

# MARIST

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## First Year Seminar: Fall 2021

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### **FYS101L - 620 & 621    Adulting**

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.”

### **FYS101L - 622    “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.”

### **FYS101L - 623 & 624    Celebrity in the 19th Century**

This FYS class will examine the concept of “celebrity” in order to better understand what it is, how it is cultivated, and how it changes over time. To this end, we will study the written works and publicity methods of several celebrated personalities of the nineteenth century: Gothic writer Edgar Allan Poe, prolific poet Emily Dickinson, abolitionist and activist Frederick Douglass, and investigative journalist Nellie Bly. In addition to thinking about their cultural value in their own time, we will consider their legacies and examine more modern representations of these figures. Because we live in an age obsessed with fame and self-image, it is useful to look back and see how the concept of celebrity emerged and developed over the years.

### **FYS101L - 625 & 626    JFK: Famine to New Frontier & Beyond**

The “Kennedy years” in 20th century American politics were a time of cultural transformation, global tension, and political turbulence. How did the Kennedys carve out a place of political prominence in

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what historians have labeled the “American Century,” and what is their social and political legacy? This class begins with a brief consideration of the Irish Famine and traces the Kennedy family’s political ascent through Joe Kennedy’s lifetime. It explores the actors and policies of John F. Kennedy’s New Frontier and the political priorities of Robert F. Kennedy. Topics we will examine include religion and American society, women’s activism, foreign policy and politics, environmentalism, and Civil Rights. Students can expect to enjoy ample reading, active class discussions, and opportunities to research Kennedy related themes for papers and presentations.

## **FYS101L - 627    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 learning?

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

## **FYS101L - 629    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.

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## **FYS101L - 632 & 633 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.

## **FYS101L - 635 & 636 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.

## **FYS101L - 637 The Frankenstein Myth in Popular Culture**

This course examines the historical and literary origins of the Frankenstein story, following it through the innumerable adaptations for stage, film, and television as it developed into what many call "the first modern myth." Students will also explore the relevance of Frankenstein as applied to many social, scientific, and religious issues of contemporary times.

## **FYS101L - 638 & 639 Imagined Worlds: Social Justice & the Power of Literature**

In this course we will examine fiction as a tool for social reform and as lens to understand conflict, marginalization, and activism in U.S. history. Specifically, we will be reading 'speculative fiction' written in the 20th century through the present, in which authors imagine and build worlds different from their own. While some writers imagine worlds where problems have been solved (utopian fiction) others offer cautionary tales about what might happen if current trends spin out of control (dystopian or apocalyptic fiction). We will consider the propaganda value of stories and connect their vision to actual events, people, and ideas at the time of their publication, moving chronologically through the most important social movements in our nation's history, from women's suffrage through Black Lives Matter.

## **FYS101L - 640 & 641 Music and the Drama of History**

When people talk about their favorite bands or artists, they sometimes ask, "What kind of music are you into?" Music is a universal language of drama, complexity, and emotion. This course works from such a premise. By drawing on specific musical moments and genres, we will use the art form as a way to "get into" the study of the past. U.S. history is filled with stories of heroism and villainy, inspiration and

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shame, contradiction and ambiguity. But, as 21st century people several steps removed, we don't always feel the drama of it all. In this course, we will listen intensively to key musical selections in order to feel the realities of our collective past. Our focus will be the twentieth-century popular genres of blues, country, folk, rock, and jazz; our historical orientation will be the modern United States; and, our topics will include race and the black freedom struggle, gender and the feminist movement, class and economic inequality in America. One need not be a musician to take this course. But, all students will need to be ready to take music seriously as a way to seriously analyze U.S. history.

## **FYS101L - 644 & 645 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.

## **FYS101L - 647 “I’m not racist, but...”: Racial Cognition & Responsibility for Bias**

Being overtly racist is widely regarded as unacceptable these days. But, while overt racism is justifiably denounced in the public square, many people exhibit behavior that suggests that their actions are often motivated by racial biases of which they are not directly aware. Moreover, people consciously deploy racial categories in their cognitive lives. Such thinking, while perhaps innocuous at times, can lend itself to irrational generalizations that result in actions and policies that contribute to the domination over and oppression of groups of people who are regarded as falling under a specific racial category.

In this course, we will focus on four problems that arise in reflecting on racial cognition by examining relevant work in evolutionary psychology, moral philosophy, neuroscience, philosophy of race, and social psychology. The first of these is over whether using racial categories in our cognition can be reduced and the extent to which the use of any such categories in our thinking ought to be retained. Second, we will consider whether there are any reasons for accepting that racial categories track any actual salient differences between groups of people that justify the use of such categories. Next, we will shift to how we may unjustifiably deploy racial categories in our unconscious cognition and exhibit implicit biases as a result. Finally, assuming that we agree that people can and should be regarded as morally blameworthy for explicit racial biases, we will consider whether people can also be held morally responsible for their implicit racial biases.

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## **FYS101L - 648 & 649 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 flash mob as a way of understanding how ritual functions to transform gathered individuals into bonded groups.

## **FYS101L - 650 & 651 Family Matters**

Families: we all have them, be they adoptive, biological, or chosen. We have relationships to our parents or caregivers, siblings of various sorts, and many face the question of whether to start families in the future. Although we don't always consider them, these relationships raise a host of philosophical questions and concerns, which we will explore in this class. Should one have children? Do parents have a special obligation to their children that they do not have to others? If so, why? Who should do the caretaking? How should parents raise their children, in terms of gender norms or religious expectations? What should parents do when their children are grown? What obligations do children have to their parents? Taking the Philosophical Parent, by Jean Kazez, as our central text, we will read chapters and related articles from contemporary philosophy that aim to challenge and enrich the students' thoughts about parenthood and family in general.

## **FYS101L - 652 & 653 Groundbreaking Cases: The Supreme Court on Rights and Wrongs**

This course will examine 12 Supreme Court cases that changed the course of American history. The landmark decisions explored in the class either famously or infamously shaped the development of our institutions, politics and culture. Along the way, we will consider the inner workings of the Supreme Court and whether the law should operate as a vehicle for social change. The cases studied range from early decisions such as Marbury v. Madison (1803) establishing the power of judicial review to current cases such as Obergefell v. Hodges (2015) upholding the right of same sex couples to marry.

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## **FYS101L - 654 & 655 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.

## **FYS101L - 657 The Painter of Modern Life**

In 1863 Charles Baudelaire published an essay entitled "The Painter of Modern Life" in which the French poet and art critic examined how the conditions of modernity (fashion, the city nightlife, prostitution, self-displays of all social classes) should consume the imagination of the modern artist. The Second Empire was a time of great prosperity during which Paris was modernized under Baron Georges Haussmann. Most of these improvements were seen as progressive and utilitarian, such as the new sewers, streetlights, and expensive apartment buildings for the bourgeoisie. The modernization of Paris, however, came at a cost. The working districts of Paris were destroyed and consequently their population displaced outside of the city limits. Some critics lamented the loss of the Old Paris. Others concluded that the true motivation of this modernization was to minimize the threat of the proletariat that emerged from the 1848 Revolution. In this seminar, we will analyze the social conditions of modernity in mid nineteenth-century Paris to understand why Baudelaire and avant-garde painters, focusing on Édouard Manet's paintings, became fascinated with the concept of modernity. To do so we will examine the artistic production of such painters as Édouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot and Gustave Caillebotte and pay special attention to their representations of Modern Life.

## **FYS101L - 658 & 659 Italy in Color: The Cultural Explosion of Second-Generation African Italians, from Jollof 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 Bel Paese. We will examine the many cultural gifts from cuisine and music, to politics and literature, as well as everything in between. In addition, we will consider the nationwide reaction to the arrival, presence, and influence of Africans in Italy, juxtaposed with the 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, especially after the murder of George Floyd.

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## **FYS101L - 661 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.

## **FYS101L - 663 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.

## **FYS101L - 901 & 902 Living a Logical Life**

Though we don’t necessarily realize it, mathematics is all around us. We are constantly using math and logic when we watch the news, while we relax enjoying movies and tv shows, while we do our finances, and even when we’re hanging out with our friends for a game night. In this class we’re going to discuss the analytical skills needed to navigate through everyday life and see how they can contribute to our knowledge of the world around us. If you want to learn how to correctly interpret the data in a news report, understand the pros and cons of different voting systems, watch and analyze math-related video clips from popular movies and TV shows, talk about improving personal finances, and consider optimal strategies in games, then this is the course for you.

## **FYS101L - 903 & 904 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.

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## **FYS101L - 905 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.

## **FYS101L - 906 Reading the Apocalypse**

People have long been fascinated by how the world ends, and that critical imagining has become even more intense since the turning of the last millennium. This course will sample literature written in the past ten years that takes as its premise the end of civilization as we know it, and we'll use film and television to supplement our investigation. Why are we so interested in the destruction of civilization, and why now? We'll use history, psychology, philosophy, and literary studies to try to answer this question.

## **FYS101L - 907 & 908 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.