

# VOLCANOES

En/VC 108 | Fall 2019



**Dr. Sullivan**

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Office: Dabney Hall B111

Office hours: by appointment

Tues/Thurs 10:30am – 11:55pm  
125 Baxter

## **Course Description**

Long before torrents of lava cascaded down Los Angeles streets in the 1997 film *Volcano*, volcanic disaster narratives erupted across 19th-century British pages, stages, and screens. This class will examine the enduring fascination with volcanoes in literary and visual culture and the socio-political tensions that disaster narratives expose. We will analyze a variety of literary and visual texts, including: James Pain's 1880s pyrotechnic adaptation of *The Last Days of Pompeii*, the influence of Tambora's infamous 1815 eruption on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, paintings of global sunsets after Krakatoa's 1883 eruption, and M.P. Shiel's apocalyptic *The Purple Cloud*.

## **Required Texts**

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818), Broadview 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (2012), ISBN: 9781554811038

NB: you may purchase Broadview's print, PDF, or ePub versions

M.P. Shiel, *The Purple Cloud* (1901), Penguin edition (2012), ISBN: 978-0141196428

*Volcano* (1997 film; \$3.99 digital rental on Amazon;

*Dante's Peak* (1997 film; stream on Netflix)

Additional texts will be made available on Moodle. Do not circulate those files beyond our class.

### **Weighted Assignments**

- 25% Essay 1 (1000-1500 words)
- 35% Essay 2 (1800-2500 words)
- 10% Discussion Facilitation
- 30% Participation:
  - Three Short Response Papers (500-800 words each) (10%)
  - Daily in-class conversation (15%)
  - Quizzes (5%)

### **Class Policies**

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory and will be taken daily. You may miss two (2) classes, but subsequent absences will impede your ability to pass the class. Please note that an *absence from class does not extend the due date for any assignment*.

**Participation:** Since this is a discussion driven course, you are expected to actively participate by: coming to class prepared and on time, driving discussion by offering insights or asking questions, and responding to your instructor's and peers' ideas and questions. Preparing for class includes completing any reading and writing assignments in advance, writing notes in response to the assignments (e.g. annotating the text itself or jotting down ideas on a separate piece of paper), identifying passages and topics from the texts that you want to discuss, creating questions that will generate discussion, and asking questions for clarification. You will not receive participation points merely for showing up to class. If you are shy about speaking in front of your peers, use this requirement as an incentive to develop your public speaking skills. Participation grades are up to the discretion of the instructor and will not be posted on Moodle.

**Short Response Papers (500-800 words) and Informal Writing Assignments:** You will write three short response papers (500-800 words each) that will help you prepare for the longer essay assignments by practicing literary analysis. You may also complete informal writing assignments throughout the quarter, including: impromptu writing assignments that we complete during class time or pre-writing assignments that you will need to complete before class (e.g. drafting a thesis statement, creating an essay outline, writing an analytical paragraph etc.). The short essay and informal writing assignments will be graded as pass/fail and will count towards your participation grade. While the goal of these assignments is for you to practice generative writing, please note that your work must demonstrate effort in order to receive a passing grade. Merely completing the assignment with substandard work will result in a failing grade on the assignment.

**Quizzes:** We will use quizzes to incentivize each other to read and to practice timed writing as a means of generating ideas for further discussion, research, and formal writing. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class and they may not be announced ahead of time. Tardy students *will not* be able to take the quiz. Absent students *will not* have an opportunity to make up a missed quiz. Students with serious scheduling conflicts (e.g. conferences or sports competitions) must contact me in advance (at least 48 hours) to ask about making up a quiz. Quiz scores will count towards your participation grade, and you will have an opportunity to drop your lowest quiz score at the end of the term.

**Assignments:** All assignments listed on the course schedule must be completed before class begins on that date (unless otherwise noted). The daily reading and writing assignments are designed to help

you participate in class discussions and activities and to help you prepare for the essay assignments. Additional reading and writing assignments may be announced throughout the quarter.

**Discussion Facilitation:** Students will work in small groups to prepare open-ended questions related to the assigned readings that will generate a 20-minute in-class discussion. A detailed description of this assignment will be available on Moodle.

**Paper Formatting:** The three short response papers and two longer essays must adhere to current MLA formatting guidelines. This includes proper document formatting, such as one-inch margins, Times New Roman 12-pt. font, and double-spacing, in addition to properly citing sources. Consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) for assistance:  
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

**Paper Submission Instructions:** Send your short response papers and longer essay assignments to me via e-mail by the dates and times listed on the course schedule. Please attach .doc, .docx, or .pdf files only, otherwise I will not be able to read your file and your assignment will be counted as late. Please use the following format for your file's name: first initial + last name + assignment name. E.g. asullivanresponse1.pdf

**Late Work:** In general, I do not accept late work for any of the assignments in this course. Please note that an *absence from class does not extend the due date for any assignment*. However, there are notable exceptions to this policy. Please see the "Late Pass" and "Emergency" sections below.

**One Free Extension Pass:**

You may use **one** free extension pass on the writing assignment of your choice *except* for Essay 2, which is due during finals week. The free extension pass extends the assignment's due date by 48 hours without any grading penalties. Choosing to submit one of the short response papers or Essay 1 with an extension pass means the assignment will still be counted as on time. Students do not have to ask for permission to use their one free extension pass, nor do they need to offer any explanations or answer any questions. There are two important disclaimers about using this pass: 1) the free extension pass is no longer valid after 48 hours have passed, and 2) using the pass may result in delayed grading and feedback from the instructor. Once 48 hours have passed, the assignment will be counted as late and will not be accepted.

**Class Etiquette and Decorum:** It is expected that you will participate appropriately and as adults during class discussions. We are a diverse academic community, representing different faiths, lifestyles, ethnicities, sexualities, and cultures. We will be discussing sensitive topics and controversial issues in class—issues that can elicit strong opinions, so it is especially important that you show tolerance and respect for your fellow classmates and instructor at all times.

**Electronic Devices:** Laptop computers and tablet devices like iPads are *only to be used during class for accessing assigned texts and related resources*. If you abuse your in-class electronics privileges (e.g. by continuously browsing Facebook), you will be banned from bringing electronics to class and will be required to bring print copies of course materials from that point forward. As a courtesy to your fellow classmates and me, please turn off and put away phones and other electronic devices before entering the classroom. If you need to keep your phone or other electronic devices on during class, please keep them on silent if possible, and, if needed, please consider choosing a seat that will let you exit our class quickly and quietly.

**Moodle and E-mail:** Be sure to check your Caltech e-mail and our Moodle site daily for announcements and important instructions regarding completing assignments.

**The Hixon Writing Center:** Caltech's Hixon Writing Center, located on the north end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Center for Student Services (Bldg. 86), offers a number of resources that you may find useful for supporting your writing in this class, including tutorial support that allows you to discuss a work-in-progress with a professional or peer tutor. You can learn more about the location of the Hixon Writing Center, how to make an appointment with a tutor, and about their other resources on their website: [writing.caltech.edu](http://writing.caltech.edu).

**Accessibility Accommodations:** I am committed to making our classroom accessible for every student. If you have any questions or concerns regarding accessibility, please contact Caltech Accessibility Services for Students (CASS) in week 1 so CASS and I can work with you to ensure appropriate and supportive accommodations are made.

**Emergencies:** Please know that there are resources on campus to support you. One of the staff members from Caltech's CARE team can help you navigate medical, psychological, psychiatric, social, financial, or academic issues that you are facing, and they work alongside many other resources on campus. Per the CARE website, "If you need a consultation after hours, please call the Counseling Services main line, 626-395-8331, and press "2" to be connected with the on-call service." Also, if an emergency comes up, please e-mail me as soon as possible. You do not need to describe the details of the emergency. The benefit of letting me know that an emergency is happening is that we can have a frank conversation about your options.

**Additional Support:** I'm still learning about Caltech's campus resources, so I invite you to share information with your fellow classmates and me. One place to get started is Caltech's Student Wellness Services: <http://wellness.caltech.edu/resources>

**Plagiarism:** The Hixon Writing Center website states, "Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit, and it violates the honor code in a fundamental way. One of the collective goals of Caltech is to produce new knowledge through research and writing, and we often do that work through collaboration. For this process to work, we need to be able to trust that when our ideas or words are taken up by another thinker, we will be credited for our contribution to his or her thinking. Not crediting the author of writing or ideas takes unfair advantage of the intellectual work that individual has done." If you are unsure about how to cite sources correctly, please feel free to work with the Hixon Writing Center or with me during office hours. In class, we will discuss how properly citing sources will boost your confidence as a writer, enhance your creative thinking, and make you feel empowered to enter into an ongoing critical conversation. We will also discuss how to read and critique each other's writing in ways that follow Caltech's Honor Code. For more information about plagiarism, please consult the Hixon Writing Center website: <http://www.writing.caltech.edu/resources/plagiarism>

## Course Schedule

*Subject to change with notice*

### Unit 1: Vesuvius, Herculaneum, and Pompeii

#### Week 1: Picturing Disaster

##### Tuesday, October 1

*In-class:*

Pliny the Younger letters (79 AD); Susan Sontag *The Volcano Lover* (1992) pp. 5-8; beginning lecture on Vesuvius, Herculaneum, and Pompeii; discuss plans for upcoming mandatory field trip to Getty Villa on October 12<sup>th</sup>.

##### Thursday, October 3

*Readings:*

David Pyle “Visions of Volcanoes” (2017) (the first two sections: “Introduction” and “Understanding Volcanoes”); Philip Shaw, “Landscape and the Sublime” (2014); Joseph Wright of Derby *Vesuvius in Eruption, with a View Over the Islands in the Bay of Naples* (ca. 1776-80);\*\* J.M.W. Turner’s *Vesuvius in Eruption* (ca. 1817-1820)\*\*

\*\*for Wright and Turner: examine the paintings online and read the curatorial descriptions

*In-class:*

Sample Discussion Facilitation

#### Week 2: Real and Virtual Travel

##### Tuesday, October 8

*Readings:*

Felicia Hemans “The Image in Lava” (1828); Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) Book I: Ch. I and Ch. III; Book X: Ch. IV-Ch. XI (the end)\*\*; *Life of George Eliot* journal excerpt (ca. 1880) pp. 353-357; Charles Dickens “A Rapid Diorama” from *Pictures from Italy* (1846) pp. 243-254; “Photographing Vesuvius” (1888) p. 3; excerpt from Nicholas Daly “The Volcanic Disaster Narrative: From Pleasure Garden to Canvas, Page, and Stage” (2011) pp. 255-257 and 271-280.

*In-class:*

Group 1 Discussion Facilitation

##### Thursday, October 10

*Readings:*

“Victims of Pompeii” (1882) p. 4; “Plaster Citizens of Pompeii” (*Atlas Obscura*); Mary Beard “The Art of Reconstruction” (2009) pp. 3-7; “Resurrection” (*Getty Center* 2013); “Pompeian Entertainments” (*Getty Center* 2013); William FitzGerald “Pictures in Fireworks” in *The Strand* (1896); “The Last Days of Pompeii—In North London” in *The Sketch* (1898).

##### Saturday, October 12: Mandatory field trip to the Getty Villa

Meet outside the Caltech Human Resources building (399 S Holliston Ave, Pasadena, CA 91125). The bus will leave at 9am, so plan to arrive by 8:45am. See the handout on Moodle for further details and tips. *Recommended:* Listen to “The Villa dei Papiri on Display in Malibu,”

season 4, episode 91 of the Art+Ideas Getty podcast (run time 54 minutes). Curator Ken Lapatin and conservator Erik Risser discuss the exhibition. <https://blogs.getty.edu/iris/podcast-the-villa-dei-papiri-on-display-in-malibu/>

<b>Week 3: “Vesuvius Now”: the Hollywood Disaster Movie</b>
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**Tuesday, October 15**

*Readings and Viewings:*

*Volcano* (1997; \$3.99 rental on Amazon); *Dante’s Peak* (1997; Netflix or \$3.99 rental on Amazon); Mike Davis *The Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (1998) pp. 6-14 and 275-282

*In-class:*

Group 2 Discussion Facilitation

**Thursday, October 17**

NO CLASS MEETING. Dr. Sullivan will be attending a conference in Ohio. In lieu of class, work on the short writing assignment due on Monday, October 21.

<b>Unit 2: Tambora, <i>Frankenstein</i>, and “The Year Without a Summer”</b>
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<b>Week 4: Volcanic Eruptions and “Unnatural” Weather</b>
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**Monday, October 21:** Short Response Paper #1 due by 5pm. The short response papers are ways to generate discussion in class, synthesize the materials that you have found engaging so far, and to test out ideas for the long paper due at the end of Week 5. We will discuss detailed directions in class (which will also be available on Moodle), but in brief, the first short response paper will allow you to creatively and critically reflect on your visit to the “Buried by Vesuvius” exhibit at the Getty Villa using texts we’ve read in class and multimedia elements from your visit (e.g. sketches, photographs, recordings, etc.). For students who have received permission in advance to miss the field trip, we will make arrangements for you to complete this assignment using alternative source material(s).

**Tuesday, October 22**

*Readings:*

Gillen D’Arcy Wood’s *BRANCH* article “1816, the Year Without a Summer” (2011); Byron’s “The Darkness” (1816); Jeffrey Vail, ““The bright sun was extinguish’d”: The Bologna Prophecy and Byron’s ‘Darkness’” (1997) pp. 183-192; Introduction to “Ecocriticism” (Purdue *OWL*).

*In-class:*

If time permits, students may volunteer to share from their creative and analytical reflections on the Getty Villa (or from pre-approved alternative assignments).

**Thursday, October 24**

*Readings:*

*Frankenstein* Volume I, pp. 47-110; Adam Frost and Zhenia Vasiliev “How to tell you’re reading a gothic novel – in pictures” (2014); Sharon Ruston “The Science of Life and Death in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*” (2014)

*In-class:* Clips from *Penny Dreadful* (2014) and National Theatre Live: *Frankenstein* (2011)



## Week 5: Nature and “Monstrousness”

### Tuesday, October 29

#### Readings:

*Frankenstein* Volume II, pp. 111-160; Percy Shelly, “Mont Blanc” (1816); Helene Fouquet, “Want to See Climate Change? Come With Me to the Mont Blanc Glacier” (2015); Rob Nixon, “The Swiftiness of Glaciers: Language in a Time of Climate Change” (2018); excerpt from Freud “The Uncanny” (1919). *Recommended*: re-skim Philip Shaw “Landscape and the Sublime”

#### In-class:

Group 3 Discussion Facilitation

### Thursday, October 31

#### Readings:

*Frankenstein* Volume III, pp. 161-221; Anne K. Mellor “Gender, Nature, and *Frankenstein*” (2018); Jennifer Schuessler “*Frankenstein* at 200” (2018); Leo Braudy “Why we’ll always be obsessed with – and afraid of – monsters” (2016)

#### In-class:

Group 4 Discussion Facilitation

### Friday, November 1

Essay 1 due by 5pm

## Week 6: Skies on Fire: Studying Perspectival and Atmospheric Effects

### Tuesday, November 5

#### Readings:

C. S. Zerefos et. al. “Atmospheric effects of volcanic eruptions as seen by famous artists and depicted in their paintings” (2007); find a scholarly peer-reviewed article about *Frankenstein* that is relevant to your interests (NB: I will post a list of potential articles on Moodle that you may read or use as a jumping off point).

#### Writing Assignments:

Short Response Paper #2 is due by the beginning of class. In addition to submitting it via email, please bring a copy to class to use for an in-class writing workshop. We will discuss detailed directions in class (which will also be available on Moodle), but in brief, the second short response paper will allow you to practice close reading by analyzing *Frankenstein* and to practice proper citations by incorporating a secondary source into your analysis. You may choose to expand on these ideas for Essay 2.

### Thursday, November 7

#### Readings:

Monique Morgan “The Eruption of Krakatoa (also known as Krakatau) in 1883” (2013); Richard Hamblyn “The Krakatoa Sunsets” (*Public Domain Review*); selections from *Nature*: “The Java Disaster” (1883) pp. 140-141, “The Remarkable Sunsets” (Dec. 1883) pp. 174-180; “The

Remarkable Sunsets” (featuring Gerard Manley Hopkins’s letter) (Jan. 1884) pp. 222-225;  
Alfred, Lord Tennyson “St. Telemachus” (1892)

<b>Unit 3: Krakatoa</b>
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<b>Week 7: Volcanic Apocalypse</b>
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**Monday, November 11:** Dr. Sullivan submits midterm deficiency notices

**Tuesday, November 12**

*Readings:*

Shiel’s *The Purple Cloud* (1901) pp. 3-56

**Thursday, November 14**

*Readings:*

*Purple Cloud* pp. 56-108

*In-class:*

Group 5 Discussion Facilitation

<b>Week 8: Volcanic Apocalypse</b>
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**Tuesday, November 19**

*Readings:*

*Purple Cloud* pp. 108-160

**Thursday, November 21**

*Readings:*

*Purple Cloud* pp. 160-211

*In-class:*

Group 6 Discussion Facilitation

**Friday, November 22**

Short Response Paper #3 is due by 5pm. We will discuss detailed directions in class (which will also be available on Moodle), but in brief, the third short response paper will allow you to practice close reading by analyzing *The Purple Cloud* and to practice proper citations by incorporating a secondary source into your analysis. You may choose to expand on these ideas for Essay 2.

<b>Week 9: Volcanic Apocalypse</b>
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**Tuesday, November 26**

*Readings:*

*Purple Cloud* pp. 211-261; John Sutherland’s “Introduction” to *The Purple Cloud* (xiii-xxxviii)

*In-class:*

Group 7 Discussion Facilitation



**Thursday, 11/28**

NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

<b>Unit 4: Volcanoes in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Beyond</b>
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<b>Week 10</b>
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**Tuesday, December 3**

*Readings and Visual Texts:*

Edvard Munch *The Scream* (1893); Fred Prata, Alan Robock, and Richard Hamblyn “The Sky in Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*” (2018)

**Thursday, December 5**

*Readings:*

Jean Rhys “Heat” (1976) pp. 36-37; N.K. Jemisin “Stone Hunger” (2014); find one or two news articles about recent volcanic events that interest you (e.g.: 2010 Eyjafjallajökull, 2015 Calbuco, 2018 Kilauea, 2018 Anak Krakatau, etc.).

<b>Final Exams: Week 11</b>
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**Wednesday, December 11**

Essay 2 due by 5pm