

FYS 110: First Year Seminar I (4 credit hours) MWF 10:40-11:50

These courses are designed to develop students' abilities in writing, critical thinking, and information literacy through critical inquiry on a specific topic. FYS 110 courses also include an orientation component to help students adjust to Augustana and learn about resources and opportunities that are available.

Fall 2020 First Year Seminar Course Descriptions

A: Unsinkable: Titanic Embarks on its Maiden and Last Voyage

[Unsinkable: the Titanic]

Margaret Preston

The R.M.S. Titanic, the largest passenger liner in the world, set sail on April 10, 1912. On April 14, the ship struck an iceberg and sank; like most passenger liners of the day, the Titanic did not have enough lifeboats. This course will discuss the myth and history of the Titanic. This is a story of the class divisions that characterized British society and featured on the ship. The Titanic was constructed at Harland and Wolff, located in Belfast, Northern Ireland, a city characterized by religious sectarianism - another part of the Titanic's story.

B: The Rise and Fall of Nations

Cory Conover

What makes a country great? What factors cause the decay or even collapse of societies? To understand the dynamics of creation and destruction, this class analyzes examples drawn from history--including the Greeks, Romans, the British Empire, and Nazi Germany. We will think broadly to consider culture, economy, military, politics, and natural resources. With these lessons, we examine the present to assess the fates of nations today.

C: Politics in Drama: The Moral Dilemma

Daniel Workman

Does art imitate life or does life imitate art? This class will use four plays, including *November* by David Mamet and *All the Way* by Robert Shenkkan, to examine and analyze some of the moral implications of politics. We will seek to understand the point of view of the playwright and identify the major dramatic question in each work. We will use the current political landscape to compare and contrast the ideological, thematic, ethical, and moral standards presented by the playwrights, and to examine our own moral codes.

D: The Curies, a Remarkable Family

Amy Engebretson

Members of the Curie family were awarded a total of three Nobel Prizes in nuclear physics and chemistry. In addition to their scientific research, the Curies were very engaged in the world around them. They felt a deep civic responsibility to France and Marie's native Poland. As we trace this remarkable family's history, we will discuss the responsibility of scientists for the uses of their research, the effect of honors on research, the challenges faced by women scientists, the strength gained through family ties and other topics. We will also discuss the science behind the many discoveries of the Curies.

E: Journeys of Discovery in the New World

[Journeys of Discovery]

Michael Rueter

We examine how experiencing cultural difference can alter one's sense of self as well as one's relationship with the world and the Other. We focus on two narratives of journeys into the Americas: a 16th-century Spanish explorer's tale and a 20th-century novel. Our consideration of these narratives examines how such journeys result in clashing world-views and a reimagining of the self. We explore such questions as: How can we best demonstrate awareness and respect to the Other? How do we proceed once our own vulnerabilities are exposed? What is the value of our journeys' lessons upon returning to our place of origin?

F: Robot Love and Mythology in Film

Rocki Wentzel

The myth of Pygmalion tells of a sculptor who creates a beautiful and lifelike statue with which he falls in love. The goddess of love, Aphrodite, eventually brings the statue to life. The Pygmalion myth and its themes frequently emerge in films about humans and their often complicated relationships with technological beings, such as robots and AIs. In this course, we will examine the ways in which the story of Pygmalion and related myths, such as those of Narcissus, Pandora, and Daedalus, illuminate questions about creativity, technology, and love. Films we will study include *Blade Runner 2049*, *Ex Machina*, and *Her*.

G: Rhetoric and Social Fabric

John Bart

Humans gather to celebrate, mourn, and reflect on social action. In each of these instances, audiences have a felt need to hear from leaders. These addresses are grounded in a community's values. We will examine commencement speeches, eulogies, and Presidential speeches during national crises. We will study rhetoric, critique it, and produce it. As you begin your educational journey, we will think about that journey's purpose.

H: Relentless Forward Progress

Emily Wanless

Increasingly, people are pushing the boundaries of what they think is possible, testing themselves in a sport that demands an incredible amount of physical and mental grit. As such, the world of ultramarathoning is exploding, with new races created and distances achieved every weekend. An ultramarathon is any race longer than the marathon's 26 miles and 385 yards but typically range from 50 kilometers to 100 miles. This course will explore a number of facets of ultrarunning, from the history and evolution of the sport to the science of training and race strategy, iconic races and athletes, and "the why" behind the whole thing.

I: Making Monsters Out of the 'Other': Philosophical Investigations of Inhumanity

[Making Monsters Out of the Other]

Julie Swantstrom

What does it mean to be not quite human, to be a monster? Philosophers have long discussed the boundaries between humanity and inhumanity. Understanding the strategies used to deem people sub-human is crucial to recognizing and resisting such determinations today. Students follow philosophers' footsteps, tracing shifts in defining monstrosity. Moving from the ancient period to the modern day, students explore the ways in which certain types of people—women, for example—have been described as monstrous; assignments and projects give students the chance to critique and respond to the methods used to determine the monstrous.

J: Sherlocked: Reading the Detective

Darcie Rives-East

Sherlock Holmes remains one of the most famous characters in literature and popular culture. First created in 1888 by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the great detective lives on in film, television, and print, and has inspired countless imitators, from House to CSI. What is the appeal of Sherlock Holmes, and why has he endured for over 100 years? This course will explore this question by returning to the original Doyle stories, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. We will see how critical thinking, the focus of FYS 110, is essential to Holmes's allure in print and on screen.

K: War and Memory

Patrick Hicks

Is there such a thing as “war literature” or would it be more correct to talk about literature that focuses on warfare? Are these narratives of violence, at their core, really just subversive “anti-war” statements that yearn for peace? In this class, we’ll discuss what it means to go to war, what it means to cope with PTSD, and how writing can help with the healing process. What does it mean to be a veteran? What can a nation demand of its citizens? We will read novels and poems from various wars over the last 50 years, and in so doing we will explore the common (in)humanity among all soldiers—friend and foe alike.

L: What Does it Mean to be Human?

Stephen Minister

This course will explore some of the fundamental questions of life with philosophers from Plato to the present day. What does it mean to be human? Why are we here? What matters in life? What’s our relationship to others, to society, and to the world? How should we live? We will study a variety of answers to these questions as we think through them deeply for ourselves.

M: For Tradition's Sake

Ann Kolbrek

Our world of progress offers all the modern conveniences one can imagine – from cars that govern themselves to cell phone control of our household appliances. But in this world of innovation, where does tradition fit? Companies like *Ancestry.com* remind us that knowing one’s heritage is back in fashion. Following the trend, this course examines diverse traditions (e.g. familial, cultural, educational) and determines tradition’s place in a modern world. The works we read will help inform us of our own traditions and invite us to reflect on this peculiar space we occupy between remembering the past and embracing the future.

N: The Almighty Dollar: Investigating the Social Meanings of Money

[The Almighty Dollar]

Kelcie Vercel

Why is a cash bonus for a ‘job well done’ great when it comes from your boss, but offensive when it comes from your romantic partner? Why does finding a dollar on the sidewalk feel good, while getting a dollar tip on a \$50 check feels rotten? How do we come to the consensus that the Mona Lisa has enormous economic value, while my sketch of my dog Podo has only emotional value? In this course, we will examine why money means different things in different contexts and relationships. We will investigate the social processes that shape how we assign value, establish our norms of gift-giving, and set the terms of economic exchange in all areas of social life.

O: Get Lost: The Art of Wandering

Beth Boyens

Wandering in the unknown has occupied the minds of explorers, philosophers, artists, and writers for centuries, yet we are often expected to know exactly where we are going and how we will get there. In this course, we will consider connotations and social constructions of wandering, being lost, and purposeful traveling; orientation and disorientation; crossable borders and impenetrable barriers. Examining the writings of those who brave the wilderness, map the unreadable, lose themselves in the unfamiliar, and wander the landscape of the mind, we will ultimately explore what wandering and getting lost has to do with vocation, education, inquiry, and discovery.

P: Truth is Out There? Conspiracies

Michael Nitz

Why do people believe weird things? A significant percentage of Americans do not believe a) that we landed on the moon, b) that terrorists acted alone on 9/11, c) that the Kennedys (both Robert and John) were killed by lone gunmen, d) that the Denver airport is safe or e) that contrails from jets aren't government experiments. This FYS course will utilize the tools of critical thinking, communication and effective writing to analyze these conspiracy theories. We will discuss how conspiratorial thinking works and study conspiracies in a variety of media. At the end of class, the hope is that students will be more literate consumers of conspiracy media.

Q: Hacking the Human Genome: past, present, and future of designer babies

Cecelia Miles

Science is closer than ever to producing genetically modified human beings, GM babies. Cutting-edge biotech discoveries have made this a real possibility. Should they do it? While the technological breakthroughs are brand new, ideas about manipulation of human genetics are not. We will examine the past, present, and future of “designer babies” by reading, discussing, writing, and constructing arguments to challenge each other on this controversial topic. What does the future hold for engineering the “perfect baby”?

R: Lost Tribes and Buried Cities

Kristen Carlson

This course provides an introduction to Archaeology and the deep history of humankind. Providing a world tour through time, we travel from our early origins in Africa through the cognitive development that emerges in the rock art caves of France. The course then travels through the development of agriculture in the Middle East to the emergence of complex societies throughout prehistory. Explore the exciting sites of Egypt, the Southwest of North America, and Stonehenge all while learning about the development of humankind.

S: Fecal Matters: A Critical History of our Global Sanitation Crisis

Daniel Gerling

2.4 billion people worldwide have no access to a toilet; meanwhile, Americans flush more than 2 trillion gallons of drinking water down the toilet annually. Neither of these trends is sustainable, and we are at a moment of significant change. In this course, we critically analyze the social and environmental consequences of the way our culture and others treat excrement. Using essays, field trips, and interviews with engineers, authors, and activists, we examine various cultures at key historical moments when the role of excrement shifted—for example, from a commodity to a waste. We also consider the future of sanitation technologies and cultures.

T: Comedy 1.0: Movies and TV

Richard Bowman

Comedy is an integral part of human life. Life is essentially comic, not tragic. Comedy can amuse and entertain but still offend. Laughter can wound as well as heal, condemn as well as commend. Humor can instruct, critique, and transform society. We will view, read, and think about comedy and comedians.

U: The Politics of Seeing

Anna Reich

In this section of FYS, students will develop their writing skills while considering the way we look at and interpret visuals. As citizens of a digital world, several thousand times a day we assimilate visual imagery at high speed. This course will investigate the complex dynamic between world and image in our visually mediated society. We will think critically about the sociological, historical, and cultural construction of our understanding of images and discuss topics as diverse as the censorship of social media, the emergence of selfies, the portrayal of violence, and the notion of the gaze.

V: Tech Threats

Katie McCullough

Will technology save or destroy us all? Our hopes and fears surrounding technology may reveal broader social concerns of power and control. We'll explore critical contemporary concerns about technology such as privacy and data rights, AI in the workforce, and social media bullying. A look at mistakes in technology design, for instance, reveals broader concerns of social justice. Together through readings, documentaries, and assignments, we will explore and discuss what should be the relationships between humans and machines.

W: Prairie Roots: Discovering Heritage

Monica Lhotzky

The book *Giants in the Earth* will serve as the cornerstone of an inquiry into the prairie experience of our ancestors and into how that experience informs and influences the Midwestern identity. Students will research family ethnic identity and heritage as well as the geography of self.

X: Minding the (Generation) Gap in Literature and Contemporary Culture [Minding the (Generation) Gap]

Jenny White

Literature abounds in memorable parent-child pairings. Our culture often over-idealizes or simplifies these relationships (think Atticus and Scout Finch), yet there is also a rich history of exposing their darker side (think Victor Frankenstein and his monster). Likewise, examples of complex parent-child and intergenerational relationships feature in everything from Disney films and social media memes to presidential politics and the college admissions scandal. We will examine fiction and non-fiction texts in addition to current events and culture to explore how parent-child depictions illuminate critical questions about ethics, education, class, race, and gender identity.

Y: Future Science and Technology

Andrew Strandjord

This course takes a look into the science and technology of the future. Futurists of the early 1900s predicted an incredible boom in science and technology that would transform human lives for the better. In fact, many of those predictions weren't far off, from the proliferation of automobiles and airplanes, telephones, to landing on the moon. These predictions show us just how much our science and technology has progressed in just a century and just how much further innovation could take us in the next century: unlimited energy sources, merging of robots and humans, intergalactic travel, quantum computing, teleportation...