

**David Hancock**

**Dissertation Abstract**

**Tentative Title of Dissertation:**

“Brazilian Crime Novels Obliterate Common Sense: A Study of Rubem Fonseca”

**Abstract:**

In my dissertation I analyze seven crime fiction novels written over the last three decades by the Brazilian author Rubem Fonseca (1925- ) and show how his work denounces the social construction of what neoliberal ideology calls ‘common sense’. I make a case for studying these novels by demonstrating their weakening of social narratives understood as absolute truths and their questioning of conclusions taken for granted about class mobility, politics and gender. Through a parody of what sociologists call hegemonic masculinity, Fonseca’s novels show how a narrative spin gets put on everything understood as truth. By giving the reader access to the thoughts and senses of the murderer, the philanderer and the whore, he gains an understanding as to how and why a character originally thought to be ‘bad’ acts as the reader actually would. Through representations of violence and gender relations, Fonseca’s novels join the class and gender struggles to demand a better world than the one Mandrake, the narrator in most of the novels, sees when he observes families of the poverty stricken fighting over the newest delivery of trash behind a restaurant in Rio (*A grande arte* p. 32).

Mandrake is a criminal lawyer who easily represents the world’s middle class. His character serves to link this class with masculine, neoliberal common sense which compels him to ignore his compassion for the less fortunate. Mandrake’s stream of consciousness reveals he is the paradigm of the subject divided. Through him and through characters from other race and class backgrounds, Fonseca’s work denounces society’s loyalty to hegemonic masculinity, holding it responsible for much of the world’s violence and inequalities.