

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 2022 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.

Feast or Famine: A Foodie's Guide to the Politics of Hunger and Consumption

[Shortened title: Feast or Famine]

Ann Kolbrek (English)

In a world filled with self-proclaimed “foodies,” we rarely consider the political implications of food. This course will examine food as a political weapon for both oppressor and oppressed. Appetite, hunger, and satiety will not only be the subjects of our readings but also, more importantly, they will form the lens through which we examine scenes of oppression and representations of identity. We will ask how hunger shapes consciousness, subjectivity, and language. Even more, how does this tool influence identity, particularly already marginalized identities? Our readings/films invite students to explore food in the contexts of famine, hunger strikes, and eventually overconsumption and inebriation.

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.

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 differences 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 worldviews 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.

Intimate Strangers

Paul Egland (Biology)

Our bodies are home to a zoo of microbes, some well-known and some unnamed, 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 examine the contribution of our symbiotic partners to human health and disease, and our means to maintain the upper hand.

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.

Matters of Life and Death

Leigh Vicens (Philosophy)

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.

WTF, English?

Danny 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.

What Does it Mean to be Human?

Stephen Minister (Philosophy)

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.

Changing the World through Applied Anthropology

K.C. Carlson (Anthropology)

Who doesn't want to make the world a better place? But better for who? How do we provide resources and tools for locally perceived needs rather than imposing our own values on another culture? It turns out that what may seem foreign, strange, or broken to one group is perfectly normal to another. Anthropology provides a perspective that makes the world safe for human difference. Through the lens of anthropology students will explore concepts of cultural relativism, historical particularism, and ethnocentrism. Applied Anthropology seeks to better communities and organizations from the inside out. How can we truly make the world better for everyone? Anthropology will help us pave a way.

Sherlock Holmes: Crime Junkie

Darcie Rives-East (English)

Hybrid class format

A “crime junkie” is someone addicted to crime stories. Sherlock Holmes was the original “crime junkie”; he was literally addicted to solving crimes and taking drugs, and, since 1888, he has hooked millions on fictional and real detective stories. What is the appeal of Sherlock Holmes, and why has he endured for over 100 years? Further, how is his influence felt in the current craze for true crime podcasts (such as *Crime Junkie*), series, and documentaries? This course will explore these questions by reading and considering the appeal of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s original stories about Holmes.

Politics in Drama: The Moral Dilemma

Dan Workman (Theater)

Does art imitate life or does life imitate art? This class will use four plays, including *The Taming* by Lauren Gunderson 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.

Passing and Posing Through American History

[Shortened title: **Passing Through American History**]

Michael Mullin (History)

Historically, the term “passing” refers to individuals who transformed their identity, usually in terms of their racial category. “Passing” allowed individuals of systemically non-dominant categories to enter the dominant culture. The action came at great personal cost. Passing often requires a person to abandon his/her family, community, and social network, and only time will tell if the effort was worthwhile. Though rare, there are some examples of people who “pose” as a racial minority or another gender. These people do so for a variety of reasons; one might want to marry outside of one’s race, provide economic support for one’s family, or gain greater access to societal opportunity. Exploring how people “passed” and “posed” in American history offers students a chance to explore the various aspects of the racial, gendered, and economic histories of the United States.

Wicked Witches? Philosophical Investigations of Inhumanity

[Shortened title: **Wicked Witches?**]

Julie Loveland Swanstrom (Religion/Philosophy/Classics)

What does it mean to be a witch? Are witches good or bad, human, or inhuman? Philosophers and theologians 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 witches as monstrosities. Moving from the ancient period to the modern day, students explore the ways in which (primarily women as) witches have been described as monstrous; assignments and projects give students the chance to critique and respond to the methods used to determine the monstrous.

Tech Threats

Katie McCollough (Communication)

Our hopes and fears surrounding technology reveal our collective visions for the present and the future. Together through readings, documentaries, and assignments, we will explore and discuss the relationships between humans and machines. We'll look at the way mistakes in technology design, for instance, reveal enduring issues of social injustice. We'll also explore other contemporary technology concerns including data rights, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and social media's impacts on mental health.

DOLLARS: The Social Meaning of Money

Kelcie Vercel (Sociology)

Why is a cash bonus for a 'job well done' great if it's from your boss, but offensive if it's from your romantic partner? Why does the Mona Lisa have enormous economic value, while a sketch of the family dog has only emotional value? In this course, we examine why money means different things in different contexts, and how this shapes our decisions, perceptions, and even broad economic systems and policy. We investigate the social processes that shape how we assign value, establish our norms of gift giving, and set the terms of economic exchange across areas of social life.

Food Fights

Sherry Barkley (Exercise and Sports Sciences)

Diabetes, obesity, and heart disease are major health problems in the US and around the world. All of these can be affected by what we eat. Should we blame the fat in our diets? What about sugar or processed foods? Is there an advantage to organic foods? What about vegetarian, paleo, and other diets? Are there good foods? Bad foods? Who should be responsible for our food choices? Through readings, writings, and discussions, students will learn to critically evaluate the evidence surrounding the various arguments about what people should—or should not—be eating.

Rhetoric and the Social Fabric

John Bart (Communication)

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.

Holistic Health and Healing

Karla Abbott (Nursing)

Health and wellness can be achieved by many different approaches. Holistic health practices can accentuate and potentiate traditional medical treatments used today. This course will explore some holistic health practices and their impact on health and wellness.

From Mario to Minecraft: The Power of Video Game Music

Andrew Hayward (Music)

Are you listening? As we play our favorite games, we might not realize how important music is in defining our experience. Video game music has produced iconic melodies, controlled the emotional quality of the story being told, and has allowed composers to introduce their music to

a larger audience. Video games can be the first access point children have to classical music and the symphony orchestra. Modern artists are even using games as a venue to hold live concert events. We'll also explore how advances in technology parallel the changes in video game musical scores.