



**VISITING  
SCHOLAR  
PROGRAM**

# Anna Brickhouse



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## Public Lecture Offerings

### **"Curse and Doom": Writing the Americas as Catastrophe**

How do we tell the story of "America" in the full hemispheric sense of that term? This talk will explore the idea of interpreting the long history of the Americas through the lens of catastrophe, or what one memorable narrator calls "the Curse and the Doom of the New World." Touching on the long literary history of the Americas—from writings by Columbus to contemporary U.S. literature—the talk also examines the "southernization" of catastrophe and asks how the imagined differences between the northern and southern parts of the hemisphere may have helped reinforce the vastly uneven distribution of suffering across time. Literature helps articulate what it means to live a world of ongoing and imminent catastrophes, and literature helps reveal as well that the non-experience of catastrophe is necessarily lived out in a world made by cataclysm—a world premised on disastrous violence.

### **Close Reading in a Broken World**

This talk is about close reading, an enduring method of literary studies that involves the act of slow and sustained attention to a written text. In a world of swiftly diminishing attention spans, massive influxes of new information, the circulation of distracting news, divisive news, and fake news, and all manner of impinging crisis every day, what is the point of dwelling in time—or wasting time—on the minute details of a small piece of text? Scholars of narrative medicine and the health humanities have argued that close reading can produce better doctors—and better citizens of the world more broadly—by fostering better attention to detail, better

listening, and better acceptance of ambiguity and multiple perspectives as well as a pathway to goals of inclusivity and social justice. Briefly overviewing this body of scholarship, this talk will focus on one experience of close reading as an act of praise in and for a broken world.

## Classroom Discussion Topics

1. **Literature and the Health Humanities:** a workshop with two short stories.
2. **How to Read Historical Documents from a Literary Perspective**
3. **Research, Writing, and Alienation:** how to survive problems with perfectionism, procrastination, competitive feelings, hopeless feelings, and general alienation. I present myself not as an authority on any of this but as a co-learner with long experience in the trenches of being a student, a researcher, and a writer.