional contexts worldwide. The aim will be to embrace a broad spectrum of exemplars of ESPP (*English for Scientific and Professional Purposes*, Zanola, 2023), and not only. The overarching goal of this interdisciplinary approach will be to provide a nuanced and holistic understanding of the context(s), the users, the objectives and the techniques associated with domains such as medicine, economics, engineering, and law (see, among others, Huhta et al., 2013; Pennisi, 2024). Proposals should be clearly and constructively designed, either in terms of theoretical and methodological discussion or in terms of experience and professional genres and contexts.

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Seminar n. 51. Language uses and languaging users in video games

Convenors

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Abstract

As a uniquely human trait, language plays a fundamental role in human-computer interaction and computer-mediated communication forms like gaming. Indeed, although video games are procedural and interactive media which must be played rather than simply read, watched, or listened to, they are essentially textual in nature, and their underlying rules and features are articulated semiotically, both verbally and non-verbally. To explore the functions and effects of language(s) in this global cultural phenomenon, this seminar welcomes papers discussing theoretically and/or empirically one (or more) of the following themes: the multilayered nature of video game discourse (Ensslin & Balteiro, 2019); natural languages and their varieties in the production, localization, and transmediation of game texts (Bernal-Merino, 2015; Pettini, 2022); the language of gender (Heritage, 2021); gamers' languaging online (Iaia, 2021); automatic/machine translation and gaming (Hansen & Houlmot, 2022); the nature of paratexts (Burwell & Miller, 2016) and constructed languages (Bell & Ryan, 2019) in game worlds.

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Seminar n. 52. Memory landscapes and heritage storytelling: Human voices and their digital representations

Convenors

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Abstract

Commemorating the past and reconnecting it with the present in tourism and cultural heritage branding has become a way of integrating different personal and collective timescales (Lemke 2009, 2023) into digital storytelling. This includes multimodal strategies to create ‘memory landscapes’ in (cross-)digital genres and texts in English – e.g. promotional videos and institutional websites, travel diaries/blogs, web-based accounts of migration and diaspora, etc. – that reconstruct and relive individual and collective journeys through time and space, exploiting master narratives to navigate the global and local worlds. The seminar will investigate humanity and the humane within multidimensional, transmedial forms of tourism and cultural heritage (e.g. Vasta & Manzella, 2024; Cocchetta, 2024), also in a cross-cultural perspective: the focus will thus be on how memory landscapes and cultural heritage are transformed through remediation (Grusin & Bolter, 1999) and resemiotization (Iedema, 2003) in digital texts receptive to such storytelling. Contributions are invited which undertake critical multimodal discourse analyses that (dis-)articulate heritage voices of communities in the English-speaking world, including those using English as a Lingua Franca.

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Seminar n. 53. Communicating with migrants: Languages, policies and (human) ethics

Convenors

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Abstract

In the last four decades, Italy has gone from a country of origin to a destination for migrants. As of October 2024, 55,049 migrants arrived in Italy, most of them coming from Africa and the Middle East (Ministero dell'Interno, 2024). The process of refugee status determination for asylum seekers, and of reception and inclusion of migrants in general, involves a large number of people and is fraught with drawbacks. There is an intra-personal variability in assuming (or being given) roles, which highlights the need for more in-depth knowledge of communication mechanisms and dynamics for all participants (Barsky 1994). The same applies to awareness about sociocultural differences, which should not be emphasized nor minimized, but rather drawn near to create a common background for mutual understanding and knowledge (the basis for integration). In particular, cultural differences are seen as barriers to more humane participation in the asylum proceedings, and therefore raise important questions of fair legal outcomes for members of vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers (Blommaert 2001; Maryns, 2006; Pöllabauer, 2004; Sorgoni, 2013; Veglio, 2024).

This seminar aims to explore the issues of cross-cultural and cross-language communication needs of migrants, in their efforts to establish themselves as deserving of protection and well-integrated into society. In particular, we welcome contributions that discuss:

- discourse and representation, such as asylum narratives during the status determination procedure; issues of applicants' agency in interpreter-mediated asylum hearings; ethics, empathy and compassion in public service settings involving migrants
- structural and institutional challenges, such as new forms of enslavements in Italy and in transit countries (including human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, exploitation and servitude); activism and new forms of agency of migrants as crisis managers.

Doing justice to language and culture may ultimately lead to social justice, and small actions taken by properly informed and empowered stakeholders may redress the deep-seated imbalances in power relations in this setting.

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Seminar n. 54. Worlds beyond words: Lines of enquiry about language, metaphysics and spirituality.

Convenors

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Abstract

Technological advances and scientific progress have ensured a high quality of life and an unparalleled level of comfort, especially in the Western world (OECD, 2024) to the extent that our contemporary society seems obsessed with material possessions and physical well-being. However, in contrast to the spread of a consumerist ethos and utilitarian philosophy of mind, recent scholarly studies have shown that new forms of spirituality are taking over, and people's beliefs and sense of religious affiliation still bear considerable social significance (Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Pennarola, 2019 among others). Studies of spirituality are largely based on a Western-centred and Anglophone vantage point (Lomas, 2018), and consequently can benefit from a cross-cultural perspective widening the angle of analysis and showing the differences, commonalities and contaminations between traditions distant in time and space, made available by translations and informative materials (for example, see Marks et al. on the Buddhist origins and evolution of mindfulness in the Western world).

According to the Greek philosophers Heraclitus and Socrates, language (i.e., *logos*) belongs to the metaphysical as a trace and a reflection of the eternal principles shaping the world of all transient things and mortal beings (Colli, 1980). Human understanding, however, fails to grasp the essence of reality and the ideal world contemplated by philosophers, saints and ordinary people alike. In Plato's *Phaedo* the eternal *logos* prophesied remains obscure, while in the Prologue to John's Gospel, the Verb or word of God is embodied, rejected and apparently vilified (John 1:1-11). The tension between different versions of divine and human *logos* has fed a metaphysical discourse that lies deep in mystery, despite the widespread tendency to downplay the area of uncertainty and oversimplify (Ditifeci & Kantzas, 2021). Besides a philosophical approach to *logos*, words can also relieve the feelings of loneliness and nurture other human beings in need of a more rewarding humane identity, as shown by the pioneering experience of the London Alexandra pub (<https://www.swlondoner.co.uk/news/15012018-popular-merton-pub-opens-its-doors-to-offer-companionship-for-the-lonely>)

Taking the cue from David Crystal's advocacy of theolinguistics (2018), this seminar aims to shed light on the interrelationships between language, metaphysics and spirituality, and explore how language both reflects and shapes one's metaphysical, spiritual and/or religious identity in a never-ending quest for authenticity and meaningfulness. Lines of enquiry could include but are not limited to the following:

- universal or culture-bound dimensions of spirituality
- individual and collective religious identities
- prayer encoding and the dialogue with the divine
- the representation of the divine
- Western vs Eastern forms of cognition and spirituality
- ethnographic investigations of beliefs and believing communities
- verbal and multimodal representation of mystical/transcendental experiences
- allegiance with and subversion of religious doctrine(s)
- the pragmatics of faith-based social networks
- philosophical and theological approaches to spirituality

In line with the complexity and multifacetedness of this object of study, this seminar aims to encourage a wide variety of empirical and theoretical approaches.

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Seminar n. 55. English multimodal pragmatics in the digital era

Convenors

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Abstract

The digital era has revolutionized how we communicate, transforming traditional language use and meaning-making boundaries. In this context, multimodal pragmatics – the study of how meaning is constructed and interpreted through multiple modes (e.g., linguistic, visual, auditory, and spatial) – has gained unprecedented significance, although specific research is still quite scant. English, as a global lingua franca, plays a pivotal role in shaping and being shaped by these multimodal practices in diverse digital landscapes.

This seminar seeks to bring together scholars and practitioners to explore the intersections of English language use, multimodal communication, and digital technologies. We aim to foster a vibrant discussion on how multimodal pragmatics operates in digital contexts, encompassing social media, virtual reality, online gaming, digital storytelling, audiovisual products – and audiovisual translation – and other forms of digital communication.

We invite contributions that address (but are not limited to) the following themes:

- Multimodal meaning-making in English digital communication: How do text, images, emojis, GIFs, memes, and videos work together to create meaning in English-mediated digital spaces?
- Pragmatic strategies in digital English: How are politeness, humour, irony, or persuasion achieved through multimodal means in online interactions?
- Global Englishes and multimodality: How do users from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds employ multimodal resources to adapt and transform English in digital settings?
- Multimodal pragmatics in emerging technologies: What roles do Artificial Intelligence (AI), augmented reality, and virtual reality play in evolving multimodal English communication?
- Pedagogical implications: How can educators address the challenges and opportunities of teaching English multimodal pragmatics in the digital age?
- Ethical and social dimensions: How do issues of accessibility, inclusivity, and power manifest in English multimodal pragmatics online?

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Seminar n. 56. Multilingual/multimodal text-types and language learning in the Early Modern English context (1500–1750)

Convenors

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Abstract

In the early modern period, while vernacular languages underwent processes of development, enrichment, and standardization – driven by the pursuit of linguistic and national homogeneity – polyglossia remained a fundamental feature of the historical trajectory of the English language. (Bennett & Cattaneo, 2022; Bistuè, 2013; Burke, 2004). Multilingual encounters thrived, shaped by dynamic practices of learning, translation, and linguistic borrowing. After all, this was the age of mediators, travellers, translators, missionaries, and merchants.

To put it in the terms of Roman Jakobson's definition of translation (Jakobson 1959), the interaction between interlinguistic and intersemiotic forms of translation will be the focus of the panel with respect to language learning and teaching practices (Gallagher, 2019; Montini, forth.), and with particular attention to the visual dimension that emerges from the coexistence of multiple languages (Kress, 2010; Sindoni, 2023). The session aims to provide a forum for the exploration of linguistic and methodological perspectives, focusing on the circulation of English when it was not a *lingua franca*, in dialogue and confrontation with Latin and with other national vernaculars.

We invite abstracts that examine linguistic and visual features in non-literary specialized discourse, with a focus on text types such as grammars, dictionaries, conversation manuals, illustrated marginalia, multilingual parallel texts, language teaching manuals, emblems, and letters – sources that offer valuable insights into interlingual and intercultural exchanges.

Potential areas of inquiry include, but are not limited to:

- interlingual and intersemiotic forms of translation in a didactic context (grammars, dictionaries, conversation manuals, illustrated marginalia, multilingual parallel texts, language teaching manuals, emblems, and letters)
- translingual communication and language learning
- didactic use of illustrations, typographic variations, marginalia, structured page layouts
- theoretical aspects, methodological challenges and results of empirical research in multilingual non-literary discourse
- stylistic and multimodal strategies of dissemination
- metalinguistic awareness and its development through time
- contact and change: linguistic and cultural mediation
- dissemination to specific groups and networks.

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Seminar n. 57. The metalanguage of linguistics in English through history: human knowledge and computational methods

Convenors

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Abstract

English premodern linguistics and terminology have been treated in a piecemeal manner in the fields of ESP/LSP, general linguistics and the history of ideas. The marginal place of premodern English is evident in seminal collections on the metalanguage of linguistics (Colombat & Savelli, 2001; Orioles, Bombi, & Brazzo, 2012), and in the *International Handbook of Special-Language and Terminology Research*, where only one of three essays on premodern English addresses linguistics. While Walmsley revisits grammatical terminology historically (2022), a broader understanding of the development of English linguistic metalanguage remains lacking.

Despite the role of English in premodern linguistic thought may seem trifling compared to the French, German, Italian and Latin-Greek traditions, early and late modern English sources abound in language-related debates. Alston's *Bibliography of the English Language* highlights the ubiquity of linguistic discourse throughout the history of English and the cross-fertilization of the sciences and humanities in a period predating the establishment of modern disciplinary boundaries.

The seminar intends to study how English itself served as a tool for discussing language across a variety of fields of knowledge, integrating philological and computational methods. In particular, it seeks to explore:

- methods to collect and analyse the metalinguistic terminology in English historical sources
- forms and functions of the English metalanguage of linguistics in historical perspective, focusing on terminology, lexicalization, variation, and semantic change
- English text-types involved in the circulation of linguistic knowledge and practice
- epistemic transfers shaping linguistic knowledge in early and late modern England.

Within the broader framework of Digital Humanities, the seminar will address its potential to bridge historical linguistics with digital practices for the analysis of historical texts (McGillivray, 2020). In exploring English linguistic metalanguage, it will also consider how such language reflects and shapes human/humane values within linguistic discourse. This seminar is supported by the PRIN2022 state funded project "MetaLing Corpus: Creating a corpus of English linguistics metalanguage from the 16th to the 18th century" at the University of Milan and University of Insubria.

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Seminar n. 58. Linguistic landscapes: Exploring language variation and change in language users' space

Convenors

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Abstract

The world is becoming increasingly interconnected and the way language is used by humans in different contexts within diverse *spaces* reflects the deep sociopolitical, cultural, and ideological shifts in human communication. Space may be understood through three distinct orders of spatiality: the physical-material, social, and mental spaces (Britain, 2013). The physical-material order encompasses geodesic surfaces, distances, and various location levels. In contrast, the social order refers to the structures of interactions. Lastly, the mental order involves the attitudes and beliefs that shape how people perceive and interpret their environments and geographical realities. As the physical-material, social, and mental spaces become more multicultural and interconnected, the interaction of various languages is evident at different levels of language production (Britain, 2013; Kim, 2001).

This seminar focuses on how the concept of linguistic landscape intended as “the general language situation or linguistic diversity” (Gorter, 2013: 191) and encompassing the concept of language choices, contact, and variation is rendered, navigated, and developed across time and space in human communication (Labov & Cohen, 1967; Gorter, 2013). With the broad usage of English, digital platforms and physical spaces have become an extension of social and mental spaces, mirroring broader sociocultural transformations and humane values. In such complex composition, language variation reflects the linguistic vitality of English at the macro level, and either 1) contribute in the creation of segregated LLs or 2) enrich melting tendencies at the micro level (Ng & Deng, 2017; Yao & Gruba, 2022).

This seminar invites the scientific community to explore theoretically and empirically language variation and change as fundamental aspects of human and humane practices, where power relations, resilience, and identity formation are reflected. Contributions to the seminar are expected to explore language variation within the physical-material, the social, and the mental orders of spatiality, and/or indicate how language changes maintain/neglect existing dominance in (sexist, ageist, hate) discourses.

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Seminar n. 59. Linguistic perspectives on Caribbean Englishes and English-lexified Caribbean creoles

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Abstract

The varieties of English and the English-lexified creoles spoken across the Caribbean are the outcome of complex creative interplay between the English superstratum and various West African substrata, which have been in contact for over four hundred years within the social vacuum forcibly created by early colonizers. Although the “Afric” (Allsopp 2004: xiv) component is obviously of paramount importance for their onset, “translanguaging” (García & Wei 2014: 137) and “polyglossing” (Král 2019: 836) practices are widespread across speech communities throughout the Anglophone Caribbean.

As a consequence, this part of the Anglosphere stands out as uniquely “fragmented” (Holm, 1986: 1) – historically, geographically, politically and hence linguistically – by the “colonial lag” but concomitantly united by “Pan-Caribbean tendencies” (Gramley 2001: 82), as shown by the authoritative lexicographic works compiled by Richard Allsopp, that is the *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (1996/2003), the *New Register of Caribbean English Usage* (2010) and *A Book of Afric Caribbean Proverbs* (2004).

Accordingly, this seminar aims to bring together scholars interested in exploring language variation and change in such a culturally diverse conglomerate from various linguistic perspectives, namely lexicological, phraseological, paremiological and metaphorical, by also considering attendant representations of identity and ethnicity. Potential topics focusing on Caribbean Englishes and/or English-lexified Caribbean Creoles may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Lexicology and lexicography
- Phraseology/phraseography and Paremiology/paremiography
- Oral traditions
- Translanguaging and multilingual practices
- Decreolization
- Metaphors and conceptual framing
- Digital and audiovisual communication

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