Northeastern
ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)
Interdisciplinary Professional Development Seminar Series

FRIDAYS
October 30, 2026 - April 16, 2027

3 CPDU credits per seminar



Register Online!
neiu.edu/ipds
All seminars priced $100/seat



About the Series

Each academic year, NEIU offers a series of student-centered, innovative seminars to area High School teachers, to renew and energize your classrooms on current issues you face. The seminars cover a range of engaging topics from a variety of departments and programs, plus topics suggested to us by the teachers we serve.









For questions about seminar details and registration, contact Office Administrator Hilary Jirka at h-jirka2@neiu.edu

2026-2027

01 Multimodal Inquiry:
Building Students' Research and Writing Skills in a "Post-Truth" World



How do we engage in authentic communication when authenticity is called into question by our communication tools? How do we identify credible evidence when fake news and "alternative facts" seem commonplace? How can we critically analyze information when we're inundated with information at astronomical rates?



The critical thinking skills teachers promote in the classroom can seem at odds with rapidly changing media environments. Yet, it is more important than ever to strengthen those skills and help students become savvy judges of information rather than passive consumers. This interactive seminar addresses how inquiry-based learning and multimodal rhetoric can be integrated in a variety of ELA classrooms to help students independently conduct sustained research, critically examine and synthesize multiple sources of information, and effectively use rhetorical strategies to compose in a variety of academic and professional contexts.

Participants will have an opportunity to share their specific challenges and concerns, as well as the approaches they have used to teach research and writing. We will review writing studies, pedagogy and scholarship, focusing on multimodal composition and inquiry-based research and writing. Participants will engage in hands-on activities that model practices they can use in their classrooms.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2026 *9:00 am-12:00 pm*

Jessica Bannon, English Department



02 How to De-screen the Classroom and Re-center Attention and Thought

While some faculty, students, disciplines, departments, and classrooms have embraced the reality-bending potential of Gen AI (and its many iterations), many of us have not, and, in fact, *refuse to* (for some or all of our teaching praxis). Many of us are deeply alarmed about the state of thinking, writing, and *writing as thinking*. We do not want our classrooms to facilitate the off-loading of thought itself. This workshop builds on several years of local thinking around the problem of not just Gen AI but an unquestioning reliance on and enclosure within screens and "immediated" (see the work of Anna Kornbluh, NEIU's 2025 SHARC guest speaker) surfaces. Let's talk together about what seem to be the frameworks driving the luddite view, consider some de-screening techniques currently being deployed (especially those being test-run in Composition and Creative Writing courses at NEIU), and have a conversation for building out thinking- and teaching-praxes that re-center the stochastic, rasquache, and *material* experience of learning.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2026 *9:00 am-12:00 pm*

Olivia Cronk, English Department

HIGHLIGHTING THE STAKES
Of the Literature and History Classroom:

From the English and Social Studies Classroom to the Supreme Court



03

It's sometimes hard to keep students engaged and to have them understand why studying literature and history and learning to write and present analytical arguments are important. This seminar is aimed at thinking about ways to highlight that importance by bringing it all back home by connecting the readings of history and texts and the construction of arguments to decisions in larger power structures that directly impact their lives. In the Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade, for example, one argument woven into the decision Justice Samual Alito wrote is that the original ruling in Roe v. Wade protecting a woman's right to an abortion is not consistent with American traditions and customs. Wow!

Such a statement is rooted in a ***particular*** reading of U.S. history as well as a prioritization of particular texts and elements of literary/cultural history. In this seminar, we will explore and discuss how what happens in the English and Social Studies classrooms matters to students' lives and how to make that clear, looking at theories of reading and writing history and literary texts and showing how engaging these theories helps students critically assess (mis/dis)information and arguments they encounter, and construct their own critical arguments to forward their interests.

NEW DATE: FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2027 *9:00 am-12:00 pm*

Tim Libretti, English Department



04

To "AI" or "Not to AI:"
Using Updated AI Tools to Boost Students' Learning Engagement, Writing Proficiency, and Academic Success

The workshop will focus on how AI technology, in its many forms and applications, can be an effective tool in course design to help boost students' engagement and creativity in integrating ideas from a course and apply AI technology to help formulate strategies to develop projects and draft papers. AI tools will be introduced and examined concerning the pitfalls to avoid when utilizing AI, as well as the potential benefits of AI in creating course-related assignments and in-class activities. The workshop will focus on utilizing updated AI technology to brainstorm ideas related to course learning objectives and explore how AI can be used in ways that have not been used before in instructional design.

With a more applied focus, participants will go through an AI tool(s) example together in the workshop based on specific lesson plan ideas. I will also introduce a new Internet search tool worksheet I have developed to help instructors find learning objective-related AI tools to enhance students' learning and critical-thinking engagement. Workshop participants will be shown and do "hands on" AI tools examples with specific teaching ideas from their classrooms. Ethical considerations and how to role model appropriate AI tool usage will be discussed.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2027 *9:00 am-12:00 pm*

Dr. Lisa Hollis-Sawyer, Psychology Department

05

WE THE PEOPLE IN POP MUSIC AND HIP HOP:

Understanding and Teaching the U.S. Constitution as a Living Constitution



A great advantage of the United States Constitution is that it is a written document elaborated through amendments and court cases. We can pick it up and read it. This advantage, however, is sometimes an impediment to understanding the Constitution as an historical and culturally vital political framework for us now.

In this seminar, we investigate how to comprehend and teach a living constitution that is more than the legal documents we commonly use to define "we the people." Declarations, movements, songs, wars, and literature are reflected in and animate American constitutional politics historically. To demonstrate this creativity in art and action today, the course analyzes relationships among three protests songs: Buffalo Springfield's "For What Its Worth" (1966), Public Enemy's "He's Got Game" (1998), and Beyoncé's "American Requiem" (2024). Each of these songs offers a vision of we the people, and the latter two sample and rewrite the original. This pattern of borrowing and revision—think jazz, blues, and hip-hop sampling—provides a template for understanding the enactment of the historical, cultural and ***written*** American constitution.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2027 *9:00 am-12:00 pm*

Sophia Mihic, Political Science and Philosophy

06

Teachers As Writers



This session is for teachers who want to develop their own writing without compromising their teaching. Balancing the demands of contemporary English Language Arts teaching AND pursuing one's own writing interests may seem untenable. The premise behind the establishment of the National Writing Project in the 1970s was to foster better writing instruction by supporting teachers of writing, not just in the classroom, but in their own writing lives. This session invites you to explore how teaching writing and developing one's own writing are not mutually exclusive. We will examine how to find space to write individually, with students, with peers, and for publication. And, of course, we will write. Please join us.

FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 2027 *9:00 am-12:00 pm*

Dr. Timothy Duggan, Illinois Writing Project

ILLINOIS WRITING PROJECT

07

Combinatorics: The Art of Counting

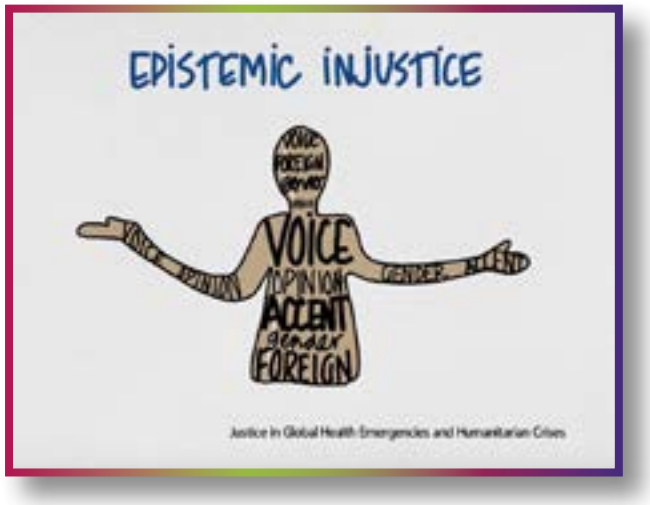


Counting is the earliest mathematical activity done by human beings. Nearly all mathematical endeavors use counting as a tool, but the subtleties and larger questions around counting also form a subject of study, called combinatorics. Questions in combinatorics are diverse and deep. While no specialized mathematical knowledge is required to tackle many of them, there are often multiple, wildly different paths to the same solution. In this professional development seminar, we will cover several classic combinatorial problems focusing on how combinatorics shows up in probability. Along the way, we will understand how different decision algorithms lead to the same answer. In this seminar, teachers will explore an accessible subject in mathematics, understand various ways to approach counting problems, and gain the necessary knowledge to teach and/or mentor students to tackle related problems.

FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 2027 *9:00 am-12:00 pm*

Nabil Kahouadji, Mathematics Department

Epistemic Injustices in the Classroom



In teaching, we want to empower our students as learners. An important part of learning is flexing one's epistemic agency—the capacity for (and comfort with) investigating questions, making claims, casting doubts, and forming judgements about the world around us. In this seminar, we'll examine how stereotypes and biases can interfere with epistemic agency in the classroom, creating "epistemic injustices." Participants will have the opportunity to read some short excerpts from contemporary feminist philosophy and learn about overt and subtle forms of these injustices. They'll also reflect on and discuss issues of identity, authority, testimony, and equity in the classroom. The takeaway will be knowledge to help you spot epistemic injustices in education, some tactics for dealing with the ones within your control, and some questions to help you think more deeply about agency and learning.

FRIDAY, APRIL 16, 2027 *9:00 am-12:00 pm*

Stacey Goguen, Philosophy Department

On Friday mornings, FREE Street Parking is available along Bryn Mawr Avenue and the West side of St. Louis Avenue.



Seminars are held in **Lech Walesa Hall, Room 2005** (large circle) unless otherwise noted. Coffee is available at **Descartes Cafe** near the Student Union (small circle).

MORE INFORMATION AND IMPORTANT LINKS ON NEXT PAGE

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION AND LINKS

SEMINAR PRICING

All seminars are **$100/seat** for individuals and group registrations done by an admin. Pricing for large groups (20+) may vary (see below).

REGISTRATION

Registration is online at **neiu.edu/ipds**. All seminars ***open to enrollment*** up to the same week of their scheduled run; Wednesday is the cut off date.

CREDITS

All seminars are worth **3 CPDU credits** that teachers may claim with ISBE; we provide documented proof of participation at the end of each session.

CONTACT US!

Questions about registration, payment, seminar logistics -- contact Office Administrator **Hilary Jirka** at **h-jirka2@neiu.edu** or at 773-442-5829

LARGE GROUP INTERESTED IN A SINGLE SEMINAR?

Do you have a large group (20 or more) interested in a single seminar delivered ***at your institution?*** Let us come to you! Whether it's an existing seminar or a seminar on a special topic that you choose, we're happy to make arrangements.

Contact the Coordinator of the CAS Professional Development Series **Brad Greenburg** at **b-greenburg@neiu.edu** or our administrator **Hilary Jirka** at **h-jirka2@neiu.edu** to work out the details.

Master of Arts in English

NEIU's M.A. in English offers three concentrations of advanced courses that develop skills in critical thinking, writing, and research, encourage intellectual curiosity and creativity, and provide training for careers and **professional advancement** in related fields such as **teaching**, editorial work, journalism, publishing, writing, and research.

Students pursuing the MA in English choose a degree concentration and can complete their electives with a combination of courses from all three concentrations. Study in **Literature, Composition, and Creative Writing** promote interdisciplinary methods and familiarity with interrelated fields of study within English. The three-track curriculum prepares students for multiple career opportunities as well as for doctoral work.

Our wide variety of courses range from critical theory and pedagogy to popular culture, race and gender studies, and seminars closely linked to faculty expertise in African and post-colonial studies, film, Latinx literature and culture, material culture, writing and assessment, and creative writing.

Each semester, the M.A. in English supports qualifying students with Merit Tuition Scholarships, Graduate Teaching and Research Assistantships, and Student Aide positions paid at an hourly rate. Connect with the Department of English to find out how to qualify and apply for any of these opportunities.

NEIU ENGLISH DEPT.

Interdisciplinary Professional Development
Seminar Series 2026-27

SEMINAR REGISTRATION:
neiu.edu/ipds

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Northeastern IL University
5500 North St. Louis Ave.
Chicago IL 60625

PLACE
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HERE