

October 28, 2025

Spring 2026

First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions by the Instructors

Catalog Course Descriptions May Be Found at
https://courses.umb.edu/course_catalog/subjects/2026%20Spring

Africana Studies [AFRSTY] 115G: Black Consciousness. Prof. Tony Van Der Meer. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 2:00 – 2:50 and Mondays 3:00-3:50 Class Number 2201.

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 11:00 – 12:15 and Thursdays 12:25 – 1:15. Class Number 3678.

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social class, ethnicity, race (most importantly, the African American struggle for civil rights), and work, we will use historical documents, literature, music, and movies to learn about the significant events and changes in American society since World War II and people's responses to them.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 Shepard Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10:00 – 10:50 and Wednesdays 11:00 – 11:50. Class Number 2197.

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.

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

Section 2: Prof. John Scialoia. Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30 – 1:15. Class Number 4212.

Section 3: Prof. Kristen Callahan. Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30 – 3:15. Class Number 4213. Reserved for College of Management Students.

Section 4: Prof. Charles Wibiralske. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 11:00 – 11:50 and Mondays 12:00 – 12:50. Class Number 4214.

Section 6: Prof. Charles Wibiralske. Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30 – 3:15. Class Number 4215.

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 11:00 – 11:50 and Wednesdays 10:00 – 10:50. Class Number 3626.

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] 175G: Athenian Democracy. Prof. Michael Mignanelli.

Section 1: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10:00 – 10:50 and Mondays 11:00 – 11:50. Class Number 13730.

Section 2: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 12:00 – 12:50 and Wednesdays 11:00 – 11:50. Class Number 13731.

The Athenians of the fifth century BC were the first to develop a form of government that allowed all citizens to participate in decision-making. This course examines the historical developments that led to this democracy and its fruitful consequences in art, comedy, and philosophy

Economics [ECON] 110G: Economic Ideas. Prof. Asad Butt. Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00 – 3:45. Course Number 1781.

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. Staff. This seminar is reserved for ESL students. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 – 3:40. Class Number 3646. Enrollment by placement.

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.**

English [ENGL] 127G: Food Matters. Prof. Mark Earley. This seminar is reserved for ESL students. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 9:00 am – 9:50 and Mondays 10:00 – 10:50. Class Number 2494. Enrollment by placement.

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. **Enrollment by Placement.**

English [ENGL] 181G: Literature and the Visual Arts. Prof. Samantha Regan. Mondays, Wednesdays 4:00-5:40. Class Number 7548.

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. Prof. Kenneth Sunnerberg. Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 3:40. Class Number 3247.

This is not a double “field trip” course connected with English 101.

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 4155.

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.

English [ENGL] 187G. Schooled: Rethinking Education. Prof. Susan Field. Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:00 – 9:40. Class Number 3739.

Schools seem to be institutions full of contradictions: they are valued by society and blamed for our problems; they rely on theories and structures from the past to prepare students for their futures; and a school's purpose is to teach students how to think independently, but they follow rigid rule systems. It's no surprise that this system doesn't 'work' for every student. In this class we will think about these contradictions, read literature about learning, and consider what experts, theorists and journalists have to say about school. We will ask whether what we read can lead us to a deeper understanding of our own school experiences by examining themes such as race and racism, socioeconomics and poverty, and literacy and language. Working with critical concepts and terminology will enable us to reach a better understanding of how school 'works' in literature and in our real lives. Our goal will be to understand and maybe even offer a solution to one of the many 'issues' in education. Who better to take on such a challenge than someone with years of recent and relevant experience in this system, someone like you? This course values labor and practice; assessments include an analytical essay, a research project and a personal podcast project.

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 3451.

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. Theodore Locke. MWF 8:00 – 9:50 and Monday 9:00 – 9:50. Class Number 2548.

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 2: Prof. Brian Kiniry. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10:00 – 10:50 and Wednesdays 11:00 – 11:50. Class Number 4040.

Section 3: Prof. Maria Brincker: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 3:40. Class Number 13841.

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 140G: Philosophy through Film. Prof. Meredith Gunning. Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 3:40. Class Number 4536.

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. Areas of philosophy that are involved include metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, ontology, aesthetics, ethics, and social and political philosophy. Central topics include knowledge, moral issues, personal identity, human freedom and the meaning of life.

Psychology 131G Personal & Social Determinants of Health: Disparity, Equity, & Health Promotion. Prof. Daria Boeninger. Mondays and Wednesdays 2:30 – 3:45 and Wednesdays 4:00 – 4:50. Class Number 3727.

This course introduces a multi-disciplinary understanding of health, with insights from Health Psychology and related fields. The course emphasizes skills in finding, evaluating, and communicating scientific information (especially pertaining to health), including becoming familiar with and assessing a range of AI tools. We will explore international, community-, and individual-level comparisons in health, discovering the significant controllable factors in health. Two core questions we tackle in the course are, What can we do as a country to promote the health of everyone across our country? And, What can we do as individuals to make sure we experience the best physical and mental health we can?

Note that, as do all first-year seminars, this course involves group discussions, group work and presentations, and a research paper series and individual presentations. We also will have a range of guests visit us to share UMB resources, and to share about their health-related work or offer wellness-related workshops.

Religious Studies [RELSTY] 115G Religion, Politics, Sex, and Violence. Prof. Mia Applebaum. Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 3:15 and Thursdays 1:00 - 1:50. Class Number 3883.

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 114G: Investigations Across the Curriculum

This course is offered in several sections and three versions:

Reality the Americas

Section 1: Prof. Ian Drinkwater. Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:00 – 9:15 and Tuesdays 9:30 – 10:20. Class Number 1457.

Section 4: Prof. Meesh McCarthy. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 11:00 - 11:50, and Wednesdays 12:00 – 12:50. Class Number 1957.

Section 5: Prof. Ian Drinkwater. Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 – 12: 15 and Thursdays, 12:30 – 1:20. Class Number 2145.

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 2: Prof. Meesh McCarthy. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 9:00 – 9:50 and Fridays 10:00 – 10:50 Class Number 1458.

Section 8: Prof. Prof. Meesh McCarthy. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 1:00 – 1:50 and Wednesdays 2:00-2:50. Class Number 3323.

Section 9: Prof. Bryan Williams. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 3:00 – 3:50 and Fridays 4:00 – 4:50. Course Number 3657.

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.

The Mind-Body Connection

Section 3: Prof. Bryan Williams. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10:00-10:50 and Wednesdays 9:00-9:50. Class Number 1650.

Section 6: Prof. Bryan Williams. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 12:00-12:50 and Fridays 1:00-1:50. Class Number 2699.

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.

News Media and the War on Terror

Section 7: Prof. Jason Hinkley. Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:45 *and* Thursdays 2:00-2:50. Class Number 7287.

Section 10: Jason Hinkley. Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:00-5:15 *and* Tuesdays 5:30-6:20. Class Number 7289.

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.

Sociology [SOCIO] 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 6951.

Section 2: Prof. Linda Ai-Yun Liu. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 1:00 – 1:50 *and* Wednesdays 2:00-2:50. Class Number 6952.

Section 3: Prof. Daniel Finn. Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00-12:15 *and* Thursdays 9:30-10:45. Course Number 6953.

Section 4: Prof. Linda Ai-Yun Liu. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 9:00 – 9:50 *and* Mondays 10:00 – 10:50. Course Number 6954.

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.

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 2108.

Section 2: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10:00 – 10:50 *and* Wednesdays 9:00 – 9:50.
Class Number 3662.

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.