Fall 2020 Course Description

Instructor: Emily Johansen  
Course: ENGL 481  
Title: Senior Seminar  

Description: As the ongoing pandemic makes clear, contemporary life is characterized by risks of all sorts. Moreover, as it and many other situations also illustrate, the effects of these risks are neither universal nor equivalent: risks are more manageable for some people than others—something that is shaped by how we represent these risks and the subjects of it. This senior seminar will examine depictions of global danger and safety in transnational literary and visual texts and consider how these texts represent the contemporary world.

This senior seminar will introduce students to a growing body of critical theory and research on risk and its global consequences/repercussions. The course will particularly focus on the way literary and cultural texts intervene in contemporary debates and concerns, adding new ways of thinking about these issues and expanding their circulation. The course’s guiding questions will center on the relationship between risk, culture, and global subjectivities: how does risk shape access to and the possibilities of global citizenship? How do representations of risk change from the Global North to the Global South? Who is the subject of risk? How do different forms of risk (environmental, biomedical, geopolitical, violent, etc…) shape global subjectivities?

Proposed Readings: