First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions

Fall, 2019


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social class, ethnicity, race (most importantly, the African American struggle for civil rights), and work, we will use historical documents, literature, music, and movies to learn about the significant events and changes in American society since World War II and people’s responses to them.


Section 1: TTh 8:00 – 9:15 and T 9:30 – 10:30. Class Number 3160.
Section 2: TTh 4:00 – 5:15 and Thursday 5:30 – 6:30. Class Number 1415.

This course examines the influence of culture on human behavior from an anthropological perspective. We focus on a number of case studies drawn from Native American, African and European contexts to consider how various aspects of culture — religion, technology, language, social structure, etc. — lead people to behave differently within different societies. The course readings include works of literature and history, as well as anthropological writings. During the course of the semester we consider such questions as: Why are there different cultures across the globe? How is culture related to human nature? Is it possible to understand a way of life that is truly different from one’s own? How and why do humans typically misunderstand one another across cultural lines? The purpose of the course is to provide students with an in-depth introduction to the anthropological concept of culture.

Anthropology [ANTH] 113G: Food and Society. Professor Rita Shepard
the focus of this 4 hour/4 credit seminar is 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 the origins of agriculture, modern agriculture and genetically modified foods, food taboos, food insecurity and hunger, festivals/feasting food, and more. The readings are structured around different aspects of these topics that will allow us to closely examine how food, society, and culture are interconnected, and I anticipate the discussions throughout the semester being quite lively and thought provoking. These class discussions will be facilitated by writing assignments and participation in 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.

Cinema Studies [CINE] 121G: Space, Place, and Cinema, Professor Linda Ay-Yun Liu. MWF 2:00 – 2:50 and M 3:00 – 3:50. Class Number 10861.

This first-year seminar explores the many different ways in which space and place are represented in cinema, while also teaching students how to closely observe and critically analyze films. Drawing from cinema history and criticism, it examines how films instill spaces with meaning and transform them into distinctive places. Through screenings of a broad array of films, we will tour a variety of cinemas from throughout the world and investigate such topics as the role of settings in film narratives, and contemporary experiences of displacement and marginalization.


This course will address philosophical, sociological, and psychological issues related to sexual ethics. We will cover topics such as the influence of Christianity on current sex education, justice issues with regard to sexual practices, the right to pleasure, harm arguments with regard to coercion, the idea of consent, and moral issues regarding media objectification, pornography, and prostitution.

Economics [ECON] 110G: Economic Ideas. Professor Ellen Frank TTH 2:00-3:15 and T 1:00-2:00. Class 3678.

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 the instructor. Students may receive credit for only one of ECON 100, ECON 110G or ECON 112G.
MWF 10:00 – 10:50 and Wednesday 9:00-9:50. Class 10705. Please note that this is the same course as Women’s and Gender Studies 197GL Section 1.

(THE SAME COURSE AS WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES 179GL.)

Where do our ideas about sexuality and gender come from? How has culture shaped the way we experience love and relate to our own and others’ bodies? How might examination of our own experiences enable us to better understand the complex nature of sexuality and the “performance” of gender? The overarching goal of this course is to explore and re-evaluate diverse conceptions of sexuality & gender, conducting an inquiry across a wide range of disciplines: English, women’s studies, cultural studies, biology, psychology, philosophy, film, and law. We will examine relationships between embodiment, desire, knowledge, and power—using story, cinema, personal reflection, and critical theory, to pry out and identify threads of connection. We will think at length about identity and community, seeking to understand how individual life and collective culture are influenced by assumptions about the body, its desires, and its meanings. We will also examine how systemic forms of oppression intersect, reinforce and magnify each other. To this end, the various political, economic, legal, and medical barriers that have faced—and which continue to face—the LGBTQ community, will be given particular emphasis.

English [ENGL] 183G: Literature and Society—Experiencing Boston Culture, People, and Places
This is a double “field trip” course connected with English 101
Section 1 and 2. Both Sections are offered TTh 12:30 – 1:45, and Thursday 1:45-2:50

At UMass Boston, we are lucky that our home is one of America's most culturally rich, dynamic, and innovative cities. This first-year course emphasizes the study of Boston culture, arts, literature, and history, featuring exciting field trips into (awesome!) Boston. We focus on generating analytical and creative approaches to studying--and experiencing--urban spaces, using Boston as our hands-on laboratory. The course captures the excitement and imagination that defines Boston, including experiences such as taking walking tours of the city, having guest lectures, and visiting museums and restaurants. We have many memorable trips planned, such a tour of the Boston Harbor Islands and our annual visit to Edgar Allen Poe's statue on Halloween!

This double course counts as TWO courses; the courses are offered back-to-back and you will be registered for both, giving us the needed time for Thursday afternoon field trips. These TWO courses give you credit for your required first-year Composition course and your required First-Year Seminar:

To be added into the course, which is blocked from student view, contact Rachel Puopolo, CLA Program Coordinator: rachel.puopolo@umb.edu
For questions about the course or registering for it, contact the English Department during business hours: 617-287-6700.

Students can continue to take a version of this double course in the spring (last year, word got out about how exciting the fall was and more people asked to be in the spring course than fall!). You can see photos from last year's spring class at this website: https://www.umb.edu/academics/cla/english/course_spotlight. Come join us as we go out into Boston and we bring Boston into our classroom!

**English [ENGL] 189G War in Literature. Prof. Paul Dyson**

MWF 11:00 – 11:50 and Monday 10:00 – 10:50  Class Number 1156

In this course, we will examine the ways in which literary works approach the challenge of representing war--the terrors of war as well as the triumphs. We will focus our study on the ethical and aesthetic issues particular to the depiction of war in a variety of media, such as novels, short stories, poetry, graphic novels, film, and journalism. This seminar is offered with military veterans in mind, and will provide opportunities to bring the experience of military service to the process of University study and intellectual inquiry. We will read works depicting war that span three millennia but we will focus the majority of our time on texts that address conflicts in which the United States has been involved since the early Twentieth Century. We will also spend time examining how veterans and texts about war interact--how veterans are depicted, how society regards veterans, and how veterans, particularly veteran authors, see themselves.

**French 150G: Self and Other in French Literature. Professor Dennis Gilbert**

MWF 12:00 – 12:50 and Wednesday 1:00 – 1:50. Class Number 4245.

A study of individual identity within communities of other selves, through close reading and analysis of literary works by the major French existentialist writers: Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus. These texts represent a broad range of moral, esthetic, and political conflicts. The essential human questions that they pose challenge students to reexamine their own education, beliefs, and actions. All readings are in English.

**Labor Studies [LABOR] 111G: Work and Society.**

Section 1: Prof. Natalicia Rocha Tracy. TTh 12:30 – 1:45 and Thursday 2:00 – 2:50. Class Number 3542.

Section 2: Prof. Alejandro Reuss. MWF 10:00-10:50. And F 11:00-11:50. Class Number 10345.

In this course, students will be actively engaged in learning about the interaction between the nature of work and the organization of society. How does the structure of work affect
that nature of society? How does the nature of society affect the structure of work? What are the characteristics of a “good job”? How does the larger social context affect whether jobs are “good” or “bad”? How do issue of gender and race play out in the job market? Who gets what jobs and why? How do the gender and racial job issues connect to gender and racial issues in the larger society? Drawing on students’ own work experiences, combined with readings, possibly films, and visits from activists in unions and other workers’ organizations, the course will explore some of the challenges of race, gender, and class that arise in the workplace and interact with broad issues of social relations. A theme running through the course will be the extent of workers’ power and their quest for social and economic justice. Moreover, this course is defined not simply by its subject matter, but also by the emphasis that is placed on critical thinking, writing, and oral presentation. This emphasis is facilitated by the subject matter; by examining issues of controversy and conflict surrounding the work-society relationship, the course leads students to develop their critical skills in order to understand fully those issues. (Note: In discussions race, gender, and class, it is necessary to recognize that there are many differences within these groups as well as between them. When we talk about average differences between groups and make generalizations about differences between groups, it is important not to lose sight of the difference within each group.)

Music [MUSIC] 105G: Music of the World. Professor Frederick Stubbs
MWF 9:00 – 9:50 and Friday 10:00 – 10:50. Class 1754.

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.

Nursing [NURSNG] 100G Transitions in Nursing.
Section 1: Prof. Manu Tharkal. TTh 9:30 – 10:45 and Thursday 10:45-11:45 Class 4083.

This first year seminar focuses on enhancing students' capabilities in the areas of clear reading and writing, critical thinking, information technology and information literacy, team work, speaking and listening, and self-assessment within the context of understanding transitions in the who of nurses and the what and where of nursing practice across the millennia. The influences of philosophy, religion, education, and societal norms on the evolving roles of nurses will be discussed. The influence of transitions in scientific knowledge, including nursing core concepts and essential competencies for quality and safety, on the what of nursing practice also will be discussed. In addition, the influence of global geo-political concerns and health-related policies on where nursing is practices will be discussed.

Nursing [NURSNG] 107G Understanding HIV Disease.
Section 1: Professor Leonard Alberts TTh 9:30 – 10:45 and Thursday 10:45-11:45.  
Class Number 3241.

Section 2: Professor Donna Gallagher  TTh 9:30 – 10:45 and Thursday 10:45-11:45.  
Class Number 4122.

This course provides a comprehensive overview of HIV disease. Scientific perspectives from virology, immunology, healthcare and epidemiological literature will be presented. This will be followed by examining selected works from the humanities that examine the lived experience of persons with HIV disease. Finally, the relationship between HIV disease and society will be examined, including social, cultural, economic, policy, and moral/ethical issues. Focus will be on integration of multiple perspectives in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of HIV.

Section 1: TTh 2:00-3:40  
Section 2: TTh 4:-5:40

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.

Philosophy [PHIL] 130G: Privacy.  
Section 1: MWF 8:00 – 8:50 and Monday 9:00 – 9:50 Prof. David Flesche.  Class Number 3035  
Section 2: MWF 1:00 – 1:50 and Wednesday 2:00 – 2:50 Prof. Maria Brincker  
Class Number 2264  
Section 3: MWF 12:00 – 12:50 and W 11:00-11:50. Class Number 4499.  
Section 34 MWF 1:00-1:50 and Monday 2:00 – 2:50.  Prof. David Flesche.  Class Number 4563.

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.


This course covers three themes-religion and public life, violence and non-violence, sexes and sexualities. Students become familiar with a range of major religious thinkers.
and formulate their own constructive positions. This course may count toward completion of the Study of Religion Program.

**First Year Seminar 114G [SEMINR 114G]: Investigations across the Curriculum**

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

**Enrollment by Placement**

**Reality and the Americas**

Section 3 – Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 10:00-10:50 and Mondays 11:00-11:50  
Prof. Meesh. McCarthy  
Section 4 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:45 and Thursdays 2:00-3:00  
Prof. Krysten Hill  
Section 11 - Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 10:00-10:50, and Fridays 11:00-11:50 
Section 12 –Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 12:00-12:50 and Wednesdays 11:00-11:50  

This course is an opportunity to examine the real world as a scholar. First, we will explore new ways of viewing the reality of the past. We will then investigate how new technology is reshaping what is considered to be accurate American history, how social networking is reshaping what we consider to be real connections with others, and how infotainment, technology, and advertisement have reconstructed what we think people in the Americas should and actually do. 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 identity that apply to our academic and other experiences.

**Court Cases**

Section 5 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:45 and Thursdays 8:00-9:15  
Prof. Kathleenn Raddatz  
Section 8 – Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 12:00-12:50 and Mondays 1:00-1:50  
Prof. Kathleen Raddatz  
Section 9 – Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 9:00-9:50 and Mondays 8:00 -8:50  
Prof Bryan Williams  

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 1 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 – 10:45 and Tuesdays 11:00-11:50 Prof. Meesh McCarthy
Section 7 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:45 Prof. Jason Hinkley

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 Mind-Body Connections
Professor Williams

Section 1: Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 2:00-2:50 and Wednesdays 3:00-3:50
Section 2: Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 1:00 – 1:50 and Fridays 12:00-12:50
Section 3: Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 11:00 – 11:50 and Mondays 10:00-10:50

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 will be required as well. The exercises will be adaptable to short- or long-term physical limitations.

Section 1: Professor Lorena Fuentes Fabe MWF 8:00 – 8:50 and M 9:00-9:50
Section 2: Professor Polly Welsh TTh 2:00 –3:45

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.

Section 1: Professor Teddy Chocos TTh 12:30-1:45; Th 2:00 – 2:50
Section 2: Professor Jessica Smalley TTh 12:30-1:45; Th 2:00 – 2:50
Section 3: Professor Jessica Smalley TTh 12:30-1:45; Th 2:00 – 2:50  
Section 4: Professor Lorena Fuentes-Rabe TTh 4:000-5:15 and T:5:30-6:209

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 2:00 – 2:50; W 3:00-3:50  
Section 2: MWF 8:00 – 8:50; W 9:00-9::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. We will have a wiki that I created for our class. Students will be able to extend our class discussions to cyberspace by having a place to further communicate with each other and exchange views and opinions on the issues discussed in class, as well as posting some assignments for review.

Sociology [SOCIOL] 110G: Insiders/Outsiders. Prof. Anna Beckwith  
Section 1: TTh 8:00 – 9:15 Tuesday 9:30 – 10:20  
Section 3: TTh 9:30 – 10:45 and Tuesday 10:45-11:25

What often makes it possible to justify and practice oppression is the division of groups of people into outsiders/insiders based on their gender, “race”/ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, religion, nationality, belief, ability, or others. Such “Us” vs. “Them” dualisms give oppressors the justification to organize social (economic, cultural, political) structures and interactions in such a way that the free development of their own creative powers comes at the expense of preventing others from developing the same in themselves. Central to what makes insider/outsider mentality and divisions possible is the deeper dualism of self vs. society. The central purpose of this course is to go beyond such an insider/outsider mentality and lifestyle by developing our sociological imaginations, a way of looking at the world and ourselves that helps us understand how our personal troubles and larger public issues have shaped and influenced one another, and can in turn shape and influence one another in non-oppressive ways. Using a variety of readings augmented by selected films, in this course we will explore how sociology can help us understand how society works itself out in our everyday lives, and how we can become better persons and help create better societies, thereby pursuing what a liberal arts education promises to do: to help individuals freely develop their creative powers and
seek the same for others in the world. Student assignments will consist of engaged attendance and participation in discussions, shared reports and presentations, and a term paper developed in multiple drafts, cultivating students' critical sociological imaginations by exploring the link between their personal troubles and ever globalizing public issues.

Section 1: Professor Daniel Finn MWF 10:00 – 1:50 and Monday 9:00 – 9:50 Class Number 2661
Section 2: Professor Lakshmi Srinavas TTh 12:30-1:45 and Tuesday 2:00-2:50 Class Number 3445
Section 50: Professor Linda Liu WF 12:00-1:50 ISSP students only Class Number 10896

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.

Latin American & Iberian Studies [SPAN] 160G Exile: The Latin American Experience. Prof. Nino Kebadze. TTh 12:30-1:45 and Thursday 2:00-3:00. Class Number 4131

This course examines how writers from Latin America have addressed their experiences of exile—what does it mean to be in exile, and the related questions of choice, identity, language, sense of belonging and at-homeness, and the possibility/impossibility of return—by studying a selection of representative essays, novels, poems, and short stories, with emphasis on works written during, or in the wake of, military dictatorships (i.e., Argentina, Uruguay or Chile).

Women and Gender Studies [WOST] 120G: Women and Men in Families.
Professor Lynne Benson
Section 1: MWF 8:00 – 8:50 and Wednesday 9:00 – 9:50. Class Number 3703.
Section 2: MWF 10:00 – 10:50 and Wednesday 11:00 – 11:50. Class Number 4497
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.

Women’s and Gender Studies [WGS] 197GL  Section 1: Sexuality in Nature and Culture. Professor Todd Drogy  MWF 10:00 – 10:50 and Wednesday 9:00-9:50. Class Number 10748. Please note that this is the same course as English 197GL

Where do our ideas about sexuality and gender come from? How has culture shaped the way we experience love and relate to our own and others’ bodies? How might examination of our own experiences enable us to better understand the complex nature of sexuality and the “performance” of gender? The overarching goal of this course is to explore and re-evaluate diverse conceptions of sexuality & gender, conducting an inquiry across a wide range of disciplines: English, women’s studies, cultural studies, biology, psychology, philosophy, film, and law. We will examine relationships between embodiment, desire, knowledge, and power—using story, cinema, personal reflection, and critical theory, to pry out and identify threads of connection. We will think at length about identity and community, seeking to understand how individual life and collective culture are influenced by assumptions about the body, its desires, and its meanings. We will also examine how systemic forms of oppression intersect, reinforce and magnify each other. To this end, the various political, economic, legal, and medical barriers that have faced—and which continue to face—the LGBTQ community, will be given particular emphasis.