

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 2021 FYS 110: First Year Seminar Course Descriptions

Unsinkable: The Titanic Embarks on its Maiden and Last Voyage

[Shortened Version: Unsinkable: The Titanic]

Margaret Preston (History)

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.

War and Memory

Patrick Hicks (English)

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.

For Tradition's Sake

Ann Kolbrek (English)

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.

Staging the Future

Jayna Gearhart Fitzsimmons (Theater)

Have you ever wished for the ability to see into the future? Contemporary playwrights imagine the future in a variety of ways—from sci-fi crime thrillers to dystopian dark comedies—and use drama to pose complex questions about our relationship to technology, our responsibility to our communities, our treatment of natural resources, and the way we define home, love, freedom, and personhood. By exploring new performance texts like *Speed of Light*, *Mr. Burns: a post-electric play*, *Urinetown: The Musical*, and *The Nether*, we will think together about how staging the future might impact the way we live today.

The Curies, a Remarkable Family

Amy Engebretson (Physics)

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.

WTF, English?

Daniel Gerling (English)

Why the fuss? Is texting indeed eroding language? Is "y'all" improper? Is politically correct language obscuring the truth? What does the MPAA mean when they tell us a movie contains "some language"? Is academic English necessary to communicate certain ideas, or is it merely for prestige? This course considers consequential debates in the way we use language today and asks you to determine where it should go from here. We'll research similar debates in the history of English and look at comparative disputes in other languages to the end of gaining a richer understanding of English and its future. Our readings and discussions will intersect with class, race, gender, and sexuality as we analyze contemporary ethical dilemmas centered around language.

Verdier: The Ideals by which We Wish to Live Our Lives

JJ Gohl (English)

Responsibility. Courage. Compassion. Honesty. Friendship. Faith. Persistence. As students begin their educational journey at Augustana, we will delve into the virtues and values that have guided individuals and communities throughout history. This seminar will highlight writings from Teddy Roosevelt, Babe Ruth, William J Bennett, the Dalai Lama, Krista Tippett, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mother Teresa, Margaret Edson, and campus pastor Paul Rohde. We will analyze how traits of good character fit with Augustana's five core values: Christian, Liberal Arts, Excellence, Community, and Service. We will discuss how these values build a sturdy foundation and become a compass for the way we wish to live our lives.

The Rise and Fall of Nations

Cory Conover (History)

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.

Keep Calm and Solve for x

Martha Gregg (Mathematics)

Math: what has it done for you lately? Math is essential to many of the technological advances that make our modern lives longer, better, and richer. We'll learn about some of those advances and the mathematical engines that drive them – how game theory saves lives by optimizing kidney exchanges, how graph theory makes your internet searches more efficient, why understanding conditional probability is important to making decisions about medical treatment. Disclaimer: this is not a math class; there is no mathematical prerequisite, and no computational work will be graded (although we may actually compute a few things)!

Journeys of Discovery in the New World

[Shortened title: Journeys of Discovery]

Michael Rueter (Spanish)

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?

Get Lost: The Art of Wandering

Beth Boyens (English)

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.

Robot Love and Mythology in Film

Rocki Wentzel (Classics)

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*.

Relentless Forward Progress

Emily Wanless (Government)

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.

Truth is Out There? Conspiracies

Michael Nitz (Communications)

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.

Making Monsters Out of the ‘Other’: Philosophical Investigations of Inhumanity **[Shortened Version: Making Monsters Out of the Other]**

Julie Swantstrom (Religion)

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.

Intimate Strangers

Paul Eglund (Biology)

Our bodies are home to a zoo of microbes, some well-known and some un-named, all in an intimate relationship with us. We depend on these partners to feed us, protect us and make us who we are. Yet, the relationship is not perfect. When the balance is disrupted things can go terribly wrong. In this course, we will strengthen our writing and critical thinking skills as we examine the contribution of our symbiotic partners to human health, disease and our ability to live with these intimate strangers.

The Music and Times of The Beatles

Peter Folliard (Music)

Many revere The Beatles as the greatest band of all time, while others would say this is overrated...what would you say? This course will explore the rise of John, Paul, George, and Ringo and track their musical and cultural influences. We will look in-depth at the evolution of their music from The Quarry Men to Abbey Road, from American pop covers to creating new genres of rock that continue to influence us all 50 years later. We’ll examine how The Beatles engaged with the radical social changes of the 1960s including social class, gender, and race.

Cat Massacres, Ritual Hangings, and Social Protest

[Shortened Version: Social Protest]

Michael Mullin (History)

History is filled with episodes of social protest. In the 18th century apprentice printers hanged cats to protest their unhappiness, while working-class residents of Boston hanged effigies of the royal governor and others to express their unwillingness to pay a stamp tax. In the 19th century abolitionists and temperance advocates took to the streets to make their voices heard. More recently, Civil Rights protestors and Black Lives Matter proponents used street protests and social media to make their voices heard. What do these advocates of social protest all share? They share a desire to alter the existing political and/or economic system. In some cases their protests led to revolution and change. In other cases, the promised social change was either temporary, or not as far-reaching as proponents envisioned. This course looks at social protests over the course of time, and tries to understand what social change might mean for those seeking a different type of world.

Modern Medievalisms

Sarah Rude (English)

Why do so many people attend Renaissance fairs, play Dungeons and Dragons, or enjoy fantasy series? As much as we enjoy the conveniences of the modern world, we also seem to have a strange fascination with the medieval European past. In this class, we will examine several artifacts of medievalism including TV shows (e.g., *Game of Thrones*), board games (*Settlers of Catan*, *Shadows over Camelot*), fantasy novels (*The Hobbit*), and even the costuming and rhetoric of political protest. We will explore how they strategically employ ideas about the Middle Ages, and how they help to shape the modern world.

Economic Inequality

David Sorenson (Economics)

This section of FYS will examine economic inequality over time and across countries, including a discussion of poverty and standards of living. The measurement and representation of inequality will be examined, and multiple economic views and broader perspectives of fairness and justice will be discussed. Differences among groups within the United States will be considered, and measures to address economic inequality will also be discussed. In addition to the general FYS emphases on critical thinking and written and oral communication, the course will involve the use of multiple data sources and working with data.

Matters of Life and Death

Leigh Vicens (Philosophy)

In this course will consider bioethical questions (questions arising from developments in medicine and biology) facing patients, doctors, researchers, policymakers, and voters. We will study some (or all) of the following issues: abortion, surrogacy, prenatal screening for the selection of offspring, cloning, genetic engineering, animal testing, experimentation on human subjects, the donation and sale of bodily organs, physician-assisted suicide, and the rationing of scarce medical resources. We will consider arguments for various positions on these issues, and formulate and defend our own.

We are Monsters

Heather Bart (Communication Studies)

Popular culture plays an essential role in conveying cultural norms, roles, values and power. American popular culture celebrates heroes, especially superheroes. However, there is a need to investigate the role of monsters. This course examines the place/need for monsters in American popular culture. We will explore different types of monsters and what they represent. We will also discuss the actions, values and power demonstrated by monsters in comparison to the hero. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues that monsters ask us to “reevaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance toward its expression.” This course examines why we create them and what they say about us.