

First Year Seminar, Fall 2023

Sections, Titles, and Descriptions

FYS 101 L 101 & 102

Adulting 101

Do I know how to budget my time and money now that I am basically on my own? Do I know how to do my income taxes? Do I understand all those flyers and applications I receive for credit cards? Should I even get a credit card? Why do I need, or do I need, life insurance? What are the best ways to invest my money? Why should I start thinking about a retirement fund now? Have you ever had these questions? How will I survive my first year in college, let alone life after college? Many people have written articles and books, launched websites, and created podcasts to consider and provide some answers to these questions. In this class we will research and discuss some of the most relevant information available about surviving your first year in college and life in the “real world.”

FYS 101 L 103 & 104

The Mindful Learner

Many college students feel pulled in a million different directions. Work, family, friends, relationships, roommates, coursework, internships, and career-related decisions are just some of the distractions the average college student must deal with on a daily basis. These stressors and responsibilities, coupled with our growing dependence on technology (e.g. smartphones) can make us feel disconnected, distracted, and alone. Have you ever wondered what impact this growing lack of mindfulness can have on our ability to focus, engage, and learn?

In this course, students will explore how developing a mindfulness practice—a practice of living in the present moment, without judgement or reaction—can help us to feel more grounded and connected, and improve our learning process. During this process of exploration, students will research the cognitive, emotional, and physical effects of various mindfulness practices, and experiment with these practices in order to determine which practice(s) provides them with the most benefits; that is, benefits to their learning process, as well as to their mental, emotional and physical health.

Some of the mindfulness practices that will be explored in this class include: yoga, meditation, reflective journaling, contemplative reading and listening, guided visualization, walking meditation, and mindful drawing. Please come to this class with an open mind and a desire to experiment with mindfulness practice.

FYS 101 L 105 & 106

Individualism, Character, Identity

This class will consider the three listed modes of understanding selfhood by exploring three different periods of the Anglophone literary tradition. Our representative of “Renaissance Individualism” will be the seventeenth-century poet John Donne. We will explore “character” as understood by the Victorian novelist Charles Dickens. “Identity” will be presented in the work of contemporary novelist Chimanda Ngozi Adichie. How does each of these authors conceive the self? Are the concepts complementary or incompatible? What does each, or what do they together, help us to understand about our selfhood?

FYS 101 L 107 & 108

Gendered Bodies, Alien Relationships

Have you ever heard the expression “men are from Mars, women are from Venus”? This expression originates from the title of a book written by a relationship counselor in 1992 that sold an astonishing 50 million copies. But the success of this book, and the adoption of its title phrase as popular wisdom, posed a troubling question for American society at the end of the 20th century: after a nearly 100-year period that saw major advancements in social and political equality, why did such a large number of Americans see the opposite sex not as fellow human beings but as something akin to aliens from outer space? What were the interpersonal effects of this mutual alienation? And does this sense of gendered alienation carry on into the 21st century?

Students in this First Year Seminar will explore questions about gender definitions and roles both historically and today through study of what is commonly termed “speculative fiction.” These speculative works (novels, stories, films, and other cultural products) will provide us strange and often provocative lenses through which to examine gender issues in American society. By introducing us to alien peoples, genderless cultures, advanced technologies, alternate histories, and both utopian and dystopian worlds, this literature will reveal to us the potential detriments of a rigidly gendered society as well as the possibility of a future free from gender's restrictive influence. Readings extend from the early 20th century to the present, with selections from major speculative authors like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Joanna Russ, Octavia E. Butler, James Tiptree, Jr., and Carmen Maria Machado.

FYS 101 L 109 & 110

Nostalgia

The word “nostalgia” was first coined in the 17th century to describe a homesickness so severe it required medical treatment. Today, we more often think of nostalgia as a mild, even pleasant, desire for a better time, whether one that we’ve actually lived through or one we've only imagined. In this course, we will read works about nostalgia by historians, psychologists, political scientists, and literary critics. Some of these theorists write about nostalgia as a personal way of engaging with the world, while others argue for nostalgia as a societal ill. We will also read fiction, personal essays, and poetry, watch films, and analyze current forms of media that

enact nostalgic desire. Along the way, we will develop our own theories of nostalgia and deepen our understanding of nostalgia as a complex aspect of contemporary life.

FYS 101 L 111 & 112

Worship and Dior: Faith and Fashion

The intersection of faith and fashion reveals much about religion and society and how we tell our faith stories. This course aims to explore the function and ritual of apparel in faith practices while examining the influence of religion and spirituality on fashion and its cultural impact. Starting with the fig leaf in the Garden of Eden, students will trace the origins of fashion through the lens of religion. We will study how iconic designers and brands have both celebrated and misappropriated faith through fashion and how sacred garments and symbols have been used to promote propaganda and persecution throughout history. By exploring how fashion can be both sacred and profane, students will gain a greater understanding of the power of faith and fashion.

FYS 101 L 113 & 114

Power to the People!: Black Cinema and Narratives

This course will introduce you to key moments and issues pertaining to Black identity, liberation, and social justice through film. A nuanced and interdisciplinary approach to understanding global Black experiences is foregrounded. We are concentrating on power as a concept and considering literary, cinematic, historical, and sociological narratives. Critical Race Theory, Afrofuturism, and Black Feminism are among the paradigms and theories that will guide our analyses. *Power to the People!* also centers your own empowerment journeys as first year students. By the end of this semester, you will be equipped with strategies for success and efficient tools to further your academic progress at Marist College and beyond. Keywords for this course include agency, power, politics, freedom, and representation.

FYS 101 L 115 & 116

Evolution of the Broadway Musical

This seminar investigates theatrical styles, creative pioneers and cultural shifts that have innovated the Broadway musical over its one hundred and fifty year history. We explore how musicals evolved from operetta, variety shows and vaudeville into book musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein and concept shows of Fosse & Prince. Students will research and write about influential changes, largely between 1905-1975, and present their findings in class. From George M. Cohan's "Give My Regards to Broadway" to A Chorus Line's "What I Did for Love", we examine how theatre reflects life in America.

FYS 101 L 117

Minds and Bodies in Comics

In this FYS, you will develop your skills as a researcher, speaker, and writer by reading great comics and thinking about how mental and physical experiences are represented within them. Along the way, we will engage with scholarship in a variety of fields, including disability studies, comics history, and visual rhetoric.

Throughout the semester you will have the chance to work with the Cannavino Library's [impressive and ever-growing collection of comics](#). As the semester progresses, you and your classmates will choose the comics we read as a class and will organize and moderate our class discussions of them. It will be great to see where your interests take us!

FYS 101L 118

Classical Relevance: Considerations of Classical Music Today

While classical music is often stereotyped as a form of music that “only old people enjoy,” the music of composers like Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms is played every season in most major orchestra programs. If classical music is only popular with a limited audience, then why does it continue to be played so frequently throughout concert halls. This FYS will consider the place of classical music in today’s society. In addition to considering the style of music itself, the class will think about the contexts in which it is played, examining things like stage setups, orchestra attire, and audience attire. Ultimately, we will explore how orchestras have (or have not) adapted over time to consider changing musical interests, the impact of social media, the influence of the COVID pandemic, and more for modern audiences.

FYS 101 L 120 & 121

Greening America

We will consider how a range of American writers frame human interactions with “Nature,” and explore their various representations with the natural world. How has “wilderness” been imagined? How do authors construct language to shape the way readers think about the environment? What vision do these texts offer about the relationship of individuals to society, and about progress, industrialism, and technology? We will examine Native American stories, early accounts of natural history, diverse representations of plants, animals, and insects, memoirs of the local, as well as narratives of exploration and essays on urban nature. Nature writing often combines rhapsody and science and runs the gamut of the scientific, philosophical, psychological, aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual. We will explore how authors depict a range of diverse habitats and places, from oceans to deserts to rainforests. In this class you will construct essays based on meaningful places, on course readings, and on your classmates’ presentations.

FYS 101 L 122

Autobiographical Americans: Studying History through the Writings of Those Who Were There

How do we understand ourselves and our place in the world? This course will look at the relationship between personal events/attitudes and the larger forces of culture and history that shape an individual's understanding of their experience. Americans have written about themselves in many ways, through letters, diaries, journals, and formal autobiographies. The cast of characters for this class will include the famous and the ordinary, and stretch from the colonial period to the near present.

FYS 101 L 123

Where does Creativity Come From?

Creativity is often thought of as a trait that we are either born with or not. It's long been thought that some of us have the ability to think imaginatively, while others are more practical-minded. Creativity, which has been defined as the ability to produce original ideas that have value, is increasingly becoming an essential skill for success as our information economy evolves into a creative economy. It is no longer enough to just store, process and analyze information. The workforce of the 21st century will need to be able to transform knowledge and information into something new and useful. But if creativity is so important where does come from and how can we foster more of it? Is it a rare and elusive quality or is it a skill that can be learned and nurtured? Are there certain conditions that are needed for creativity to flourish? What can you do to increase your own creative ability? In this class, we will examine these questions, along with others related to creativity. We will read texts from authors who have explored these questions from multiple perspectives and engage in activities that help us expand our own creative potential.

FYS 101 L 124

Students Revolt!

Student activism has been at the heart of revolutionary movements from the Civil Rights Movement, to the global revolutions of 1960s to activist movements today. This class uses history, journalism, photography, film, and literature to analyze what brings students together to resist oppression and call for social justice. Students will use our analysis of the past to understand and evaluate organizing efforts around us today such as March for Our Lives, Black Lives Matter, and the #MeToo movement, to name a few.

FYS 101 L 125 & 126

Global History through Graphic Books

This seminar will introduce students to modern historical events through the use of graphic books. The content of the course engages multiple regions of the world in the modern era with a particular focus on how race, gender, warfare, and imperialism shape the lives of individual historical subjects. Historical topics include Colonial and Postcolonial Africa, the Holocaust, the revolutionary era in Iran, and the wars in Yugoslavia of the 1990s. In addition to reading such classics as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, students will engage lesser known authors and learn about how best to read, interpret, and contextualize works of graphic literature.

FYS 101 L 127 & 128

Brokedown Palace: The Grateful Dead and U.S. History

This course uses the music and history of the late 20th-century American rock band, the Grateful Dead, as a starting point to investigate the modern United States. Today, more than fifty years since its founding, and almost thirty years since the death of its iconic member Jerry Garcia, the band is more popular than ever. But, what does this mean? Does this success signal victory for the founding "counterculture" vision? Are we closer to utopia or dystopia in the U.S. today? For most of its lifespan, the Dead was an all-white, all-male band playing to a mostly-white audience. This course, however, will use the band's music and story to branch outward to issues of diversity and injustice, art and politics, resistance and accommodation, consumerism, conflict, war, militarism, and materialism. Students need not have any prior knowledge or appreciation of the band to succeed in the course. But, you will need to be willing to listen to a fair amount of music, do a fair amount of reading, and talk seriously about the U.S. culture, politics, and history.

FYS 101L 129 & 130

The New Italians: Second-Generation African Italians, from Jollof Rice to #BLMItaly

In this course, we will explore the concept of Second-Generation or 2G Italians of African heritage and their rich contributions to the Italian culture. We will examine their role and influence in cuisine and music, art and culture, politics and literature, and everything in between. In addition, we will consider the national reaction to the arrival, presence, and influence of Africans in Italy, juxtaposed with the longstanding racism, bigotry, and discrimination of a very "traditional" country. We will investigate how Italy as a nation is responding to both the influence and influx of this generation's culture, as well as its repeated and renewed calls for social justice, both pre- and post- George Floyd.

FYS 101 L 131 & 132

Afrolatinos and the Cosmic Race: Uncovering Anti-Blackness in the Myth of Mestizaje

Since the Civil Rights Era, scholars and activists have increasingly invoked Latino identity and culture as a third term meant to symbolically destabilize the Black/White racial dichotomy in the United States. What does it mean, then, to be both Black and Latino in this country? This course will explore the ways in which Afrolatino authors, artists, scholars, and activists are revealing the anti-Blackness inherent in many contemporary representations of Latino identity. In this course, students will analyze the intersections of Blackness and Latino identity in a variety of cultural products, including literature, film, music, and social media.

FYS 101 L 133 & 134

Happiness Embodied

The search for happiness gives rise to humanity's basest behaviors and its noblest pursuits. This religious studies and philosophy course examines the connection between happiness, identity, and belonging through the lens of the active human body. We examine how our physicality influences religious depictions of human excellence and the construction of our relationships and groups. More specifically, we will discuss topics ranging from gender and sexuality to martial arts, communal prayer, and ritual practice. While this course focuses on examining religious and philosophical texts, students in this class will also be invited to participate in physical forms of experiential learning, such as breath meditation or *taichi*. As a course capstone, students will have the opportunity to participate in flashmob that ties together and exemplifies many of the theoretical elements of the course.

FYS 101L 135

Braiding our Relationships with the Natural World: Delving further into *Braiding Sweetgrass* and Beyond

In the Common Read, Robin Wall Kimmerer introduces us to the multiple strands of relationships that humans can have with nature, which create the tight bonds present in a braid. She also describes where and how the strands have frayed.

What do our braids look like? How do we connect to other species, to non-human life? Using Wall Kimmerer's book as our primary text, we will explore various ways that individuals and communities relate to the living and non-living natural world. How can literature, history, art, music, biology, politics, psychology, media, info tech, business, fashion, physical sciences, economics, philosophy, education, sports, recreation, international affairs and other interests & activities influence how we perceive, use and safe-guard nature? We will explore how different cultures relate to the natural world and how some have suffered disproportionately as it has been despoiled. We will delve into some essential knowledge about the natural world, with the goal of becoming better informed on how to be responsible partners with our fellow species, to be stewards of life on earth. Class time and special field trips will include exploring outdoors.

FYS 101L 136

Family Matters

We all have families, be they adoptive, biological, or chosen. We have relationships to our parents or caregivers, as well as siblings of various sorts, and many face the question of whether to start families in the future. Although we don't always consider them, families raise a host of philosophical questions, which we will explore in this class. Should one have children? How is parenting affected by race, sexuality, and poverty? Is it best understood as a collective or individual endeavor? Who should do the caretaking and how should children be raised? What obligations do grown children and parents have to each other? Does having children change the world? Does it make life more meaningful? Through reading and discussing *Revolutionary Mothering* and *The Philosophical Parent*, along with your own research, this course will challenge and enrich your thoughts about parenthood and family.

FYS 101L 137 & FYS 101L 138

Rethinking Identity & Utopia: Race, Class & Gender in the 21st Century

How are our identities formed? What do they mean for us individually and collectively? How are we to imagine and build alternative forms of social and political community? To understand who we are, we must consider the social understanding and perception of various kinds of identity. To understand how social change is possible, we must cognize alternative forms of social life. This course will focus on several important categories of identity (race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality), as well as on how those identities overlap, intersect, and influence each other. We will consider what they are, and how they structure the world we live in. We will survey theoretical accounts of the concepts of race, class, and gender, as well as their interrelatedness, and examine their practical application to various contemporary social and political issues. We will read works about identity and utopia by philosophers, sociologists, political theorists, psychologists, artists and economists. We will also read fiction and personal essays, watch films, and analyze current forms of media that reflect our different identities and utopias. Along the way, we will develop our own theories concerning the nature, meaning and value of identities as well as deepen our appreciation of the necessity of utopian thinking for practically addressing the 21st century challenges that confront us all (challenges surrounding social justice, economic insecurity, climate change, political power, and more).

FYS 101 L 139

Africa is Not A Country

For some people, Africa is a country. For others, it is a country filled with poverty, diseases, warfare, and corruption. Some who identify Africa as a continent, including Welsh journalist and explorer Henry Morton Stanley, have named it the "Dark Continent." The goal of this FYS is to

disrupt these misconceptions, demonstrate what the content is really about, and highlight the dangers emanating from these misconceptions for both Africans and non-Africans. Ultimately, students who take this class will be challenged to engage with the African continent in a way that makes them emphatic citizens of the world in the twenty-first century. Among other things, we will watch films/documentaries and read readings that show that the African continent has 54 countries with over 1.4 billion people who speak over 2, 000 languages. We will also read fictional and non-fictional stories that show that the continent does not have a single narrative of pain. Come join us this Fall as we explore this diverse and magnificent continent!

FYS 101 L 140

Rockin' the Look: The Synergies Between Fashion and Rock 'n' Roll

Since the birth of rock 'n' roll in the 1950s, the relationship between fashion and popular music has been a culturally significant one. This course will explore the ways in which the constant intertwining of fashion and rock 'n' roll has shaped attitudes, taste, and consumption as well as the identity of the youth of the past seven decades. Looking at a variety of media including music, magazines, and videos, we will study this unique and exciting relationship while engaging critical college-level skills such as information literacy, research, public presentation, and writing.