First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions

Africana Studies [AFRSTY] 115G: Black Consciousness. Professor Tony Van Der Meer. TTh 12:30 – 1:45 and Tuesday 2:00 – 2:50

This course will examine the development of Black consciousness in the 20th century. The social, economic, cultural, and political implications of Black consciousness will be explored. The impact of Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, The Harlem Renaissance, The Civil Rights/Black Power movement, The Nation of Islam and The Black Arts Movement on the development of Black consciousness will also be examined.


This course examines the multiple, and often differing ways that Americans have lived, thought, and expressed themselves from World War II to the present. Much of our country’s history has been defined by conflicts among ethnic groups and social classes about rights to economic, social, and moral well-being and even the right to call oneself an “American.” To ponder these and similar problems, scholarship in American Studies draws on an interdisciplinary approach to thinking about life in this country. Starting with World War II, but with emphasis on the historical and the political context of American life since 1945, especially social class, ethnicity, race (most importantly, the African American struggle for civil rights), and work, we will use historical documents, literature, music, and movies to learn about the significant events and changes in American society since World War II and people’s responses to them.

Anthropology [ANTH] 113G: Food and Society. Professor Rita Shepard. MWF 9:00 – 9:50 and Wednesday 10:00 – 10:50.

This course revolves around food - a topic that is important to all of us. Throughout the semester we will explore how food is related to culture. Discussion topics include (among others): the origins of agriculture, food insecurity in America, the introduction and popularity of ethnic foods in the US, the pros and cons of genetically modified plants, food taboos, the social organization of eating, festivals, and feasting. The focus of this 4 hour/4 credit seminar is food. The readings are structured around different aspects of this topic that will allow us to closely examine how food, society, and culture are interconnected. As food is something that everyone can relate to in one way or another, I anticipate the discussions throughout the semester being quite lively and thought provoking. These class discussions will be facilitated by writing assignments designed to help you focus your thoughts and through in-class group projects. In our study of food we will also learn aspects of critical thinking, careful reading, as well as how to do library and web-based research. Longer writing assignments and oral presentations will allow you to apply these skills to specific questions and data sets.

This is a one semester four-credit version of the School for the Environment’s First-Year Seminar requirement. Course content will vary by instructor, but will focus on current issues in sustainable human, built, and natural systems of coastal New England. Using this approach, students will become increasingly familiar with and experienced in interdisciplinary discourse, the different ways of knowing, and the interplay between the arts, humanities, economic development, and natural and social sciences that comprise the study of sustainable human, built, and natural systems. Successful completion of this course will fulfill the students First-Year Seminar requirement which focuses on the capabilities of careful reading, clear writing, critical thinking, information technology, oral presentation, teamwork, and academic self-assessment. CDVCTR 179GL and ENVSTY [Environmental Studies] 179GL are the same class.

Classics 112G [CLSICS]: Women, Gender and Sexuality in Ancient Greece. Prof. Lynne LeBlanc. MWF 9:00-9:50 and Wednesday 8:00 – 8:50.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS COURSE IS TAUGHT IN ENGLISH, WITH ENGLISH READINGS. Many of the conceptions about men and women that we have in the West today are derived from those established in ancient Greece. These conceptions can, however, also serve as a baseline against which we can measure the progress over the millennia since then. Moreover, by taking this course and studying how the Greeks thought of gender and sexuality, you will come to understand some of the fundamental concepts in Western thought: distinctions between what is natural and what is conventional. We will also look into utopian speculation about how all of our conceptions can be turned upside down. Sexuality and gender create distinctions that are as basic and any a culture can have, and by working with them students can understand other basic concepts such as race, wealth and power.

The course will proceed historically, first looking at early, archaic ideas about men and women, and then moving into the literary, legal and philosophical works of the classical period. By looking at the roles women played in religion, law, science, and the family; by looking at philosophical inquiries into the role of men and women; and by examining the impact of war on Greek society we can get a clearer picture of how women lived in the ancient Greek world and how the roles of men and women were mutually defining. We also consider Greek ideas about hetero- and homosexuality. Thus, we will see how broad patterns of thought emerge from materials of many types: myth, history, literature, politics, medicine, and philosophy.


This first-year seminar course presents basic economic concepts and tools of analysis in the context of current economic issues. Controversies over the distribution of income, the role of markets, pollution, or globalization are often addressed, although topics vary with

In this course, we will connect literature (including short stories, poetry, plays, and graphic novels) to visual art (including paintings, film, and multimedia work on the internet). We will forge these connections using the theme of “identity,” paying close attention to how identity is created through characters, plot, imagery, color, movement, and space. How does literature and the visual arts attempt to represent the self as both an interior and exterior identity? How can we (or, can we ever?) represent the elusive workings of the self? How can art capture both the mind (our intellect) and heart (our emotions)? In working with the various versions, adaptations, and interpretations of the selected works, we will identify differences and similarities among different art forms, as well as the consequences of creative choice and circumstance. We will familiarize ourselves with literary devices and terminology such as genre, narrative voice, and diction, and understand how our awareness of those elements contributes to our appreciation and interpretation of what we read. We will engage in analytical, reflective, and creative writing about literature and visual art; ultimately, you will able to articulate your opinions of why a piece of writing and its visual interpretation "works" for you and why it does not. Hopefully, our study of the concept of “identity” will broaden its scope, and will apply both to the writers we study, and to you, as a reader, writer, and viewer shaping your own identity.

English [ENGL] 183G: Literature and Society.  TTh 9:30 – 10:45 and Tuesday 8:30 – 9:20

Introduction to the ways in which literary works represent a particular aspect of society, such as work, education, aging, or war. Close analytical reading of literary works with special attention to a writer's social milieu and choices of form (including figurative language and representations of speech), and how readers in varying social contexts have read and used the work.

English [ENGL] 185G: Literature and Film. MWF 12:00 – 12:50 and Wednesday 11:00 – 11:50.

An introductory examination of the relationship between moving pictures and the written word. Students will study how filmmakers and writers construct narrative, and how stories have been adapted across media. Other topics may include the following: the different ways that literature and film have dealt with the problem of realism, the use of iconic and symbolic modes, and the political implications of film.

This is a one semester four-credit version of the School for the Environment’s First-Year Seminar requirement. Course content will vary by instructor, but will focus on current issues in sustainable human, built, and natural systems of coastal New England. Using this approach, students will become increasingly familiar with and experienced in interdisciplinary discourse, the different ways of knowing, and the interplay between the arts, humanities, economic development, and natural and social sciences that comprise the study of sustainable human, built, and natural systems. Successful completion of this course will fulfill the students First-Year Seminar requirement which focuses on the capabilities of careful reading, clear writing, critical thinking, information technology, oral presentation, teamwork, and academic self-assessment. CDVCTR 179GL and ENVSTY 179GL are the same class.


This course examines the power and function of music in pan-human context. Drawing on a wide variety of sounds and texts, students investigate the relationship between music and intellect, spirit, community, and environment. Special attention is given to how terms, concepts and values from various world musics illuminate and amplify our essential understanding of this human phenomenon. Please note: Students may receive credit either for this course or for MUSIC C110 (World Music), but not for both.

Section 1: MWF 10-10:50 and Monday 9:00 – 9:50.
Section 2: MWF 2:00 – 2:50 and Wednesday 3:00 – 3:50.

This course will study some contemporary problems of social ethics, particularly abortion; the death penalty; pornography, hate speech, and censorship; and world hunger and poverty. We will study varied positions on these issues, and the justifications that have been offered to support them. The course will develop the ability of each student to clearly articulate her position in each of these controversies, and to defend it persuasively, both in speaking, and particularly in writing.

Section 1 MWF 9:00-9:50 and Friday 10:00-10:50.
Section 2 MWF 1:00-1:50 and Monday 2:00-2:50

This course examines several of the current threats to privacy in the computer age related to drug testing, the assembling of personal information dossiers, genetic screening, privacy on the internet, medical records, and workplace concerns. It makes use of philosophical legal, and privacy rights. This course may count toward the major in philosophy.
Psychology 131G  Personal & Social Determinants of Health: Disparity, Equity, & Health Promotion. Professor Daria Boeninger TTh 2:00 – 3:15 and Tuesday 3:25-4:15.

This course introduces a biological, psychological, and social understanding of health and health-related interventions, which arose in large part due to research in the field of Health Psychology. This course emphasizes consideration of equity and disparities in health, building your understanding of how and why health disparities occur across the U.S. population, how to think about ethics related to both action and inaction in the face of health inequities, and what can be done to achieve health equity. We will explore questions such as, Why do Americans, on average, experience worse health and shorter lifespans than people in other developed countries? Why do some groups of Americans experience worse health and shorter lifespans than other groups? Is health and health care a “right”?—and does every American actually have the same ability to pursue health and wellness as their fellow citizens do? What can we as a society do to reduce health disparities and promote health for every person in our country? What can we as individuals do to make sure we experience the best physical and mental health we can?

Seminar 114G [SEMINR 114G]: Investigations Across the Curriculum

First Year Seminar 114G [SEMINR 114G]: Investigations across the Curriculum – Spring 2019

This course is offered in several sections and three different versions.

**Reality and the Americas**

**Section 2 - #1670 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:45 and Tuesdays 11:00-11:50**
McCarty

**Section 5 - #2821– Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 11:00-11:50 and Wednesdays 12:00-12:50 McCarthy**

This course is an opportunity to examine the real world as a scholar. We begin with Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* to explore how we view the reality of the past. We then move to the present and investigate how new communication technologies are reshaping what we consider to be real connections with others, as well as how infotainment, social networking, and advertisement have reconstructed what we think people in the Americas should do and actually do. (For example, if you received a text message right now, would you interrupt your reading of this description to respond to it?) We will use materials drawn from various disciplines (such as history, psychology, and media-communication studies) to develop our definitions of reality, fact, truth, fiction, fantasy, myth, virtual space, and reality-television that apply to our academic and other experiences.

**Court Cases**

**Section 1 - # 1669 – Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 9:00-9:50 and Fridays 8:00-8:50 Prof. Bryan Williams**

**Section 4 - #2484 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:45 Prof. Kathleen Raddatz**
Section 6 - #4327 – Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 11:00-11:50 and Mondays 10:00-10:50 – Prof. Kathleen Raddatz

This First Year Seminar is about arguments, in particular legal and related arguments that are used in courtrooms. We will study real criminal, civil, and constitutional cases, as documented on film and in courtroom transcripts, and academic and news articles. Via these documents, you will observe the words and actions of individual jurors, judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys.

These cases represent both just and unjust outcomes. In some cases, the criminal evidence for guilt may be ambiguous. In some, the judicial system may be inherently biased because of a particular judge or lawyer, or because of the constraints of the appeals process or the ways the justice system is funded. And in other cases, the system seems to protect our rights well. Come judge for yourself.

*News Media and the War on Terror*

Section 3 - #1996 - Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:45 and Thursdays 11:30-12:20 - Staff

This course focuses on the 9-11-01 attacks, which ushered in a new war: the "Global War on Terror" (GWOT). Like other wars, the White House had to “sell” this to the public. The news media played a pivotal role in the buying, selling, and rejecting of the GWOT “sales pitch”.

We will explore news reports from the 9-11-01 era and scholarly responses to them. We also will pose such questions as: If all representations by the news media are distorted, are some nevertheless “better” than others? How are news reports always somewhat distorted, but not always lies? What are the obligations of the news media when reporting on the President, the Press, and Public during times of national crisis?

Seminar 120G [SEMINR 120G] Mind-Body Connections. Prof. Williams

Section 1 MWF 11:00-11:50 and Wednesday 12:00 – 12:50

Section 2: MWF 100 – 1:50 and Fridays 12:00-12:50

How do the body and mind interact? We will investigate this question through observations of ourselves, through observations and interviews of others, and through the course’s readings and library research. Along the way we will learn about how people deal with physical and emotional challenges and how some people seem more resilient while others may become more resilient. For assignments there will be journal entries, formal essays, and frequent presentations, often in groups. Once or more each week, meditation and/or physical exercise may be required as well. The exercises will be adaptable to short- or long-term physical limitations.
Section 1: Professor Brittanie Greco MWF 8:00 – 8:50 and Wednesdays 9:00 – 9:50  
Section 2: Professor Polly Welsh TTh 12:30-1:45 and Tuesdays 2:00 – 2:50

By examining the issues of race, class, and gender, participants look at what freedom has meant to different people in the United States. They are also asked to reflect on and write about their personal definitions of freedom and to broaden and deepen the understanding they bring to their own historical situations. Enrollment by Placement.

Seminar [SEMNR] 126G: Aging and Wisdom. Prof. Teddy Chocos. TTh 8:00 – 9:15; and Tuesday 2:00 – 9:30 – 10:20.

We will examine varied historical, cross-cultural, and literary views on aging and wisdom. Through a wide range of texts and genres, a visit to a nursing home, and an interview with an octogenarian, we will take an in-depth look at the way individuals, societies and families deal with and view the elderly, death, and dying. We will analyze the causes and effects of these attitudes and how they relate to social and political expectations, policies, and changes. Enrollment by Placement.

Seminar [SEMNR] 127G: Food Matters Professor Marta Martinez Earley  
Section 1: MWF 12:00 – 12:50 and Wednesday 1:00-1:50  
Section 2: MWF 2:00 – 2:50 and Wednesday 3:00 – 3:50

Why does food matter? In this class we will explore our relationship to food and the role we play in the complex food system. We will read a selection of texts from a variety of genres as we examine different views on the meaning of food, food consumption, production, and sustainability. With the help of the readings and class materials, we will reconsider the ways in which we think about food and the associations we have with food, and we will carefully reflect on the implications of our food choices and our responsibilities as consumers in the complex food system. Assignments and course materials will be available via Schoology.

Section 1: Prof. Lakshmi Srinavas MW 4:00 – 5:15 and Monday 5:30 – 6:20  
Section 2: Prof Linda Ai-Yun Liu, 10:00 – 11:50 Navitas Global Student Success Students only.

What is popular culture? How do mass media and popular culture help us to make sense of our world, identities, and relationships? Do we organize our lives around media or do media shape our lives? Do media technologies make us happier or better citizens in a democratic society? This course will address such questions by applying various theoretical lenses to artifacts and visual messages in media and popular culture, with a primary emphasis on developing a critical awareness of contemporary mass media (radio,
film, photography, music, television, fashion, video games, the internet) and their impact on culture.

You will examine your own conceptions and consumption of media through (1) readings and group tasks that engage and challenge your perspective on our cultural landscape, (2) a service-learning project that integrates the local community with your understanding of course material, and (3) writing assignments that allow you to apply the theories and concepts you learn to your own analysis of popular culture. Access to a camera is required. Note: Section 50 is reserved for Navitas program students.

Women and Gender Studies [WOST] 120G: Women and Men in Families. Professor Lynne Benson  TTh 8:00 – 9:15 and Thursdays 9:25-10:15. Has feminism destroyed the traditional family? Would marriages last longer if women and men shared family responsibilities equally? Does society still need to make major changes if we want both women's rights and stable families? Participants read, discuss, debate, and make up their own minds on these issues. We will also discuss how families deal with various crises, such as death, divorce and shifts in their economic status. This course may count toward the major and the minor in women's studies.