

TERM: Fall 2025

COURSE NUMBER & CATEGORY: ENGL 4600: Electives: Topics in Lit

COURSE TITLE: Banned Books

SECTION TIMES/DAYS: TR 1:45-3:25 pm MWF

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Miskolcze

COURSE DESCRIPTION/PRINCIPAL TOPICS:

According to the American Library Association, seventeen states attempted to censor more than 100 titles in 2023, and the number of titles targeted for censorship at public libraries increased by 92% from the previous year. Reading books has been perceived as a dangerous activity throughout the U.S. since the colonial era. This upper-division course examines the recurring patterns of book censorship throughout American history, exploring how societal fears, political climates, and shifting cultural values contribute to the banning and suppression of literature. Students will analyze the cycles of banning, from historical texts to contemporary works, and explore the ways in which the same topics—like race, sexuality, and dissent—continue to spark controversy. The course will also address the ways these banned works reflect ongoing struggles for free expression and social justice.

Key texts may include Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, *1984* by George Orwell, *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, *Gender Queer*, by Maia Kobabe and others.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Students will develop the ability to critically assess and compare patterns of book banning and censorship throughout U.S. history.
2. Students will gain the skills to analyze how societal values, political climates, and cultural shifts influence the banning and suppression of literature, particularly in relation to controversial topics such as race, sexuality, and dissent.
3. Students will explore how works that have been banned or censored intersect with struggles for free expression and social justice, gaining insight into how censorship reflects ongoing debates about power and equity in society.
4. Students will refine their ability to conduct research and engage in critical analysis of both historical and contemporary texts, and produce a public-facing project engaging the topic of banned books.

CLASS LEVEL RESTRICTION:

Junior/Senior Only

RECOMMENDED/PREREQUISITES:

N/A

COURSE ATTRIBUTES:

OLD CURRICULUM

- GENRES (LD)
- HISTORIES (LD)
- AUTHORS (UD)
- CRITICAL/THEORETICAL (UD)
- COMPARATIVE (UD)
- CREATIVE/ARTISTRY

CORE ATTRIBUTES

N/A

NEW CURRICULUM

- DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH (LD)
- HISTORY OF LIT, MEDIA, AND CULTURE (LD)
- READING AND WRITING GENRES (LD)
- THEORY, POWER, AND RHETORIC (LD)
- PRE-1800 (UD)
- CREATIVE ARTISTRY (UD)
- RACE, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND POWER (UD)
- UPPER-DIVISION ELECTIVE (UD)
- 5000-LEVEL SEMINAR (UD)