First-Year Seminars

In the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA), you can engage professors in an intimate setting through First-Year Seminars (FYS). These are small courses that are limited to 18 students and fulfill at least one LSA requirement. FYS give incoming students the opportunity to share ideas, to take intellectual risks, and to get to know their classmates in the process.

First-Year Seminars are offered in the following areas:

- Humanities
- First-Year Writing
- Interdisciplinary
- Natural Science
- Social Science
When Rosa Parks refused to leave her seat on a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama one fateful afternoon in December 1955, the stage was set for what would later become the modern Civil Rights Movement. We will study the religious beliefs, institutions, and dialogues of African and African-origin communities across the Atlantic world. The class will focus on the transnational relationships of black communities across different time periods to examine how religion has informed slavery, identity, colonialism, revolutions, nationalism, globalization, and popular culture.

This seminar introduces first-year students to the intellectual community of humanities scholars working in the field of Afroamerican and African studies. The topic of this seminar is Black Atlantic Religion. We will study the religious beliefs, institutions, and dialogues of African and African-origin communities across the Atlantic world. The class will focus on the transnational relationships of black communities across different time periods to examine how religion has informed slavery, identity, colonialism, revolutions, nationalism, globalization, and popular culture.

American Culture

Monuments, Power and Cultural Landscapes
TTh 2:30–4 / Kristin Ann Hass

This course will focus on the analysis of Latinx/o/x Artistic production as expressed through paintings, architecture, artifacts, urban-altered spaces, people’s bodily modifications, food innovations, theater, and other performative practices surrounding these communities. The course will examine how political, social, and economic conditions affect how Latinx/o/x relate to art and creativity. This class will argue that through the use, manipulation, and implementation of art, Latinx/o/x challenge, transgress, and resist the preconceived notions of traditional art, inscribe new spaces for emancipation, and are able to envision a different world.

Religion and Religious Dilemmas in the U.S. - A Case Study Approach
TTh 10–11:30 / Nancy Khalil

The United States has long had a range of religious and spiritual traditions acknowledged and practiced in its borders. As these traditions increase in number and followers, there is a constant national renegotiation of what exactly is religion, and whether all forms of it, or all types of believers, can call the US home. Using case studies mostly researched and compiled by Harvard University’s Pluralism Project over more than 15 years through its Case Study Initiative, each week this course will dive into a new instance of a religion driven dilemma to both develop a broad understanding of religion in the US and engage in constructive conversation around the nation’s evolving religious landscape.

Monte Carlo Crime
TTh 10–11:30 / M Remi Yergeau

See DIGITAL 158-001

Asian Languages and Cultures

Buddhist Lives Across Time and Space
MW 11:30–1 / Sangseraima Ujeed

Mad yogi, reincarnated monkeys, headless dancers, enlightened prostitutes, good monks, bad monks, naughty monks, runaway nuns, crazed princesses, Bodhisattvas, Buddha, demons, and demonesses. This course will introduce the lived and imagined lives of major Buddhist figures throughout the long history of Buddhism with an emphasis on the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Together, we will explore the social, cultural, mythological, doctrinal, and historical implications of Buddhism on societies and vice versa throughout history as depicted in notable life stories from the tradition.

Shakespeare’s Classics
TuTh 1:20–3 / Basilo Dufalo

What did classical Greco-Roman antiquity mean to Shakespeare, and why did he turn to ancient Greece and Rome to explore the great questions of human existence through the medium of drama? In pursuit of answers to these questions, this course will examine a selection of Shakespeare’s plays about the classical past as well as one (The Tempest) strongly influenced by an ancient Roman comedy. In addition to studying the plays as great theater in their own right, we will consider them both with and against Shakespeare’s ancient Greek and Roman sources in Plautus, Vergil, Ovid, Seneca, Plutarch, and others, so as to grasp how Shakespeare staged, transformed, and adapted the ancient world for audiences of his day.

Cities of Images
MW 1–2:30 / Lisa Neveu

Have you ever wondered why some places are the focus of long-lived settlements? And what does make a settlement into a city? The monumentality of its buildings? The range of its infrastructures? Or, merely, the size and density of its population? In this seminar, we will investigate the rise of urbanism in the Old World from a comparative perspective. We explore the nature of the earliest known villages in the Near East and of the first cities in Mesopotamia, India, China, and the ancient Mediterranean. Through the archaeological evidence, we look at how these urban centers were planned, built, and lived.

When in Rome Eat as the Romans Do
TuTh 2:30–4 / Rachel Rafael Neis
See HISTORY 197.03

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Social distancing isn’t new. Disabled and chronically ill people have long navigated the world at a remove. Inaccessible environments, institutionalized, discriminatory social policies, and educational inequalities have had profound consequences on how disability communities engage in public life. For these reasons, and more, disability cultures often intersect with digital cultures, highlighting ways of moving through the world that help us to think together. In this class, we will examine how disabled activists deploy protest tactics online, paying particular attention to histories and pre-histories of online activism as well as current media campaigns and digital accessibility advocacy. Also see AMCULT 103.006, ENGLISH 140.005.

**ENGLISH 140.005**

**Amsterdam: Tolerance in the Triple X City**

TTh 11:30–1:30 / Annamarie Toebeek

Amsterdam: Tolerance in the Triple X City tells the story of the Dutch capital’s diversity and multiculturalism through its social, political, and religious history. It is the only course taught with this emphasis in the U.S.

**DUTCH 160.001**

**TTh 11:30–1:30** / Jillian Cahill White

In this class, we think historically and theoretically about twentieth-century poetry’s reputation as attention training, and we practice reading poems together with that kind of attention in mind. How do various poems, and poetry reading norms, ask us to pay attention? While much of what we do will involve practicing a variety of college classroom tools to practice different ways of attending to poems – close-reading and research – we will also look at prose writing (through popular science, literary criticism, history) to help us think together about what attention is, and why it (and distraction) are such a hot topic now.

**ENGLISH 140.001**

**Poetry and Attention**

MWF 10–11:10 / Sarah Murray

This first year seminar will critically explore the emergence of ordinary artificial intelligence, or smart life. In order to do this, we will study the history of AI in the western world. We will break down the words artificial and intelligence. We will consider the burning questions that AI prompts: what does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be smart? Can life be replaced, enhanced, or custom designed? To faster and smarter always better? How have media represented and interrogated the concept of life since the 1950s? And, most importantly: who does smart life privilege, what does smart life make possible, and how can we be advocates for a truly smarter world?

**HISTORY 197.003**

**Humans and Non-Humans in the Ancient World**

TTh 2:30–4 / Rachel Rafael Neis

This course aims to re-imagine the way we think about the human in antiquity. It is focused on the concept of what it means to be a human and how that concept has been shaped by the history of thought. We will explore the idea of humanity as a social construct and how it has been used to define and limit human agency. We will also examine the ways in which the concept of humanity has been used to justify various forms of social and political inequality.

**HISTORY 197.004**

**Does Your Family Matter? Genealogy and History in America**

TTh 11:10–12 / Gregory J. Doucet

The Constitution says, “No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States.” Yet, the people of a nation of commoners, are claiming family trees. An observer has recently quipped, “deep down, genealogy is pretty shallow.” Is it? What does it mean that new technologies are making it easier to trace our family histories? This course will explore the meaning of genealogy in America and American history from before the revolution to the present.

**HISTORY 197.005**

**Monks, Demons, Hermits: On the Edge of Early Christian Practice**

MW 2:30–4 / Ellen Muehlberger

In this discussion-based seminar, we will consider together the history of early Christian practice that took place outside of churches and towns. This course will introduce students to fundamentals of Roman history through the study of human life. Ultimately, this course is meant to help students engage critically with historical sources and explore questions about family, identity, and hierarchy that also speak to important issues in our present.

**HISTORY 197.006**

**Christians of the Middle East: The Armenian Experience**

TTh 2:30–4 / Hakem Amer Al-Rustom

This course serves as an introduction to the diverse Christian populations and churches of the Middle East. With a focus on the Armenians, the course presents Armenian history of the region from the vantage point of co-existence between communities, as well as ideological interaction between churches. A particular emphasis will be given to Christian history under Arabo-Muslim policies to map the patterns of exchange, borrowings, and shared sites between various religious communities of the region.

**HISTORY 197.007**

**The Roman Family**

MW 2:30–4 / Alessandra Ferrini

What does “family” mean to you? What constitutes a “household”? In the Roman world, a household (domus) might include

**HISTORY 197.008**

**Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl**

TTh 8:30–10 / LaKisha Michelle Simmons

This first year seminar investigates the life and times of Harriet Jacobs. Born enslaved in North Carolina in 1813, Jacobs eventually escaped to the North and became a famous abolitionist. She wrote her own autobiography, and during the Civil War, along with her daughter Louisa, Jacobs founded schools for children who were formerly enslaved. In class we will examine girls’ experience with slavery, resistance to slavery by African American women, the abolition movement in the North, and women’s activism during the Civil War through the story of Jacobs and her family.

**ITALIAN 250.001**

**Dante’s Divine Comedy: A Journey of Discovery**

MW 10–11 / Leonardo Chiavarini

The story of Dante’s voyage through the three realms of the Christian afterlife, the Divine Comedy is a perfect text for people who are starting college and, like Dante, are embarking on a journey of discovery. This course is a guided reading of the Divine Comedy, a poem and an encyclopedia of the human experience, but also a text that resonates with readers of all kinds. Students will read the whole of the Inferno and selections from the Purgatorio and the Paradiso. We will consider the text both in its original context and in our twenty-first century context.
understanding of language? To address the former question, we consider Ojibwe (Algonquian), the language of the Nishnaabeg, who are indigenous to the Great Lakes region. We examine several aspects of the language which differ from English and many Indo-European languages, including word-building processes, word order, and gender-neutral pronouns. No linguistic experience required.

### Mid Eastern Studies

#### Fake! Fraudulent Production in the Visual Arts, Literature, and Historical Documents

**Course Code:** MIDEAST 295.001
**Day and Time:** MW 10–11:30 / Gary M. Bechman

Criminals, tricksters, frauds, hoaxes: why create something and pretend that it is something that it is not? From antiquity and to today some craftsmen, artists, and writers have dedicated their efforts to creating objects and texts that masqueraded as something they were not, usually something of greater financial value. How and why are the gamut of fakery, including fraudulent antiquities from various civilizations, including ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, forged examples of later (including contemporary) visual art, bogus literary works, scientific deceptions, and spurious historical documents.

#### The Qur’an and its Interpreters

**Course Code:** MIDEAST 295.003
**Day and Time:** MW 1–2:30 / Alexander D. Knysh

This course has three primary objectives. First, to introduce students to the main historical, thematic, and literary features of the Qur'an as both a scripture considered sacred and infallible by Muslims and as a literary text. Second, to assist students in refining their thinking, speaking, and writing skills by discussing a major world scripture and its role as an ideological and intellectual force. Third, to foster an informed and sophisticated understanding of the role and place of the Qur'an in contemporary Muslim life thought and practice. To achieve these goals, the course explores how classical forms of appreciation and interpretation of the Qur'an have transitioned into the present.

### Philosophy

#### Social Progress and Ideology

**Course Code:** PHIL 196.001
**Day and Time:** TTh 4–5:30 / Dan Low

Underlying every society is a system of ideas. These ideas explain and justify the existing social order – who gets to hold power, how wealth is distributed, and what social categories like race and gender mean. These systems of ideas are necessary: without some commonly understood reasons for why society is arranged the way it is, society would be perpetually unstable knowing how one ideology may be reformed or replaced with a better one – is crucial to making one’s society better. That is the central question we will consider in this course: What ideologies are at work in our society, should they be changed, and if so, how?
First-Year Writing Requirement

Classical Civilization

- **CLCIV 121.001**
  - **Coming of Age in Times of Crisis**
  - **MF 10–11:30** / Donka D. Markus

In this course, we will explore the coming of age of Achilles in Homer’s Iliad and of Antigone in Sophocles’ play of the same name. Both of these characters face challenging crises: Achilles – the Trojan War and Antigone – the civil war at Thebes. Through these two protagonists, we will explore what a mature human being looks like, what the epic Iliad and of Antigone in Sophocles’ play of the same name. Both of these characters face challenging crises: Achilles – the Trojan War and Antigone – the civil war at Thebes. Through these two protagonists, we will explore what a mature human being looks like, what the epic

- **ENGLISH 125.013**
  - **Magicians, Seers, and Witches: Magic in the Ancient Mediterranean**
  - **TTh 10–11:30 / Catherine Schenck**

We relegate the world of magic to fantasy novels and superstition, but magic in antiquity was deeply embedded in all aspects of daily life: childbirth, birth control, business rivalry, and athletic competitions. Students will learn to analyze written and visual sources (curse tablets, spells, and amulets) from the ancient Mediterranean, evaluate modern scholarship, and analyze objects in social contexts. We will attempt to answer several questions: what is “magic”? Who uses this term, and what are they describing? How is it different from religion or medicine? How is it tied to gender and sexuality?

- **ENGLISH 125.015**
  - **Monsters in Society**
  - **TTh 2:30–4 / Kate O’Conner**

What are “monsters” and why are we (supposed to be) scared of them? Zombies, for example, a perpetual favorite in the horror genre, have changed dramatically over the last century to reflect cultural anxieties including racism, immigration fears, nuclear war, technological disasters, and pandemics. This course will examine how “monsters” reflect broader social, political, and cultural anxieties and fear about categories including race, sex, gender, sexuality, immigrants, power, class, health, and disability. What is it about zombies, Frankenstein’s monster, vampires, ghosts, and other monsters that make people uncomfortable and/or scared? Through close readings, historical analysis, and literary analysis, students will be encouraged to think broadly about the categories of “horror” and “monsters.”

- **ENGLISH 125.017**
  - **Archaeology of Death**
  - **TTh 11:30–1 / Shilpa Cakola**

From ancient mummies to medieval anti-zombie rituals, archaeologists encounter many enigmatic burial practices. How do we know what they mean? In this class, students will learn to think like archaeologists as we investigate how burials can answer questions about social status, inequality, gender identity, cultural and ethnic identity, and religious beliefs. Drawing on examples from across the globe, we will also consider the ethical implications of studying human remains. Students will have the opportunity to explore their interests as they learn to analyze diverse perspectives, evaluate arguments, and practice both popular and academic writing styles.

English

- **ENGLISH 125.010**
  - **Ways of Knowing: How We Understand Environmental Change**
  - **MW 1–2:30 / Elliot Greiner**

Nothing exists in a vacuum; every living thing in Earth’s history has been influenced by the physical environment that bore it. In this class students will use classroom and field methods to learn how to observe, analyze and write about environments as they occur in both the present and the past. By developing skills in scientific analysis and environmental writing they will better understand how scientific and creative methodologies are used to approach the unknown. Particularly, we will investigate environmental change through time, explore ecological connectivity, and examine how perspective influences scientific conclusions.

- **ENGLISH 125.033**
  - **Digital Values (and How to Use Them)**
  - **MW 10–11:30 / Caitlin Dyche**

Values are frequently defined as core enduring beliefs that shape how we behave and evaluate as well as how we justify our actions and assessments. Values spread and materialize through communication—words, images, sound, video. In this course, we will explore values transmitted via digital communicative forms, with the goal of identifying our own personal values and gaining insight into how they are produced and reinforced through media. In addition to consuming, discussing, and analyzing academic texts, digital media, and evaluative discourse, we will also experiment with producing digital media, including (but not limited to) TikToks, Tweets, and Snaps.

- **ENGLISH 125.037**
  - **Outcasts and Social Control**
  - **MW 11:30–1 / Stacey Jacqueline Bishop**

How was ‘normal’ created? This first year writing course explores how law, policy, and battles over public space created ‘outcasts’ and ‘deviants’ in US History. Topics range from government campaigns against opium dens, vagrancy laws, industrial and reformatory schools, skid rows, asylums, and working-class publics. We will examine these topics as processes of social control that powerfully define and redefine citizenship and belonging. Looking at scholarly accounts, oral histories, movies, cultural works, and archival sources, we will ask what exactly is being regulated through these processes? How is a social problem defined and then resolved?
Biology

**BIOLOGY 120.001**

*Marine Biology*

TTh 2:30–4 / Diarmaid O'Foighil

Most of our planet's surface is covered by oceans and this course engages with how we study life in this very different environment. Major topics include the physics of living in seawater and its biological implications, the enormous diversity of marine lifeforms, how major marine ecosystems and biological communities function, and how these functions are increasingly impacted by human activities.

**BIOLOGY 120.002**

*Biology and Middle Earth*

TTh 8:30–10 / Stephen A. Smith

Through the lens of Tolkien’s works (Lord of the Rings, Hobbit, among others), we will explore several major modern biological themes including environmentalism, ethnobotany (plants and people), evolution, biogeography (why do things live where they live), and ecology. In addition to learning about some of the biology related to these topics, students will learn about the local flora of Michigan as well as the last few billion years of Michigan’s geology. The ecological ethos of Tolkien’s middle earth offers compelling lessons for modern biology and environmentalism. While Tolkien wrote fiction, his works are firmly grounded both in real plants and in broad biological themes that we will use to learn and discuss major biological topics.

Psychology

**PSYCH 121.001**

*The Human Mind and Brain*

MW 11:30–1 / Thad Polk

How are mental processes like memory, language, and attention implemented in the brain? What is the neural basis of insanity? Of sleep? Of depression? What, if anything, can the brain tell us about consciousness? Within the last few decades, science has made significant progress on these and related questions by studying the effects of brain damage and by recording brain activity in intact individuals. In this seminar, we will survey this exciting field. We will first familiarize ourselves with the structure of the human brain and then learn what is being discovered about how the brain implements a variety of mental processes.

Interdisciplinary

**UC 154.001**

*Alone/Together: The Individual Life and the Common Good*

MW 1–2:30 / Christine Ann Modey

After more than a year of living through a world-wide pandemic and with the emergence of a “new normal” on the horizon, many of us are asking: Where do we go from here? This first-year seminar provides us with opportunities to put our experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic crisis, and the uprisings for racial justice into broader perspective by exploring our needs for solitude, reflection, and self-care, as well as our ethical obligations to others and to the common good. Key assignments include weekly journals, online discussions, and a final project.
Social Science

**Afroamerican and African Studies**

- **AAS 103.001**
  Reading Africa: Critical Perspectives on Popular Development Books
  TTh 2:30–4:00 / Howard Stein
  This course seeks to introduce students to everyday life in urban Africa. The course is designed to equip students with basic and useful knowledge about how urban residents - rich and poor, newcomers and old-timers, young and old, men and women - negotiate the challenges of living in cities. Social organization, religious belief and practice, ethnicity, economic and political systems, the arts, and popular culture are some of the topics we will explore. We will be approaching these themes from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including history, anthropology, literature, political science, sociology, and economics.

- **AAS 103.002**
  Reconsidering African Environments
  MW 1–2:30 / Brian Klein
  See ENVIRON 152.001

- **AAS 103.003**
  South Africa: from Apartheid to Democracy
  MW 1–2:30 / Adam Philip Ashforth
  This course will examine the history of racial domination in twentieth-century South Africa, the struggle against apartheid, and the legacy of apartheid in the twenty-first century. Our objective will be to identify and evaluate emerging forms of governance, politics, and culture in this new African democracy.

**Social Media, and the Politics and Culture of Human Rights**

- **TTh 4–5:30 / Omolade Adunbi**
  This course examines international human rights theory and practice through a consideration of three key concepts: Transnationalism, ethnic nationalism, and social media practices. Each of the central concepts will be considered in depth and linked to the emerging field of transnational governance and the growing interest in Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in using social media to shape local and global practices. The central goal is to use an interdisciplinary approach to human rights combining legal scholarship, political theory, and social science research - to engage some of the most pressing issues regarding the application and enforcement of human rights.

**American Culture**

- **AMCULT 102.002**
  American Horror History: Monsters in the US
  TTH 10–11:30 / William A. Cahn-Quiros
  This class analyzes the history of the United States through the emergence of monsters, supernatural creatures, the uncanny, and phantasmagoric tales. In particular, it will study traditional witches, zombies, vampires, as well as other creatures such as the Freddy Krueger, the Chupacabras, and cyber monsters like the slenderman. It will study their historical context, evolution, political, economic, and gender elements in order to understand how America uses the imaginary to deal with socio-historical anxieties, fears, and demographic changes. This class will discuss and analyze stories, tales, films, TV shows, fiction, novels, and academic papers.

**Communications**

- **COMM 159.001**
  An Introduction to Hackers, Pranksters and Whistleblowers
  MW 2:30–4 / Macammi M. Hussain
  This course offers a three-part framework for thoughtfully understanding and situating issues and challenges surrounding global “hacktivism” - the subversive use of computers and networks to protect and promote freedom and democracy. Part 1 introduces students to recent events and issues surrounding hacking and whistleblowing that have disrupted international affairs. Part 2 introduces students to a framework for understanding the relationships between information communication technologies and political power. Part 3 introduces students to emergent issues and ways of thinking through the processes of innovation and governance of political technologies. In addition to course readings, students will have an opportunity to engage with course concepts through the mediums of movies, novels and games.

**Environmental**

- **ENVIRON 152.001**
  Reconsidering African Environments
  MW 1–2:30 / Brian Klein
  Blood diamonds: Resource curses. Land grabs. Tragedies of the commons. Climate refugees. These concepts are often used to frame discussions about natural resource politics and environmental (mis)management in Africa. Time and again, we hear that corruption (in government) and overexploitation (by poor citizens) are preventing sustainable development, putting biodiversity conservation at risk, and providing fodder for ongoing conflict. This course prompts students to critically engage with these narratives through an appraisal of popular media, policy documents, and relevant scholarship in the fields of political economy, geography, anthropology, political ecology, and development studies. See also AAS 103.002.

**Psychology**

- **PSYCH 120.001**
  Sustainability: Can Psychology Save the Planet?
  W 2–5 / Stephanie D. Preston
  People are concerned about the state of our natural environment, with increasing interest in climate change, pollution, sustainable food production, and conservation. Despite this growing concern—and efforts by public and private interests to increase sustainability—we often fail to change behavior. Psychological research is needed to help us translate knowledge about sustainability into real behavior change. Existing approaches have tried to reach people through fear, social norms, personal values, and the desire to belong or surpass others. In addition, “nudge” techniques try to passively change behavior. We need to evaluate these approaches and suggest new ones.

- **PSYCH 120.002, 120.011**
  Psychological Perspectives of Politics
  MW 10–11:30, TTh 2:30–4 / Joshua L. Rabkinowitz
  In this seminar, we will discuss the psychology of public opinion, voting, leadership, and media coverage of elections. Examples of pertinent questions include: Do citizens vote in self-interested ways? Or are other, more symbolic aspects more important? To what extent do environmental characteristics influence one’s political behavior? And does a candidate’s race or gender matter?
The Development of Stress and Resilience: Biology, Psychology, and Society  
T 9–12 / Daniel P. Keating

Stress is an essential part of everyday life, but there are many indicators showing substantial increases in feelings of distress and anxiety in recent decades, along with a rise in health problems associated with excess stress—indeed, a stress epidemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has of course made this far more severe over the past year and a half, leading perhaps to a stress pandemic. In this seminar, we will explore the biology, the psychology, and the social factors responsible for this cycle, with a special focus on how to break that cycle at an individual and societal level.

The Psychology of Violence  
M 1–4 / Sandra A. Graham-Bermann

This first-year seminar is focused on the study of violence. The course begins with a discussion of a range of violence events and definitions of violence victimization and violence perpetration. Theoretical frameworks and models useful for understanding violence are introduced, including developmental psychopathology, cognitive development, neuropsychology, bio-behavioral theory, and intergenerational systems theory. Following the developmental psychopathology model, research on relevant risk and protective factors associated with violence is also presented.

Emerging Adulthood  
MW 1–2:30 / Kathleen Jodl

This seminar provides an in-depth study of development during the period of emerging adulthood (ages 18 to 25+). The goal is to provide an overview of the current state of the art regarding the transition to adulthood, and how larger historical, cultural, and economic forces impact emerging adults today. Students are encouraged to think critically about the theory and research on emerging adulthood and to integrate this knowledge with their own observations of human behavior. Moreover, students should consider the practical implications of current research in the field of developmental psychology for emerging adults and social policy.

What Makes Life Worth Living?  
MW 1–2:30 / Nansook Park

This first-year seminar addresses the topic of what makes life worth living. This course will draw on positive psychology as well as allied work in various disciplines to address these common themes of the good life. In this course, students will learn about the science and art of the good life by examining research findings as well as specific practices that build and promote happy, healthy and meaningful life.

Sociology  
SOC 105.001

Sociology of Elites  
MW 10–11:30 / Jonah Stuart Brundage

Who are elites and why do they matter? This course approaches a number of key topics in sociology through the lens of social elites, those who have the most power in society. Elites are important not because they are “representative” of larger groups, but because they have disproportionate influence over major social processes and other people’s lives in spite of their unrepresentative character. We will consider the identities, views, and actions of elites in terms of their implications for social inequality and for the nature of politics, primarily in the United States but also elsewhere. We will explore elites in such fields as: finance and the economy; politics and government; the education system; art; and entertainment; and foreign policy.

Families in the US  
MW 2:30–4 / Pamela J. Smock

What’s happening to the family today? One can’t get through the news without seeing articles and blogs about changing family life and whether these changes are “good” or “bad” for society. This class will introduce you to key family topics using a sociological lens. We will cover living together, marriage, divorce, remarriage, parenthood, and the sheer diversity of family life. An emphasis throughout this course will be inequality by social class and gender — and how those inequalities affect families. The course is organized as a seminar, with emphasis on reading, writing, in-class activities, and lively discussion.

Understanding Social Problems through Memoirs  
MW 4–5:30 / Karyn R. Lacy

This course peers into the lives of Americans through intensive analysis of their memoirs. Most people remember good and bad aspects of their lives well enough to share them with others in everyday conversation. But memoirs chronicle the most impactful experiences of our lives. Some of these authors expose their lives to strangers, as a cautionary tale, others as a model for achieving economic mobility, still others to document life’s obstacles that they have managed to overcome. This course has three objectives: to apply theories about race, class, and gender to people’s “real life” experiences; to understand how people engage social identities in their interactions with others; and to deepen students’ understanding of inequality and its consequences.

Women’s and Gender Studies  
WGS 151.001

Fantasizing Japan  
MW 8:30–10 / Allison Alexy

Japan, Japanese people, and Japanese things occupy a surprisingly central place in many personal and collective fantasies. From anime characters to misconceptions about samurai, Japanese goods and ideas exert important influence far beyond Japan. At the same time, fantasies within contemporary Japan tell us about current social debates and possibilities there. Exploring both common fantasy images and more complicated realities, occurring within and beyond Japan, this seminar investigates the social effects of such fantasizing. Engaging theories about orientalism, exoticism, fantasy, and the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality, we examine a range of readings and films.
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