1 November 2026

Spring 2027

First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions by the Instructors

Catalog Course Descriptions May Be Found at https://courses.umb.edu/search/spring-2027/?courseSeminars=First%20Year%20Seminar

Africana Studies [AFRSTY] 115G: Black Consciousness. Prof. Tony Van Der Meer. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 3:00-3:50 *and* Mondays 4:00-4:50. Class Number 2129.

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.

American Studies [AMSTY] 110G: U. S. Society and Culture Since 1945. Prof. Anne Blaschke. Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-11:45 *and* Thursdays 1:55-2:45. Class Number 3362.

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social class, ethnicity, race (most importantly, the African American struggle for civil rights), and work, we will use historical documents, literature, music, and movies to learn about the significant events and changes in American society since World War II and people's responses to them.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. Prof. Rita Shepherd. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10:00-10:50 *and* Wednesdays 11:00-11:50. Class number 2125.

This course explores how food is related to culture. Discussion topics include the origins of agriculture, food taboos, the social organization of eating, festivals, and feasting.

Business Administration [BUSADM] 120G. Beacon to Business: Opportunities and Challenges.

Section 1: Prof. John Scialoia. Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-1:15. Class number 3675.

Section 2: Prof. Charles Wibrialske. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 11:00-11:50 *and* Monday 12:00-12:50 Class number 3676.

Section 3: Prof. Kristen Callahan. Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30-3:15. Class number 3677.

Section 4: Charles Wibrialske. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 1:00-1:50 *and* Wednesdays 12:00-12:50. Class number 3678.

Course Description: This course will be your guide to uncover the essential principles and basic challenges of the world of business. Over the course of two-week modules, we will delve into comprehending a new function of business and discover how these principles apply and become relevant in real-world business environments through an integrated course project to which each student contributes: a social impact business plan. The social impact business plan is a strategic document that outlines how a business intends to address a social or environmental challenge, while maintaining financial viability. We add to these practical areas an understanding of the contexts in which business operates - law, government, society, rapidly changing technology, new risks, the changing nature of careers, increasingly diverse workforces, and the broad global reach of business. This course will develop your capabilities in reading and critical thinking, oral and written communication, working in teams, information technology, academic self-assessment, and professional etiquette.

Cinema Studies [CINE] 121G: Space, Place, and Cinema. Prof. Linda Ai-Yun Liu. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 12:00-12:50 *and* Mondays 1:00-1:50. Class number 3326.

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.

Classics [CLSICS] 125G: The Myth of the Hero. Prof. Michael Mignanelli. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 2:00-2:50 *and* Mondays 1:00-1:50. Class number 5188.

This course examines the image of the hero in ancient Greek literature, focusing particularly on epics and tragedies that present single heroes or heroines who must undertake a journey or confront enemies. In addition to assessing various constructions of the hero, the class will consider larger questions prompted by the struggles Greek heroes faced, with themes including fate, death, failure, suffering, community values, honor, betrayal, redemption, and self-discovery.

Economics [ECON] 110G: Economic Ideas.

Section 1. Prof. Asad Butt. Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00-2:15 *and* Wednesdays 12:00-12:50. Class number 1744.

Section 2. Prof. Marija Bingulac. Tuesdays and Thursdays 5:30 – 6:45 *and* Thursdays 7:00 – 7:50. Class Number 5018.

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.

English [ENGL] 126G: Aging and Wisdom. Prof Carol Chandler-Rourke. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 – 3:40. Class Number 3342. Enrollment by placement.

We will examine varied historical, cross-cultural, and generational views on aging and wisdom. Through a wide range of texts and genres, we will take an in-depth look at the way individuals, societies and families develop and cope through aging and the stages of life. Through reading, writing and discussion, individual and group presentations, and research, we will analyze the causes and effects of generational attitudes and issues and how they relate to social and political expectations, policies, and changes. **Enrollment by placement.**

English [ENGL] 127G: Food Matters. Professor Mark Earley. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 1:00-1:50 *and* Mondays 2:00-2:50. Class Number 2367. Enrollment by placement.

Course Description: 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 also conduct research, both using library resources and first-hand field research. The

assignments in this course are designed to provide you with experience in the following seven capabilities: *careful reading, clear writing, critical thinking, use of information literacy, teamwork, oral presentation, and academic self-assessment.* **Enrolment by placement.**

English [ENGL] 179G: Sexuality in Nature and Culture. Prof. Todd Drogy. Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-5:10 PM. Class number 5073.

This course explores texts and film in order to expand, complicate, and challenge the way students think about diverse sexualities and genders. The course will ask where ideas about sexuality and gender come from, and question whether those ideas are rooted in nature or culture. Students will examine theories and concepts addressing cultural norms, systems of power, and the performance of the self. Students will become familiar with methods of analysis from a range of disciplines, including literature, women's studies, cultural studies, biology, psychology, philosophy, and law. As the class investigates sexuality and gender, students will engage in self-evaluation, examine methods of reasoning, and ask questions about cultural values and inheritances.

English [ENGL] 181G: Literature and the Visual Arts. Prof. Samantha Regan. Tuesdays and Thursday 4:00 – 5:40. Class Number 4394.

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 do 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. Section 2. Prof. Kenneth Sunnerberg. Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 3:40. Class Number 3065.

This course is an introduction to the ways in which literary works represent a particular aspect of society, such as labor, education, the arts, war, and contemporary social topics. 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.

Specifically, our focus on "Strange Tales and Stranger People" will examine stories that feature representations of characters, creatures, monsters, and places (from haunted houses to misrepresented borders) to understand how different literary forms are useful when reflecting on our societies. We will read a variety of texts such as fictional prose, the graphic novel, poetry, and a play, as well as secondary source materials.

English [ENGL] 185G: Literature and Film. Mondays and Wednesdays 4:00 - 5:40. Prof. Penelope MacDonald. Class Number 3657.

Adaptations? "The Good, the Bad, and the…Ugly?"
This course is an introductory examination of the relationship between moving pictures and the written word that will examine the artistic aspects of literature and film. We will consider the nature of film-what it is, what it does, why it matters. The course analyzes a variety of works drawn from multiple genres-the short story, novel, drama, documentaries, film, etc. As a class, we will study how filmmakers and writers construct narrative, and how stories have been "adapted" across media.
For our course, we want to think about the fusion of images and text in our world today through the lens of 'genre'—the way that moving pictures and words work together. This close connection between visual and verbal/written is not new, even though it is more present than ever, and this course will examine especially rich and interesting moments when writers and filmmakers were both experimenting with their materials and methods and pushing the boundary of what classifies as a particular "genre." Ultimately, we want to challenge how we read, see, and think about such elements related to specific genres in addition to the relationship between representation and imitation. How can we further our understanding of text and visual culture in terms of how they engage with challenging questions in society today?

Music [MUSIC] 105G: Music of the World. Prof. Frederick Stubbs.
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 9:00 – 9:50 *and* Fridays 10:00 – 10:50. Class number 3185.

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.

Philosophy [PHIL] 109G: Moral Debate in Society. Prof. Andres Perez-Carrasco. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10:00-10:50 *and* Mondays 11:00-11:50. Class number 2408.

This course will study some contemporary problems of social ethics, particularly our obligations to others in need, abortion, human reproductive cloning, animal rights, affirmative action, pornography, and capital punishment, as well as ethical issues associated with the use of force: torture, war, and terrorism.

Philosophy [PHIL] 130G: Privacy.

Section 1. Prof. Brian Kiniry. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 9:00-9:50 *and* Mondays 10:00-10:50. Class number 3633.

Section 2. Prof. Brian Kiniry. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 12:00-12:50 *and* Wednesdays 1:00-1:50. Class number 4431.

This course examines the nature of privacy from a philosophical as well as legal perspective. To further this examination, we will be addressing some of the following questions. What is privacy? Do we have a right to privacy? Are such rights ever properly overridden given considerations of the public good or safety and security concerns? While focusing primarily on informational privacy rights, we will also be considering such disparate issues as the privacy rights of children, the privacy rights of non-human animals, and the privacy rights of the dead.

Philosophy [PHIL] 140G: Philosophy through Film. Prof. Meredith Gunning. Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:40. Class number 3829.

By using imagery from the medium of film, this course attempts to show how philosophy can interconnect themes and ideas presented by film directors. Film provides the opportunity to consider traditional philosophical problems, but in a manner more reflective of the mode of communication of the age. As an aid to class discussion, students read scholarly papers in conjunction with viewing and examining a film. Central topics include epistemology, moral issues, personal identity, human freedom, and the meaning of life.

Political Science [POLSCI] 113G: Issues of Political Identity at the Turn of the Century. Prof. Ursula Tafe. Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:40. Class number 4922.

This course addresses the question of how and to what ends people choose a political identity, what it means to them, and what kinds of political commitments follow from it. Drawing on readings from across political science disciplines, the course examines political identity and some of the conflicts it can produce.

Religious Studies [RELSTY] 115G Religion, Politics, Sex, and Violence. Prof. Mia Applebaum. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 12:00-12:50 *and* Mondays 11:00-11:50. Class number 3519.

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.

SEMINAR [SEMINR] 114G: Investigations Across the Curriculum
This course is offered in several sections and several different versions:

Section 1. Professor Meesh McCarthy. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 8:00-8:50 *and* Wednesdays 9:00-9:50. Class number 1433.

Section 2. Professor Bryan Williams. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 9:00-9:50 *and* Fridays 8:00-8:50. Class number 1434.

Court Cases

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.

Section 3. Professor Meesh McCarthy. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10:00-10:50 *and* Fridays 11:00-11:50. Class number 1619.

Section 4. Professor Bryan Williams. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 12:00-12:50 *and* Fridays 1:00-1:50. Class number 1897.

Mind-Body Connections

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

Section 5. Professor Meesh McCarthy. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 1:00-1:50 *and* Fridays 12:00-12:50. Class number 2078.

Section 6. Professor Bryan Williams. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 2:00-2:50 *and* Wednesdays 3:00-3:50. Class number 2539.

Sense of Place

What makes a place meaningful? This seminar explores the concept of sense of place, examining how people develop meaning, connection, and belonging in relation to the environments around them. Drawing on perspectives from multiple disciplines, students investigate how personal experiences, social relationships, and physical environments shape the significance people attach to places. By examining both familiar and unfamiliar places, the course considers how relationships between people and places influence identity, community, and everyday life.

Section 7. Professor Jason Hinkley. Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:45 *and* Tuesdays 11:00-11:50. Class number 3347.

News Media & the War on Terror

This course focuses on the ways in which news media frame events, using reporting on the 9/11/01 attacks and the "Global War on Terror" (GWOT) as key initial examples. As with other wars, the White House had to "sell" this to the public. The media played a pivotal role in the buying, selling, and rejecting of the GWOT "sales pitch".

To explore questions such as: How are news reports always somewhat distorted, but not always lies? If all representations by the news media are distorted, are some nevertheless "better" than others? In which contexts do government officials, journalists, and citizens unthinkingly frame news? we will explore news reports about 9/11/01 along with artistic and scholarly responses to them. We will then explore how other important events since 9/11/01 have been framed by the news media, artists, and scholars through interdisciplinary research.

Section 8. Professor Jason Hinkley. Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:45 *and* Tuesdays 2:00-2:50. Class number 4245.

News Media & the War on Terror

Note: Section not shown to students

Sociology [SOCIOL] 110G: Insiders/Outsiders. Prof. Anna Beckwith. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 9:00-9:50 *and* Mondays 10:00-10:50. Class number 5007.

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.

Sociology [SOCIOL] 120G: Sociology of Popular Culture

Section 1: Prof. Daniel Finn. Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:00-9:15 *and* Tuesdays 9:30-10:45. Class number 5008.

Section 2: Professor Linda Ai-Yun Liu. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 2:00-2:50 *and* Wednesdays 1:00-1:50. Class number 50009.

Section 4: Prof. Daniel Finn. Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00-12:15 *and* Thursdays 9:30-10:45. Class number 5010.

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**.**

Theater Arts [THRART] 108G: Plays from Page to Stage. Prof. Amanda Fallon. Wednesdays and Fridays 11:00-12:45. Class number 4859.

Playwrights create works that get produced. How? By whom? Participants study how directors develop concepts; how collaboration with designers, actors, and technicians bears fruit; and how productions are promoted. The course also examines the rehearsal process and looks behind the scenes to where sets and costumes get built, lights are hung, and tech rehearsals begin and build to opening night.

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies [WGS] 120G: Women and Men in Families. Prof. Lynne Benson.

Section 1: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 8:00 – 8:50 *and* Fridays 9:00 – 9:50. Class Number 2044.

Section 2: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10:00 – 10:50 *and* Wednesdays 9:00 – 9:50. Class Number 4806.

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, as well as the impact of the COVID pandemic. This course may count toward the major and the minor in Women's Studies.