

First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions

Spring 2025

First-Year Seminars offer every Dartmouth first-year student an opportunity to participate in a course structured around independent research, small group discussion, and intensive writing. Below you will find a list of the courses being offered next term.

Spring 2025

Instructor: Robert Baum

Course Title: African Religions Through West African Literature

Description: This writing seminar examines the diversity of African religions through the study of major examples of West African literature. Oral epics, novels, films, and autobiographies form the core readings for this course which will examine African religious traditions and their sustained interaction with Islam and Christianity within Sub-Saharan Africa. The course raises questions about external images of African religions and of traditional societies in the face of the challenges associated with the Atlantic slave trade, colonization, and globalization as well as Christian and Muslim efforts at conversion. Writing assignments will include short descriptive essays, short analytic papers, and a research paper, all of which will be subject to peer review and reviews by the instructor.

Instructor: Kristin O'Rourke

Course Title: Paris in the 19th Century

Description: This writing course will examine the city of Paris as the cultural capital of the nineteenth century, looking at artists and art production in the mid-late nineteenth century. We will investigate changes in the city and how that impacted the art movements that made up the new category of “modern” art: Realism, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. We will begin with a discussion of traditional forms of artmaking in the 19th century and contrast this with avant-garde art production in the works of Manet and the Impressionists, among others. We will look at Paris through the eyes of Parisians at the time, as well as through the gaze of filmmakers in our own time. We will investigate factors of contemporary life that affected subject matters, style, technique, and meaning in art works, in particular the invention of photography, urban planning and the modernization of the city of Paris, and the political and social situation in France and Europe. While exploring the impact of these factors on painting, photography, sculpture, architecture, posters, and film, the course will look at alternative art practices and exhibitions that challenged

the status quo and that became the basis of modern art. We will investigate what makes Paris in the 19th century “modern” and explore characteristics of modernism that continue to resonate today.

Instructor: Flora Krivak-Tetley

Course Title: Invasive Species

Description: Invasive species, like climate change and habitat destruction, pose extraordinary challenges for biodiversity and ecosystem conservation. But animals, plants and pathogens have always moved around the world. What makes a non-native organism invasive? How do we measure and attach value to their impacts? How do we decide which species should be eradicated, which should be tolerated, and which should be intentionally planted? What are the ethical considerations embedded within these decisions? And how does the language we use to describe non-native species—“invader”, “alien”, “exotics”—influence our thinking? Students will use a combination of readings and videos, discussions and debates, and diverse writing assignments to explore the complex environmental and ethical aspects of invasive species and their management. Writing assignments will include a reflective essay, an annotated bibliography with an invasive species focus of choice, a journalistic piece reporting on a recent scientific advance, and a research proposal.

Instructor: Wendy Epps

Course Title: Sci Communication & Context

Description: While scientific discoveries have shaped our modern world, many of the greatest discoveries fell flat in their time. The acceptance of scientific discoveries by the establishment (and general public) is highly influenced by social context, and the interplay between science and society makes for intriguing studies of science history. We will examine case studies (from Galileo’s findings to current-day medical breakthroughs) from the perspectives of the scientist, the establishment, and the general public, including both the initial communication failures and the subsequent successes that accompanied these breakthroughs. We will analyze both primary and secondary written sources, and our course design will build toward a written analysis of a current-day failure in science communication. Assignments include one short review paper and one final paper/presentation. The writing process will be iterative, and feedback will be provided via peer review and professor input. In-class writing exercises will help students hone their science-writing and peer-editing skills.

Instructor: Florencia Foxley

Course Title: Athens to the Americas

Description: We will explore the life and legacy of the ancient plays about Medea in the plays and films of Latin America. We will investigate why a genre originally performed to celebrate a god in a small city in a small corner of the Aegean has made such an impact throughout thousands of years of re- performance, re-interpretation,

and renovation. We will read Euripides and Seneca (in translations) as well as adaptations and re-imaginings from throughout history with special attention to the works produced across Latin America in the 20th and 21st centuries. As a First-Year Seminar, we will dedicate time to honing our skills of observation, interrogation, argumentation, editing, and research through a variety of writing assignments.

Instructor: Ayo Coly

Course Title: Litofthe Colonial Encounter

Description: This course examines the implication of literature in the colonial encounter and the literary representations of this event. We will read classical texts of European colonialism in dialogue with postcolonial texts from Africa, the Caribbean and Asia. We will begin with an exploration of the literature of empire and look at the ways in which colonialism shaped some canonical European texts. We will then study the range of literary responses emerging from postcolonial authors. Our study will be organized around the themes of representation, identity, power, race, gender, and resistance.

Instructor: Alexander Chee

Course Title: The Art of the Essay

Description: The personal essay is a literary form we turn to in order to both express and experience a diverse and imaginative sense of everything from our past, present, and future, our politics, our aesthetics, our sciences and ourselves. While fiction and poetry acknowledge the personal record as among the sources they draw upon, the personal essay makes this more explicit, directing the reader's attention to the use of memory, archives, interviews and research. For the personal essay, the writer is treating themselves the way they might treat any other subject they'd write about, sometimes even researching their own background the way a stranger might. Students will learn to treat themselves as an instrument for the recording of experiences, and to look for material in everything from their email draft archives and text messages to old social media posts, papers written for high school or middle school, family photos, family archives. We will look at the records we keep deliberately and the ones we make accidentally as we ask ourselves how well we know ourselves and how we can create ourselves as a character on the page.

Instructor: Anjuli Raza Kolb

Course Title: PublicWriting/PublicHealth

Description: After decades of privatization and foundering, American healthcare has been in a near constant state of emergency and scandalous revelation since the COVID-19 outbreak of 2020. From the racial and economic disparities revealed by the pandemic to the framing of violent policing in the United States as a "public health crisis" to the Dobbs decision and the December 2024 assassination of the United Healthcare CEO Brian Thompson, the public has rarely had a more acute need

for informed activist writing in the public sphere. How do we understand and talk about systems that are simultaneously vast and intimate? How do we translate technical knowledge in persuasive and feeling ways? What is the role of the doctor writer? Of the patient-writer? Of the advocate? How are material health outcomes shaped by what we know, how we think, and what stories we tell?

Instructor: Azeen Khan

Course Title: Freud & Culture

Description: Sigmund Freud is perhaps one of the most significant thinkers of the late 19th and 20th century. His work has influenced numerous artists, literary theorists, psychoanalysts, philosophers, writers, and his thought has made its way into culture. Our everyday references—in conversation, on television, and in other forms of media—to the unconscious, the oedipal complex, the work of dreams, trauma, the drive, and the return of the repressed, owe to this psychoanalytic legacy. This first-year writing seminar is an introduction to the cultural writings of Freud, in which Freud the psychoanalyst acts as a cultural critic. He uses his psychoanalytic findings to reflect on the way in which culture is organized; the role of history and religion in the life of man; the uses and impossibility of war; and the role of repression in the progress of civilization. These writings also introduce us to some of Freud's most important concepts: sexuality, affect, the unconscious, and the drive. Throughout the course of the semester, readings of Freud's work will be supplemented by episodes of *Game of Thrones*.

Instructor: Jeffrey Sharlet

Course Title: Investigative Memoir

Description: In this course we'll encounter the most unreliable narrators imaginable: ourselves. In recent years, a number of popular memoirs have been exposed as deliberate fictions; frauds. Such scandals distract us from more interesting questions about the role of memory in any attempt at reconstructing the past. While contemporary critics weigh the balance of fact and fiction in modern memoir, a number of writers have turned to the methods of research—archival and secondary sources, and fieldwork—to rebuild the autobiographical genre as an investigative endeavor in which their own memories are suspects. By reading their work, we'll consider questions of memory, history, and the documents between them; self-knowledge and self-representation; the meanings of fact in works of literature; allegory as argument; and personal stories as public narratives. We'll approach these matters through theory and practice in short response papers and reported autobiographical prose. Our goal will be to develop both voice and wit, to learn to draw on our creative abilities in our critical writing and our critical abilities in our creative writing.

Instructor: Jodi Kim

Course Title: War & Col in Asian Am Lit

Description: This first-year writing seminar offers an intensive examination and critical analysis of war and colonialism in contemporary Asian American literature. While this literature has often been read and interpreted as a form of immigrant narrative, we will take a step back and ask instead: Why have Asians been compelled to migrate to the United States in the first place? What displacements and ongoing histories of violence have US colonialism, imperialism, and wars in Asia wrought? How have Asian American writers given complex narrative form to this? How can we situate Asian American literature within multiple frameworks, traversing beyond the domesticating contours of US so-called “ethnic” or “minority” literature, to global Anglophone literatures of anti-colonialism? How does a focus on war and colonialism in Asian American literature yield analytic insights about decolonial politics and aesthetics, global articulations and movements against white supremacy, and critical imaginaries of alternative world-makings? Related topics and analytics to be explored also include settler colonialism, militarism, Orientalism, transnational and transracial adoption, transnational decolonial feminism, queer of color critique, critical race and ethnic studies, and Indigenous studies. We will engage with a constellation of materials, reading literary texts (novels, short stories, and drama) alongside scholarly articles, visual art (including a visit to the Hood Museum), and films. As this is a first-year writing course, classroom activities will not only include contextual mini-lectures, discussion, group presentations, and student-led discussion facilitation, but also place a great emphasis on short writing sessions in response to a prompt as well as peer review of writing. Likewise, course assignments will reflect this focus on writing, and accordingly include short critical reading responses, an essay, and a final research paper that is a revision and extension of the essay.

Instructor: Michael Chaney

Course Title: Literary Adaptations

Description: What if the literary text were a series of images? What kind of images would work best given the literary text in question? This writing seminar invites students to consider and write about the implications involved in adapting literature to another medium. Across writing assignments and literary readings, this seminar asks students to re-imagine the literature they read as well as their reading experiences of that literature as visual media as well as audio renditions and pedagogical materials, combining words and images. Writing and reading will be based on visual representations of English and American poetry, nineteenth-century African American autobiography, and student-created adaptations.

Instructor: Klaus Keller

Course Title: Climate Change

Description: Climate change has occurred naturally and frequently over the course of many time scales in the past. America today is engaged in a discussion of current

climate change and its cause, ranging from calls for immediate action to denial. This course explores the published scientific literature on the nature and cause of climate change, potential impacts on us, and the implications for our nation's energy issues. Through readings, class discussion, and individual research, we will explore this complex problem; student writing will synthesize results from the literature to clarify the factual basis for their own understanding. Reading will include a number of published papers and selections from textbooks. Students will be required to actively participate in class by leading class discussions and actively engaging in small group activities. In addition, students will develop an annotated bibliography, write a research paper based on the research completed for the annotated bibliography, as well as write and present a pitch where they argue for a specific action relevant to the topic of their research paper.

Instructor: Morgan Peach

Course Title: Nature-based Solutions

Description: Nature-based solutions (NbS) utilize ecosystem processes to help humans adapt to global change, conserve biodiversity, mitigate climate change, and promote sustainability. Viewing NbS through an interdisciplinary lens and from interrelated social, ecological, and technological perspectives, we will ask: (1) What ethics and theory support NbS? (2) What is key to NbS adoption today? (3) How can NbS contribute to just, resilient trajectory for society? In each of the three course units we will engage with diverse environmental literature, including philosophy, creative nonfiction, and scientific articles. The course will position you to propose plausible, equitable NbS for a specific place. The intent of this seminar is to develop your knowledge and skills as a student of the liberal arts. We will work to become more informed as global citizens who can assimilate knowledge, reflect, connect, synthesize, innovate, and communicate understanding in multiple modes. We will exercise our liberal arts skills in an iterative learning process. This will involve routine reading, writing, design thinking, and discussion. I will give short lectures as necessary. Throughout this process, we will imagine and explore solutions-oriented environmental actions that can result in just, sustainable futures.

Instructor: Sarah Smith

Course Title: Future of Food

Description: Modern agriculture causes extensive environmental damage and is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. These environmental changes – depleted soil, extreme temperature and precipitation patterns, and increased pressure from crop pests – are in turn putting a strain on the ability of this modern agricultural system to provide nutritious food for our growing world population. While there is no one solution to this massive problem, there are many proposed technological innovations, ecologically based solutions, and consumer choices that can help mitigate

some of the problems we have with our current system. In this course, we will explore these solutions as we try to envision what the Future of Food might look like. Students will read current opinion and research from the popular press and scientific literature. Assignments include a selfreflection, a journalistic piece on the results of an agriculture-related scientific study, a research paper delving deeper into a potential solution to the problems with our agricultural system, an oral presentation, and a final essay synthesizing our course material into a vision for the future of food. We will spend ample course time discussing all aspects of writing, including revising student writing and finding and evaluating source material.

Instructor: Jonathan Winter

Course Title: Thirsty Planet

Description: Humans have radically altered the distribution of water on Earth. We've built cities in deserts supplied with water from hundreds of miles away, extracted enough groundwater to alter the Earth's gravitational field, and dammed sixty-five percent of global freshwater flows. This course will: 1) Introduce students to the physical geography of water, 2) Survey human interactions with water through case studies from around the world, and 3) Explore how climate change and population growth will affect future water availability and quality. Exercises, lectures, and assignments will emphasize synthesizing and distilling complex scientific ideas with clarity. Assignments will include reading reactions, a discussion presentation, an opinion editorial that addresses a facet of water management, and a research paper focused on a pressing water-related scientific or policy issue. Drafts of the opinion editorial and research paper will receive peer and professor feedback in a workshop setting.

Instructor: David Petrucci

Course Title: Histories of Crime

Description: Crime exerts a powerful fascination on the popular imagination, and historians are not immune to its allure. The reasons for this are manifold, ranging from the lurid and sensational to the particular capacity of crime and punishment to reveal unspoken assumptions and unquestioned ideologies. This writing seminar will examine the different ways that historians, theorists, and others have written about crime and criminals. Through the study of crime, it will present students with different approaches to historical writing, including cultural history, social history, microhistory, and theory. Drawing on exemplary works from within and outside the field of history, the course will also focus on what it means to write well in a variety of forms. Students will gain practical experience writing in several different formats, culminating in a research paper.

Instructor: Ernesto Mercado-Montero

Course Title: Caribbean Pirates

Description: This course introduces students to the history of piracy and sea marauding in the colonial Caribbean. This seminar uses a transnational lens to explore the rise and fall of piracy and maritime violence. Through their writing, students will examine the role of piracy in European exploration, how piracy galvanized colonial settlements, and the significance of privateering and sea marauding for imperial competition in the Americas.

Instructor: Naaborko Sackeyfio-Lenoch

Course Title: Slavery in West Africa

Description: This seminar will examine slavery and the slave-trade, a theme that has arguably generated the most comprehensive literature in West Africa. Through selected readings, discussion and writing assignments we will discuss and critique the classic issues historians have been concerned with: demographic, socio-political, and economic impact of slavery and the slave trade on West African societies. You will write 2 short essays and a final research paper. The purpose of each writing assignment is to develop specific skills that combine careful analysis of ideas, perspectives and historical evidence with writing. We will emphasize how to structure essays, develop an argument/thesis through supporting evidence, engage with different historical perspectives and sources of evidence through comparison and contrast, and interpret what we read and discuss in written form.

Instructor: Matteo Gilebbi

Course Title: What is (Italian) Cinema?

Description: Cinema is a form of expression that, by integrating different media and disciplines (including writing, music, dance, theater, architecture, fashion, etc.) creates something that is beyond the sum of its parts. But how does cinema integrate all these other media into something new? What are the specific tools needed to read, understand, and critically analyze this multifaceted form of expression, and how can we use them effectively? In this course we will tackle these questions through an exploration of Italian cinema. Italian filmmakers played a pivotal role in advancing the language of cinema, via both technical and narrative experimentation. While Italian films are, of course, artifacts of a specific culture, they also transcend national boundaries and influence cinema around the world. At the same time, Italian filmmakers have always been avid watchers and attentive critics of foreign films – in particular, French, German, Russian, Japanese, and American – which, in turn, left a mark on their work. For these reasons, we will watch and analyze five Italian films to explore what cinema in general is and does. Importantly, the critical tools acquired in this course will help you tackle the complexity of other texts and develop a critical reading of those texts. Finally, critical analysis of films, like that of any other text, should not happen in a vacuum. Watching a film with a critical eye, like doing any critical reading, is a social interaction. For this reason, this course is organized as a

student-led seminar and all writings rely on peer-reviews. In this class you will become part of the same learning community: we will take responsibility for collaborating, sharing each other work and reflections, and respect each other opinions.

Instructor: Christiane Donahue

Course Title: The World's Englishes

Description: Why are writing courses most often assumed to be "English class"? In our networked globalized world, what language abilities do we need, and how do these abilities connect to college writing? We will study the nature of language and the demands globalization is placing on our speaking and writing abilities. We will consider the value of translation, "translingual" strategies for composing, and the ways in which multilingual capabilities are a resource and a challenge in communication. You will explore your own language resources (no advanced language ability required, though it is welcome), the place of languages in globalized communication, the linguistic rules of language activities such as codeswitching, and the importance of linguistic and rhetorical adaptability in successful writing today. We will read essays by authors such as sociolinguists Edgar Schneider, Rajen Mesthrie, and M.M. Bakhtin, applied linguists such as Ilona Leki and Braj Kachru, and writing studies scholars such as Suresh Canagarajah, Bruce Horner, or Maria Jerskey. From these readings we will develop linguistic and critical literacy methods for studying the ways in which Englishes are evolving and what this means for 21st century communication. We will work on your writing every day, in class and on your own, in relation to reading and speaking and in interaction with questions of language. Coursework will include many short informal writing pieces and discussion presentations, two more formal essay projects with several revisions, frequent peer review and conferencing, and a final project that will focus on an issue of your choice from the various subjects we cover. You will have the option to produce a multimodal project in place of one essay.

Instructor: Peter Mucha

Course Title: Analyzing Network Data

Description: We live in a connected world, where the confluence of the different connections — social, political, financial, informational, technological, biological, behavioral, epidemiological — affects virtually every aspect of our lives. The mathematical study of networks provides a framework for describing these connections. Writing about the properties of networks leverages this framework to test ideas and increase understanding of the resulting impacts of a network on the system it interconnects, especially when describing the comparisons and contrasts between different types of networks. Most people are familiar with the concept of a network from hyperlinked web pages or online social networks. Online networks are of

particular interest, but networks are also useful for representing and studying a wider variety of connected systems. With “nodes” representing actors of interest and “edges” connecting the nodes representing relationships, the concept of a network can be flexibly used across many applications. Students will analyze network data by developing three written documents — critical evaluation of a journal article, a computational notebook, and a journal-style project report — across multiple milestones through the term.

Instructor: Andrew Simon

Course Title: From Steamships to Social Media

Description: What may pandemics and their maritime passage in the past teach us about Covid-19 today? How may cameras assist us in picturing the past and archiving the present in the Arab world? And what is the relationship between social media and mass demonstrations in Iran, Egypt, and the the United States? In this first-year seminar, we will explore the impact, significance, and surprising stories of numerous technologies throughout Middle East history. We will cover devices we often take for granted as well as things that command our attention. Cameras, clothing, and the Internet, dams, printing presses, and modes of transportation will all surface in readings that transcend any single historical genre, bridging the local and the global, the social and the cultural, the intellectual and the environmental. The scope of this course is consciously panoramic in nature. In traversing nearly two hundred years of history, from the Ottoman Empire to the present day, we will examine a wide array of case studies that unfold across the Middle East and occasionally travel further afield. To assist us on this journey, we will conduct close readings of several primary sources, from films and photographs to comics and music videos. These materials will inspire lively discussions that engage larger themes, including modernity, mediation, power, politics, infrastructure, and identity. In the spirit of intervening in broader debates and developing one's writing skills, students will have the opportunity to undertake a wide variety of assignments, from a film review to a critical biography. Likewise, students will have the chance to pursue a final research project on a topic of their choosing that advances an original argument. By the end of the quarter, it will be clear that the trajectories of objects, small and large, were essential to the making of the modern Middle East.

Instructor: Ann Bumpus

Course Title: Contemporary Moral Issues

Description: Do you wish you had a better grasp on the arguments for and against the death penalty? Drug legality? Physician-assisted suicide? In this course we will study two or three currently contentious moral issues. Assigned content will include academic papers, articles from the popular press, films, and documentaries. Class time will be devoted to discussion, debate, argument-analysis, and peer review of written

work. Students will be assigned at least two argumentative essays, several reading reactions, argument reconstructions, and a final presentation.

Instructor: Mark Detzer (3B) (last taught 2008-10)

Course Title: Exploring the Science of Wellbeing

Description: This course explores the principles of strengths-based psychology. Rather than the traditional psychology focus on psychopathology, this course examines how individuals can thrive by cultivating mindfulness, the importance of love and relationships, gratitude, happiness and success at work, self-compassion, and meaning, transcendence, and spirituality. Students will learn about the science of wellbeing reviewing textbooks, peer-reviewed scientific literature and doing their own practical exercises. Writing assignments will be assigned for each class, and student drafts will be reviewed by classmates and the instructor across the term. By the end of the term, students will have developed a deeper understanding of the scientific research on wellbeing. They will also have refined their writing skills through research, writing assignments, and reflective journals, while grappling with key questions surrounding positive psychology, human potential, and happiness.

Instructor: Kathryn Lively

Course Title: Managing Emotions

Description: Drawing on insights from sociology to psychotherapy, this is an interdisciplinary course on managing one's emotions. The purpose will be to 1) examine how social norms and cultural expectations tell us what we should feel and how to express those feelings, 2) investigate the intrapersonal and societal consequences of adhering to these norms, and 3) better understand why particular strategies related to mindfulness help us to navigate these social demands. We will work to develop a stronger appreciation of how emotion operates in both the external and internal worlds, and to what consequence. We will approach the sociological content of the course through a number of writing components. Students respond to course readings through informal writing in reading journals and short reflection papers (1-2 pages) throughout the term. Students learn about formal writing through two papers, one of which is a quasi-research paper based on your original data collection (e.g., observations, content analysis, or short interviews with friends) that will draw on sociological resources (read in class) to explore the cultural and structural constraints surrounding a particular emotion. The other is a more significant library research paper on a related topic of your choice and will require additional library research, although you may also draw on assigned readings.

Instructor: Paul Carranza

Course Title: Cognitive Don Quixote

Description: Don Quixote is the story of a man who loses his mind by reading literature. This course will use Cervantes' masterpiece to examine theories of the

human mind and how it engages with literature. We will read selections of both Part I and Part II of Don Quixote together with critical works about it. The study of Cervantes' novel will allow us to learn about the exciting field of cognitive literary studies. We will devote special attention to learning about theory of mind—the ability of readers and literary characters to attribute emotions to others—necessary to literature and life. We will also examine cognitive approaches to film by analyzing adaptations of Don Quixote such as Terry Gilliam's *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*. All readings and lectures will be in English.

Instructor: Mara Sabinson

Course Title: Theater for Social Change

Description: This course will trace particular developments in American and Western European Theater from the First World War through the present. Artists and theater groups under consideration will be those whose work has focused on contemporary social conditions and the potential of performance to affect social change. In addition, students will experiment with developing scripts and performances based on current events. Readings will include selections from the writings of Erwin Piscator, Bertolt Brecht, The Federal Theatre Project, Harold Pinter, Augusto Boal, etc. as well as newspapers, news magazines, and other media sources. In addition to creative and critical writing, students will be assigned one major research project and a power point presentation. Emphasis will be on class participation.

Instructor: Mara Sabinson

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Instructor: Doug Moody

Course Title: He, She, or It: Reconstructing Gender in Science Fiction

Description: In this seminar, we will explore strange new worlds of thought and seek out new intellectual life and advanced lines of research-based inquiry to inspire your critical thinking and provide you with strategies for effective academic research and composition. The literary and cinematic genres that we are exploring fall within the realm of “speculative” or “science” fiction (and we will consider both of these terms,

but SF will suffice for now) and many of the historical and theoretical perspectives we explore in this course come from the field of women's, gender, and sexuality studies. Gender studies, as you will discover, has arisen out of centuries of "feminist movement," and one cannot fully appreciate the significance of feminism and its influences on social change without considering other closely related issues of race and ethnicity, social class, and sexual orientation through an "intersectional" lens. The influences of science fiction and speculative fiction in literature, film, television, and in the popular imagination have been very significant for our cultures in a post-modern world, and in this class we will consider a wide range of the social concepts, gender constructs, technological influences, and cultural theories that have been informed by feminism as we read speculative fiction stories and a variety of non-fiction texts, as well as view and examine various electronic media.

Instructor: Chris Drain

Course Title: Anthropogenesis

Description: In this seminar we will deal with the question of human origins (i.e., "anthropogenesis"). In staking out this investigation, we follow late philosopher Bernard Stiegler and Soviet psychologist L.S. Vygotsky in positing the following proposition: Homo sapiens is interesting only insofar as it leaves the bounds of purely biological determination. In other words, we are cultural-historical animals, and our specific development relies on the mediating role of cultural devices and cognitive scaffolds. But what exactly are these devices and scaffolds? And how do they function not only in relation to the quantitative amplification of prehuman capacities but also their qualitative transformation? In formulating answers to these questions, we will look to work from philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and cognitive science, while also considering insights from literary theory and psychoanalysis. As a writing seminar, we will critically examine the rhetorical structure of our texts and workshop analytic and argumentative compositions to learn the contours of academic prose in an interdisciplinary context. Shorter written assignments will scaffold the development of a research paper. Students should expect to draw on peer and instructor feedback throughout the term.

Instructor: Clara Lewis

Course Title: True Crime

Description: The genre of true crime is wildly popular. Enjoying its sensational narratives for entertainment purposes, however, raises difficult questions. What are the implications for justice when podcasters, documentarians, and tabloids weigh in on high profile cases? How do new visual and social technologies impact the genre? What does our cultural fascination with violence reveal about our society? This seminar offers a critical introduction to the practice of reading and writing true crime. We aim to extend the boundaries of the genre by considering underrepresented harms

and unconventional stories. We begin with theory from harm studies and critical criminology that contextualizes the state's role in defining what constitutes crime. Then we embark on an extended period of self-directed research complimented by shared readings that illustrate the potential of the true crime genre to reveal social harms. Readings include, Slavoj Žižek's *Violence*, Jess Walter's *Ruby Ridge*, Dave Cullen's *Columbine*, and Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. By the end of the term, you will complete a significant independent study that culminates in either an original true crime narrative or a critique of an existing true crime story. Ahead of your final project, you'll practice a number of real-world short forms, including pitches, proposals, and reviews. You will also experiment with ways of writing-without-writing and pre-writing designed to level-up your skills, build confidence, and cut the stress and procrastination out of your process.

Instructor: Colleen Lannon

Course Title: The Female Detective

Description: Detective fiction is generally considered a conservative genre. It addresses doubt and uncertainty (Who committed the crime? Why? Will she or he strike again?) and once the crime is solved, it replaces that doubt with certainty and assurance; the status quo is reinstated. What happens, then, when the historically male sleuth is replaced by a female detective? What possibilities are opened by it? Is the status quo reinforced or challenged? This course will examine the female detective alongside her masculine counterpart, starting with the early days of Sherlock Holmes and his detective "sisters" and then proceeding through the golden age of British crime fiction and selections from American hard-boiled fiction. Finally, we will examine the new wave of female detective fiction that began in the 1980s, as well as the emergence of the sub-genre of queer/lesbian detection in the 1990s. Readings will include selections from authors such as Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Dashiell Hammett, Sue Grafton, and Katherine V. Forrest.

Instructor: Erkki Mackey

Course Title: Questioning Physicalism

Description: The belief that reality is fundamentally physical has dominated western thought for at least four centuries. While the success of that belief, combined with scientific reductionism, has been undeniable—in curing disease, developing technology, and dramatically improving the quality of life on Earth for humans—we have long had legitimate philosophical reasons to question its plausibility and utility as a worldview. What's more, it has, paradoxically, motivated profound discoveries that cast doubt on its own validity and, arguably, imperiled life on Earth. We will examine some of those discoveries and philosophical concerns to try and decide if it's time to abandon physicalism—and we'll consider possible alternatives and contemplate their implications. In addition to numerous informal writing assignments,

students can expect to write multiple drafts of three short exploratory essays and one substantial research paper, and will receive considerable feedback from both peers and the instructor on those four assignments. Readings will include *Mind and Cosmos* by Thomas Nagel, *The Mysterious Universe* by James Jeans, *Why Materialism is Baloney* by Bernardo Kastrup, and *The Case Against Reality* by Donald Hoffman.

Instructor: John Barger

Course Title: The Poetics of Surrealism

Description: “Surrealism,” said Salvador Dali, “is destructive, but it destroys only what it considers to be shackles limiting our vision.” When we think of surrealism, perhaps we think of Dali’s melting clocks or Hitchcock’s bizarrely aggressive birds. Although the first wave of surrealism, which concentrated on painting in France after WW1, ended almost 100 years ago, surrealism as a concept in art is still going strong. Why has it survived? To begin with, it’s flexible enough that it has adapted to allow in other genres—music, paintings, photography, sculpture, film, stories—and diverse cultural groups. In our class, we will read three books of poems (by Alice Rahon, Charles Simic, and James Tate), watch two films (*Inland Empire* by David Lynch, and *Un Chien Andalou*, by Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dalí.), read numerous stories and scholarly essays, and look at lots of paintings and photos. Using the lens of English literature, we will specifically focus on how literary scholars write, craft arguments, and develop and test theories about poetry, film studies, aesthetics, psychology, art history, photography, Afro-Surrealism, poetry, and poetics. As part of this process, you will learn how to write and read research papers, such as those in academic journals, and how to package these ideas for public audiences. There will also be a creative component, where you try your hand at the creative forms we’re observing.

Instructor: Leigh York

Course Title: Seriality in Popular Culture

Description: The popularity and ubiquity of serial storytelling are evident today in the proliferation of television programs, web series, film sequels, podcasts, comic books, multimedia franchises, and transmedia programming. This course traces the development of serial storytelling from the serialized novel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to television and digital storytelling in the twenty-first. We will examine the ways that stories unfold over time in different serial media, including visual, textual, video, and digital forms; in the process, we will explore the shifting roles of author and audience, the ways changes in technology and media have shaped narrative content, and the ways that serial forms have influenced our historical consciousness and cultural discourse. This course will focus on how literary and cultural scholars write about popular texts. You will learn how to write formal research papers in literary and cultural studies by analyzing popular texts and researching the scholarly, critical, and audience reception of those texts. In this

course, you will write a research paper on a serialized text of your choosing. To prepare for the research paper you will complete two shorter papers and additional informal writing assignments. In consultation with the instructor, you will choose a television show, comic book, serialized novel or novel series, media franchise, web series, series of magazine or news articles, etc., and will write about different aspects of the text throughout the term. In addition to these popular texts, readings will include texts from major figures in cultural studies, including Walter Benjamin, Antonio Gramsci, Stuart Hall, bell hooks, Henry Jenkins, Lisa Nakamura, Michele Wallace, and others.

Instructor: Min Young Godley

Course Title: Cultures of Self-Loathing

Description: In an age dominated by the language of positivity, self-care, and empowerment, negative emotions such as self-loathing are taboo, or at best viewed as obstacles that individuals must overcome in order to be successful and happy. But what if self-loathing is about more than an individual deficit and, in a sense, doesn't even reside in the "self"? What if it has something to teach us about what we value, and can therefore shed light on larger problems in our culture and society that would otherwise go unheeded? This course explores self-loathing in a number of perspectives: as "ugly feelings," as moral perversion, as social pathology, and as internalized oppression. Then, expanding our perspective to interpersonal relations, we will examine how self-loathing also manifests in such forms as blame and resentment, playing a hidden role in politics that includes racism, sexism, body shaming, and so on. Finally, we will interpret the shifting ethical stakes that are expressed in resentment and self-loathing and appraise their value as criticism.

Instructor: Rachel Obbard

Course Title: Technology and Sport

Description: "Technology and Sports at the Crossroads" is a First-Year Seminar that engages students in indepth study of this complex, interdisciplinary topic through reading, research, discussion, and composition. In this course, we will examine why some innovations in science and technology create controversy, try to answer some of the important questions about the use of technology in sport that transcend individual sports, and examine who is contributing to and shaping the public discourse about these topics. We will read and discuss scientific (peer-reviewed) papers and scholarly essays on engineering, ethics and the philosophy of sport and each student will do extensive research and writing on a specific topic. Coursework will include short informal writing pieces, an annotated bibliography, a presentation on their topic, and two major essays: a literature review paper on the applied science or engineering behind a specific sports technology, and a scholarly essay that examines the intersection of that technology with sport and society.

