

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR TITLES & DESCRIPTIONS - FALL 2022

HONORS OFFERINGS

Course Title:

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.

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.

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.

MARIST

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.