First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions
Spring, 2020

Africana Studies [AFRSTY] 115G: Black Consciousness. Professor Tony Van Der Meer. MW TTh 12:30 – 1:45 and T 2:00 – 2:50. Class Number 7139.

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class, ethnicity, race (most importantly, the African American struggle for civil rights), and work, we will use historical documents, literature, music, and movies to learn about the significant events and changes in American society since World War II and people’s responses to them.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


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.


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.


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 be 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. MWF 10:00 – 10:50 and M 9:00 – 9:50. Class Number 10192
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.** Professor Christopher Craig. MWF 10:00 – 10:50 and W 11:00 – 11:50. Class Number 7735.

In 1839, John O’Sullivan proclaimed of America’s westward expansion: “We are a nation of human progress, and who will, what can, set limits to our onward march? Providence is with us and no earthly power can [stop us]. . .The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American greatness.” Indeed, for the next century and a half, America settled the land west of the Mississippi, from the Texas plains to the Rocky Mountains to the California coast, and across the Pacific Ocean to the Hawaiian Islands. Through American literature and film, we will consider the legacy of this expansion. Who were these settlers? How did America’s settlement of the west shape the nation’s character? How did it affect the surviving indigenous peoples who were living on the prairies, in the Panhandle, in the Great Northwest, long before the Americans and Europeans arrived? America’s “onward march” produced great wealth for the United States, but it also resulted in the deaths of arguably millions of Indians, while it irrevocably altered landscapes and ecosystems. How does this knowledge complicate O’Sullivan’s claim to “American greatness”? We will explore these questions and many others, as we interrogate literature and film about the American west.

**Environmental Studies [EnvSty] 179G: First-Year Seminar for the School for the Environment.** Prof Alan Wiig. MW 4:00 – 5:50. Class Number 81234

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.**

**Music [MUSIC] 105G: Music of the World.** Professor Frederick Stubbs MWF 9:00 – 9:50 and Friday 8:00 – 8:50. Class 7897.

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 10:00 – 10:50 and M 9:00 to 9:50 Class Number 7693
Section 2: MWF 2:00 – 2:50 and W 3:00 – 3:50 Class Number 7856

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. Prof. Brian Kinery

Section 1: MWF 9:00 – 9:50 and Friday 10:00 – 10:50 Class Number 6227
Section 2: MWF 1:00 – 1:50 and Monday 2:00 – 2:50 Class Number 6373

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 MWF 4:00 – 5:15 and M 3:00-3:50. Class Number 8244.

This course introduces a multi-disciplinary understanding of health and health-related interventions, with insights from the field of Health Psychology providing our dominant lens for viewing connections between the biological, psychological, and social influences on health. This course emphasizes consideration of 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?

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 – Spring 2020

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

**Reality and the Americas**

**Section 2 - #5960 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:45 and Tuesdays 11:00-11:50**
McCarthy

**Section 5 - #7048 – Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 11:00-11:50 and Mondays 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: Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 9:00-9:50 and Fridays 8:00-8:50 - Professor Bryan Williams.  Course Number 5959.**

**Section 4: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:45 – Professor Katie Raddatz.  Course Number 6735**

**Section 6: Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 11:00-11:50 and Mondays 10:00-10:50 – Professor Katie Raddatz.  Course Number 8095**

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.

\textit{News Media and the War on Terror}

Section 3 - #6267 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:45 and Thursdays 11:30-12:20 - McCarthy

This course focuses on the ways in which news media frame events, using reports on the 9/11/01 attacks and the “Global War on Terror” (GWOT) as key examples. 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 the Public during times of national crisis?

SEMINAR 120G  Mind-Body Connections. Professor Bryan Williams

Section 1: Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 11:00-11:50 and Wednesdays 12:00-12:50  Class Number 7586

Section 2: Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays 1:00 – 1:50 and Fridays 12:00-12:50  Class Number 7807

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 Brittanie Greco  MWF 8:00 – 8:50 and W 9:00-9:50 Class Number 6734.
Section 2:  Professor Jessica Smalley TTh 12:30 – 1:45 and  T 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. \textbf{Enrollment by Placement.}
Seminar [SEMNR] 126G: Aging and Wisdom. Professor Jason Hinkley TTh 8:00-9:15; Th 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; W 1:00-1:50 Class Number 7602
Section 2: MWF 2:00 – 2:50; W 3:00-3:50 Class Number 7603

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 association 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.


Section 1: TTh 8:00 – 9:15 Tuesday 9:30 – 10:20 Prof. Lakshmi Srinavas. Class Number 9575.
Section 2: MW 11:00 – 11:50 ISSP Students Only. Class Number 12525

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.

Women and Gender Studies [WOST] 120G: Women and Men in Families.
Professor Lynne Benson TTh 8:00 – 9:10 and Th 9:30 – 10:20. Class Number 8962.

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.