

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR TITLES & DESCRIPTIONS - FALL 2022

Course Title:

Adulting101

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 freshman year, 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 look at some of the information available about surviving Freshman year and life in the “real world” through discussions and research.

The Road Less Traveled

The metaphor of the road has been deployed throughout literature to represent the journey of life, and decisions made along the way. In this course, we will read, speak and write about the image of the road in poetry and longer fiction, and investigate how this metaphor is made real in nonfiction accounts of our shared human struggle.

Your Mind on Metaphors

You may perhaps think of metaphors as an ornamental device that poets use to make their poems more engaging and meaningful. And they are that, certainly. But the authors George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue in their book *Metaphors We Live By* that our minds are *fundamentally* metaphorical, that metaphors govern every aspect of how we understand our world and act in it. In this class, we will start by learning to appreciate the metaphorical language employed by the Elizabethan sonneteers Sidney, Daniel and Shakespeare. But then, under the guidance of Lakoff and Johnson, we will broaden our focus to the metaphors that quietly govern how we understand the world, and therefore how we act in our everyday lives.

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.

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Gendered Bodies, Alien Relationships

Have you ever heard the phrase “men are from Mars, women are from Venus”? This phrase 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, television shows, 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, third sexes, 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 late 19th century to the beginning of the 21st, with selections from major speculative authors like H. G. Wells, Joanna Russ, and Margaret Atwood.

Sounds in the Key of Life

This course introduces students to sonic rhetoric--the academic study of the pervasive and consequential force of sound in our daily lives, artistic expressions, and identities. Streetscape “noise,” the blips and chimes of our handheld technologies, animal and human voices, and popular music are just part of the sonic landscape through which we are moved and attempt to move others. The rhetorical study of sound helps us understand rhetoric beyond a language based focus on persuasion to the aural and ambient forces that shape identities, relationships, and civic life, informing our emotional experiences and memories. Through examining lived experiences, media ecologies, and creative expressions, students will create written texts and media projects on various aspects of sound to understand its rhetorical dynamics and consequences.

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 can make us feel disconnected, distracted, and alone. Have you ever wondered what impact this growing lack of mindfulness can have on our writing?

In this course, students will explore how developing a mindfulness practice—a practice of living in the present moment, without judgment or reaction—can help us to feel more grounded and connected, and improve our writing 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 writing 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,

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and mindful drawing. Please come to this class with an open mind and a desire to experiment with mindfulness practice.

Murder, Madness, & Mental Mayhem

This seminar will focus on the recurring motif of madness and mental illness in literature, film, television and society in general, and address the question of how madness challenges traditional assumptions regarding individual identity. Through an interdisciplinary approach, we will explore the nature of the human mind and cultural representations of madness in a variety of contexts. Students in this course will consider how madness is a very ordinary human possibility which can be creative and/or destructive, which can be a breakdown and/or a breakthrough. We will examine the significant presence of madness in society and question how central madness is to human life. Students will study both social/intellectual components and cultural/emotional/expressive aspects of mental illness.

The Female Gothic

In this First Year Seminar, we will read, discuss, and do research about Female Gothic literature, a subsection of Gothic literature concerned with issues of gender. In addition to learning about the conventions of the genre, we will examine the social and historical issues that women writers have used dark, mysterious tales to expose and critique, particularly ideas about gender. We will start with Mary Shelly's classic *Frankenstein* and end with Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, considering a number of important women writers' works along the way. Throughout the class, we will examine the ways women writers have problematized common literary stereotypes of women, such as the monstrous mother, the wicked wife, and the love-crazed lunatic. We will explore how the Gothic genre is both popular and entertaining, but also a useful vehicle for social critique.

Fashion and Social Justice

The fashion industry has both a responsibility and an opportunity to create real change in all areas of social justice. From the environmental crisis to race and gender injustice, from body positivity to fashion for the disabled, the worlds of fashion and social justice are deeply intertwined.

In this course, the student will explore fashion through the lens of social justice and ethics as it relates to such important topics as race, gender, sustainability, body positivity, cultural appropriation and fashion activism. We will look at both historical examples as well as present day studies to see how fashion can be a force for social good but can also perpetuate inequality and exploitation.

True Crime in Film

This course will explore the historical, social, economic aspects of true crime in the U.S. and the depiction of true popular crime stories and celebrated real life cases in film. Through feature films, various readings on current criminal justice topics of interest, and class discussion, the course will cover various aspects of the criminal justice system including courts, policing, and corrections. Students will explore the criminal justice system within historical, social, economic, and political contexts. The readings in this course primarily revolve around improving research, writing, and oral communication skills.

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May It Please the Court

This course will expose students to oral and written arguments through appellate advocacy. The foundation of this course draws from law, policy, philosophy, as well as other aspects of society found within caselaw. Relying on the collegiate Moot Court model, we explore U.S. Supreme Court case law relevant to recent intercollegiate Moot Court competitions. Students will be prepared to compete in intercollegiate Moot Court by the end of this course. The readings in this course primarily revolve around improving research, writing, and oral communication skills.

Sowing the Seeds of Success

What does it mean to be successful? What skills are necessary in order to become an “expert” in a field? What is the relative significance of knowledge, grit, character, and curiosity? What is the 10,000 hour rule? Do successful people have something in common, whether they are artists, scholars, or athletes? In this class we will attempt to answer (or at least examine) these questions by reading works of non-fiction and fiction by authors who have addressed these questions in a variety of ways and from a variety of disciplines.

Global History through Graphic Novels

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.

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.

Into the Garden

In her 1969 song, “Woodstock” singer/song writer Joni Mitchell repeated “we have to get ourselves back to the garden.” What does getting back to the garden mean? Where can we find examples of people looking toward the land or gardens for answers? Which individuals and groups have done it and why? This FYS will explore the therapeutic, utopian, political, and religious impulses that have inspired people to look for answers in a life organized around a close relationship to the land. We’ll also spend time in the Marist Garden to explore what cultivating vegetables and plants stirs in us.

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“You Learn By Living”: Showing Up for Your Life

Was it ‘meant to be?’ or does ‘stuff’ just happen? Are you the driving force in your life, or are you a passenger along for the ride? Do you live in the moment appreciating that every choice you make impacts who you are becoming? Have you ever wondered how you could live more purposefully so your life is full of possibilities? This seminar focuses on learning life lessons by exploring success, failure, hopes, dreams, regrets, and redemption -- the stuff which makes life both complicated and meaningful. Using literature from the Hudson Valley, your new home, such as Eleanor Roosevelt's *You learn from living* and Washington Irving's *Legends and lore of Sleepy Hollow* and the Hudson Valley and the movies *A Quiet Place* (filmed in Ulster County), *Nobody's Fool* (filmed in Beacon) and *Peace, Love, and Misunderstanding* (filmed in Woodstock), you will develop essential 21st century skills to prepare you for “life after Marist.”

Understanding the Storm: Information, Misinformation, & Climate Change

Many public debates involve the use of scientific information and predictions. The use of references in crafting opinion and policy is very important, and widespread. The misuse of references in crafting opinion and policy is also very important, and very widespread. Being able to judge the quality of those sources and the accuracy of their use is important to good decision making. In this seminar, you will read and evaluate claims about climate change and climate science. Emphasis will be placed on tracing and evaluation of the source material and the accuracy of its use. The course will revolve around discussion, writing, and presenting about papers and media representations of sources about climate change.

Social Justice from the Sidelines to the Frontlines

This course will explore social, economic, and environmental issues through a social justice lens, explore elements of what it takes to be an activist, learn about activists in the 20th and 21st centuries, and movements they inspired. Through individual and group research, readings, engaging with the local community, and through discussion and presentations with local community activists students will learn how social action is implemented. This course provides opportunities for and encourages students to consider issues affecting struggling populations and human diversity. This course will offer a safe learning environment where students will engage in a range of activities to build intellectual and emotional intelligence while developing respect for differing opinions.

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.

Greek Myth & the Other

How do we understand myth making in contemporary times? What role might it play in shaping an understanding of ourselves and the world we live in? In this course, we will take a closer look at myths of Greek antiquity and their reception in the realm of contemporary philosophy in order to open a dialogue around the questions of myth, meaning, and otherness. Centering on the themes of creation myths, the outcast, the scapegoat, the ideal state, divine encounters, the power of masks, ethical obligation, alterity and power, students will explore how, through myth (both stories and criticism) and philosophy, an attempt to negotiate the encounter with otherness is a necessary endeavor of our times.

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 tai chi. This experiential learning culminates with the creation of a choreographed flashmob as a way of understanding how ritual functions to transform gathered individuals into bonded groups.

Time Travel: Time-based Art & Resistance

Are you curious about how film and video have been used to make radical art during the civil rights movement and sexual revolution? Travel back in time to explore time-based art during this critical period of American art history.

This seminar surveys time-based art since the early twentieth century, including an overview of experimental film, video art, installation art, and performance art. Through writing, discussion, and multimedia presentations, students will analyze moving images and develop critical awareness of how time-based art has been a tool for creative communication and expression in recent art history.

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.

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Evolution of the Broadway Musical

This seminar investigates stylistic developments and cultural shifts that have innovated the Broadway musical over its 150-year history. We explore how musicals evolved from early influences of European operetta, American vaudeville and musical revues into cohesive book musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein and concepts 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 "You're a Grand Old Flag" to Hair's "Age of Aquarius", we examine how theater reflects life in America.

Sounding the Political: Music and Politics in Africa

Music plays many functions in modern African life: It consoles people in times of death, stimulates and organizes social events, facilitates interaction with the spiritual world, structures dance, marks important life cycle events, inspires and entertains, markets products and services, or can simply be enjoyed for its aesthetic qualities. Equally important among these functions is music's multidimensional role in political expression – from politicians and political institutions, to the mediation of power relations among groups, to music's role in attempting to undermine or resist political power by marginalized groups. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, this course examines the intersection of music and politics in Africa to discover how music articulates and reflects power relations among different constituencies in various social contexts across the continent.

A Matter of Life & Death: Healthcare Inequity in the U.S.

This seminar will focus on health care disparities in the United States. In 2008, a commission of the World Health Organization published a paper that reminded us that "*Social justice is a matter of life and death. It affects the way that people live, their consequent chance of illness, and their risk for premature death.*" We will explore various economic, political, and social determinants of health, including education, economic stability, access to health care, community resources, and neighborhood environments, and their respective influences on health outcomes. This course will take an interdisciplinary approach to examine how policies and practices can impact health as we consider the role we can play in establishing goals and opportunities to develop more equitable and accessible health care for all Americans.

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. In fact, there are so many wonderful graphic narratives that it's hard to choose just a few for the course. If you have suggestions about a particular text that you think I should consider for the syllabus, feel free drop me a line at Moira.Fitzgibbons@marist.edu. I'll definitely consider your ideas!