

**LOOKING THROUGH
A GLASS ONION:
TRANSPARENCY,
TRUST, AND THE COVID
INFODEMIC**



**Friday, March 20, 2026 @ 3:00 pm
Pusan National University
Humanities Hall, Room 501**

Susan Hegeman
(University of Florida)

Talk Description

The Covid pandemic tested our capacities for trust—in governments, authority figures, our fellow citizens and even our friends and neighbors. Also tested was our capacity for care and concern for others, including the weak, the vulnerable, and the suffering. This lecture addresses the role that digital media and the tech industry played in this erosion of social trust via an examination of Rian Johnson’s satirical film *Glass Onion* (2022). The film is a classic house mystery set on a private island estate crowned by a glass onion dome. Set during the pandemic, it involves a “Covid pod” of media influencers, assembled by a tech billionaire to play a murder mystery game that goes tragically awry. The film critiques the self-serving ideologies of the digital media industry, which elide liberal-democratic conceptions of transparency with disintermediation and prioritize “disruption” over care and community.

Susan Hegeman is a Professor of English at the University of Florida and the author of *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (Princeton, 1999) and *The Cultural Return* (University of California, 2012). She is currently working on a book project tentatively entitled “Culture Wars: Institutions and the Crisis of Value.”

**THE CARE WORK OF
STORYTELLING
IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC,
CLIMATE CHANGE, AND
OTHER EMERGENCIES**



**Friday, March 20, 2026 @ 3:00 pm
Pusan National University
Humanities Hall, Room 501**

Phillip Wegner
(University of Florida)

Talk Description

This talk takes up three figures—the marks of our passage through landscapes, Immanuel Kant’s notion of the public use of reason (öffentlichen Gebrauche seiner Vernunft), and quantum mechanical entanglement—in order to meditate on the care work of storytellers: in particular, those storytellers who share the vocation of the teacher and scholar in a moment beset by the myriad challenges, institutional, political, and climatological, of our post-Covid moment. Not only are there no distinctions between the dancers and the dance of our labors of scholarship, teaching, and service, there are deep entanglements between our location in the university and the other worlds we inhabit. The goal in sharing stories of these various encounters and entanglements is to enable others to better understand their own freedom to make different realities—to educate them, as James Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus puts it in *Ulysses*, to “work the second” for themselves.

Philip E. Wegner is the Marston-Milbauer Eminent Scholar and Professor of English at the University of Florida, where he has taught since 1994, as well as the director of the Working Group for the Study of Critical Theory. He is the author of six books, including most recently *Invoking Hope: Theory and Utopia in Dark Times* (2020) and *Late Theory; Fredric Jameson, or The Persistence of Reading* (2026), both from the University of Minnesota Press.