

MONTSERRAT COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Fall 2023 – Spring 2024

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

ART'S POWER: ITS LEGACY AND CURRENCY

Common Area Designation: Arts

Display, Theft & Repatriation (fall):

The commissioning and owning of art objects often have been ways of establishing social, political, economic, and religious authority or influence. Even after the moment of an object's creation, ownership of art has been its own kind of power. We will consider both the moment of creation (for example, the way that Roman emperors used coins as propaganda), and the afterlife of these objects, as they have been displayed, destroyed, stolen, and used as diplomatic gifts. In addition, we will consider the challenges for contemporary society of handling the legacy of art objects which are associated with these kinds of power, for example the repatriation of stolen objects.

Art and Contemporary Activism (spring):

The twenty-first century has seen unprecedented artistic engagement with topics of social justice, environmental policies, and political activism. Many artists view themselves as cultural changemakers. In this class, we will examine issues of engagement, audience, and acquisition in contemporary art. Our material will include artworks that have addressed identity issues like race, gender, and sexuality; cultural issues like colonial and post-colonial politics, national identity and history, and the role of museums; and societal issues like climate change, immigration, economic inequality, and globalization. We will also consider episodes in which art objects have been the subject of activist engagement, for example the recent targeting of art objects by climate-change groups in Europe.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Common Area Designation: Literature

Learning from the Past (fall):

What can the past tell us about effective community practices and collaborative ethics? How does the past inform our present condition? How does it provide models for solidarity? In this interdisciplinary course, we will analyze early modern works of literature and art that address issues related to gender, class, race, disability, and the environment. We will explore a community of men and women fleeing an epidemic, an allegorical city of ladies constructed as a response to misogynist attacks, an aristocratic court where normativity leads to marginalization, an ecosystem in which humans and nonhumans are interconnected, and a fictional utopian society.

Challenges of the Present (spring):

What are the obstacles to community that we still face in today's world? How can we distance ourselves from self-centered individualism and adopt more inclusive and diverse perspectives? In this interdisciplinary course, we will analyze contemporary literature, theater, films, and artwork to focus on the following issues: family relations and class structures; the causes of conflict in communities; multicultural societies and clashes of civilizations; the many struggles faced by immigrants; the resistance to indigenous and environmental violence; antiracist practices; opposition to ableism and to gender oppression.

COMICS RHETORIC

Common Area Designation: Literature

Comics Narrative (fall):

Many of us associate the word narrative with language or text, but images are a primary way many of us experience and remember stories. In the first semester of this seminar, we will investigate the narrative potential of sequential images, especially when they are juxtaposed with text. We will read a variety of web comics, picture books, graphic novels, and graphic memoirs to analyze narrative techniques. You will also practice applying some of these techniques by creating your own comics narratives. This course does not require previous drawing or creative writing experience.

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Comics Action (spring):

Comics are capable of telling stories, but they are also capable of moving people to action. In the second semester, we will use theories of visual and public rhetoric to analyze comics texts with explicitly rhetorical purposes, including zines, memes, political cartoons, and infographics. Throughout the semester, you will undertake an activist project, using the design thinking process to research a social issue you are invested in. The course will culminate in the creation of a rhetorical comics piece that intervenes in this issue. This course does not require previous drawing or creative writing experience.

EMOTION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Common Area Designation: Social Science

C.I.S. Concentration: [Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies](#)

The Social Life of Feelings (fall):

What are emotions, where do they come from, and what do they do? When we feel cheerful or embarrassed or angry, we often attribute these emotions to the internal workings of our own minds, but what if we thought of our emotions as socially constructed feelings with real social effects? How do we learn what to feel, how to express our emotions, or even how to commodify them? In this seminar, we will learn how sociologists think about and study emotions. In the fall semester, we will examine the way emotions are socially constructed in the social spheres of the home, family, school, and work, paying careful attention to the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

The Politics of Emotion (spring):

Critics argue that we now live in a 'post-truth' era where feelings, not facts, are the basis for political action. We will interrogate this claim by exploring the role emotion plays in the public sphere and the kinds of emotional investments people make in their local, national, and global communities. Continuing our sociological approach to emotion, our aim will be to understand how our individual experiences of love, happiness, fear, pride, or shame are intertwined with broader structures of feeling at the national and global levels. Using the concept of 'affective citizenship,' we will explore how emotion circulates in the political contexts of national citizenship, social activism, and globalization.

RACE AND FANTASY GENRES

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies

21st Race, Fantasy, & Film (fall):

The fantasy genre has long afforded its creators a vehicle to imagine a better world or to reckon with difficult cultural or national histories. In the 21st Century, studios and creators have made use of the genre to explore the United States fraught racial past, and so this course will examine the politics and aesthetics of recent popular films. While also learning to study and write about film, this course will explore a variety of fantasy genres – from science fiction to horror to high fantasy and even superheroes – and examine how they envision our fraught racial past to imagine a better future.

Dungeons, Dragons, & Diversity (spring):

Once considered a nerdy niche game accused of encouraging demonism, the role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons is undergoing a cultural renaissance. With increased visibility comes increased scrutiny, and D&D has responded to its own potentially problematic racial past by updating its game rules and narrative lore to be more culturally literate and inclusive. This course will explore the cultural history of the game while studying the *Journeys Through the Radiant Citadel*, a game module inspired by diverse real world cultures. The course culminates with students playing as a character from an ethnicity other than their own and writing reflective essays on what it is like to imagine yourself as a member of another culture.

THE ACADEMY

Common Area Designation: Social Science

Principles of Higher Education (fall):

This seminar provides an overview of the institutions, people, and issues that shape higher education in the United States. Students will explore the history of higher education, including its purpose and evolution over time. We will examine the extent to which colleges and universities are inclusive learning spaces, and consider the changing needs of the student population in recent years.

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Throughout the semester we will explore the challenges and opportunities that higher education faces today, including student access to higher education, online learning, and artificial intelligence.

College Student Well-Being (spring):

This seminar focuses on the holistic development of college students, with an emphasis on learning and well-being. During the first half of the semester we will examine the extent to which classrooms create an equitable learning environment for diverse learners, and consider pedagogical approaches to creating more inclusive learning environments. The second half of the semester will focus on college student well-being. We will explore issues related to student physical health, mental health, personal relationships, and identity development, and identify campus resources designed to support student well-being. *This course will include a [Community-Based Learning](#) project component.*

THE BIOCHEM OF WHY WE GET SICK

Common Area Designation: Natural Science

Biochemistry of Human Health (fall):

This course will explore the fundamental principles of biochemistry as they relate to human health. We will examine the chemical and molecular basis of life, focusing on the biomolecules that are essential to human health and the metabolic pathways that are responsible for generating energy, building and breaking down biomolecules, and regulating cellular processes. We will then use this knowledge as a foundation to contemplate challenges to human health in modern society and consider how a scientific understanding may help lead to possible solutions when combined with insights from other fields of study that focus more thoroughly on health disparities.

Biochemistry of Human Disease (spring):

This course will explore how alterations in biochemical pathways of the human body can contribute to the development of disease. Building on the understanding we develop during the fall semester, we will examine how alterations in biochemical pathways can contribute to the development of diseases such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders, and neurodegenerative diseases. By combining an understanding of how scientific studies on the molecular basis of disease can allow for effective diagnoses and treatments with perspectives on disparities in global disease treatment efforts we will explore possible paths to solutions.

CORE HUMAN QUESTIONS

LITERATURE AND CONTINUITY

Common Area Designation: Literature

Foundation and Crisis (fall):

This year-long course will examine how we inherit stories, retell them, and make new meaning from them. In the first semester we will read ancient or “classical” literature in a global context – from India to the Mediterranean, from the Middle East to the Americas – and consider how storytelling helps us to constitute ourselves and our communities. The literature and ideas we encounter will encourage us to explore how we connect to each other beyond the borders of community and will offer an understanding of those connective concepts that make us human. Texts will include *Gilgamesh*, the *Ramayana*, selections from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Eduardo Galeano’s *Memory of Fire: Genesis*.

Crisis and Continuity (spring):

In the spring, we will turn to works of reception and retelling in order to understand how stories gain new meaning over space and time. We will begin with selections from the European Middle Ages and Renaissance, with writers such as Dante Alighieri, Giovanni Boccaccio, Geoffrey Chaucer, Christine de Pizan, and William Shakespeare, and consider how retellings of ancient stories drew from global sources. We will continue with modern works of reception in fiction and film, as we learn how adaptation combines new forms with familiar narratives.

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MEMORY AND ANTICIPATION

Common Area Designation: Literature

Looking Back (fall):

How does memory shape who we are? How can we agree on remembering our shared history? How will the internet change the way we remember? This course explores memory: personal memory, collective memory, and digital memory. We will think about the ways it forms our ideas of ourselves, how we can use it to understand our society, and the opportunities and dangers of storing our memories in digital space. Students will read fiction, historical, and sociological writing, and will produce their own writing about memory in the form of creative non-fiction and analytical essays.

Looking Forward (spring):

Building on our conversations about how memory informs our lives, in the Spring we will turn our attention to thinking about the future. Where does prediction help and hurt us? How can our feelings of anxiety about the future be used to generate positive change? How can we find hope for the future? We will think about our attitudes toward the future across three units: prediction, dread, and hope. We'll explore current and past attempts to predict the future, read and watch science fiction and consider its warnings, and think about how to harness hope in building a better future. Students will produce creative and critical writing.

PURSUIING HEALTH

Common Area Designation: Studies in Religion

Health as a Personal Project (fall):

What does it mean to be healthy and what is the place of illness and disability in a good life? How does stigma influence notions of illness and moral responsibility? What does ethics have to say about dignity (persons created in the image and likeness of God), autonomy, and interdependence in medical contexts that place a high value on independence and control? How is the view of persons as consumers of health care shaping approaches to health and well-being? In this seminar, we will draw on sources from Christian ethics, literature, film, and memoir to explore experiences of illness, injury, disability, and the desire for health and healing.

Health as a Common Good (spring):

What are the implications of claiming access to health care as a human right and a common good? What are some of the social determinants of health and illness? How do racism, sexism, and economic inequality impact health? What might solidarity, stewardship, the option for the poor and vulnerable, and other themes in Catholic social teaching contribute to medical ethics today? Together, we will explore issues in public health (including controversies around vaccines, communicable and infectious diseases, and other epidemics); the roles of markets, governments, and other institutions in providing access to care; the participation of human subjects in research; and environmental justice. *Spring semester includes a project-based [Community-Based Learning](#) component designed to understand and enhance campus health and well-being.*

REWRITING THE FAMILY

Common Area Designation: Literature

Tough Love (fall):

For many centuries, the stories we have used to define ourselves have revolved around familial relationships. In the first semester, we will engage a range of sources - ancient, modern, and contemporary - to explore foundational family myths and their literary representations. Examining ancient accounts (Zeus, Oedipus, Demeter and Persephone, Abraham and Isaac, Cain and Abel) and their modern interpretations, we will analyze drama, fiction, and film driven by familial conflict and the desire for connection, from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* and Greta Gerwig's *Lady Bird*. Throughout the semester, students will develop their critical reading and writing skills by undertaking a range of short and longer analytic writing assignments, including a film review.

Telling Tales (spring):

In the second semester, we will turn to personal essay, memoir, and film to investigate what happens when family stories emerge directly from lived experience. Asking how contemporary writers and filmmakers reuse and reshape the foundational myths we explored in the first half of the course, we will examine how these non-fictional narratives become a means of exploring the teller's

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own identity, including issues of gender, race and ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Over the course of the semester, students will also have the opportunity to explore and tell their own family stories through a Moth story and a series of creative writing exercises, culminating in an extended personal narrative.

SOLITUDE & SURVEILLANCE

Common Area Designation: Literature

Personal Privacies (fall):

This year-long course will traverse a wide historical arc, exploring the changing relation between private and public life from Ancient Greece to contemporary society. The first semester will present a range of readings examining the modern formation of public and private spheres of experience; we will consider how literature, music, theater, film, and art continue to shape our ideas of individual and collective experience. Units will focus on topics such as Intimacy and Interiority, Fame and Celebrity, Publicity in Peace and War, Technology and the Self, Gender and Race, and Modern Social Activism. Possible authors include Plato, Shakespeare, Mary Shelley, James Baldwin, Douglas Sirk, The Beatles, Marvin Gaye, Spike Lee, and Taylor Swift.

Spectacular Selves (spring):

Continuing our discussions from first semester, this course will focus on how the advent of technology has in the past 50 years occasioned major shifts in our notions of publicity and privacy. We will explore how media (mass and social), mediation, and technology have remade ideas of the private and public self in relation to larger social institutions and practices. Units will focus on topics such as Studio and Independent Film, Science Fiction and Virtual Reality, New Environmentalisms, Social Media and Surveillance, and Literature in the Age of Reality Television. Possible authors include W.E.B. Du Bois, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Alfred Hitchcock, Maggie Nelson, Susan Sontag, The Wachowskis, and Christopher Nolan.

THE FIRE OF EROS

Common Area Designation: Literature

C.I.S. Concentration: [Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies](#)

Deadly Blaze of Wild Passion (fall):

Sex and sexual desire exist in every human society, yet how a particular civilization understands and negotiates these biological realities tends to develop into a distinct feature of its culture. This year-long course will, for the most part, explore how the civilization of the Ancient Greeks and Romans conceptualized and negotiated the ambivalent power of sex and sexual passion. In this first semester-long half of the course, we will engage in close readings and critical analysis of selections from the Greco-Roman literary tradition which present erotic love, embodied by the goddess Aphrodite and the god Eros, as an elemental force of disorder and destruction.

Radiance of Controlled Flame (spring):

In this second half of the course, we will revisit familiar texts and explore new ones, as we deepen our understanding of the distinct perspective of the Ancient Greeks and Romans on sex and sexual desire. We will consider how cultural anxiety about the dangerous power of Aphrodite was balanced by an appreciation of her indispensability for earthly life and by celebrations of the more delightful elements of her sphere of influence. We will examine works that offset narratives of transgressive passion with depictions of socially sanctioned sexual relationships. Correspondingly, we will critically investigate attempts to directly “manage” Aphrodite and her elemental power as well as the entanglement of these efforts with ideologies of gender.

DIVINE

ACTIVISM & POP CULTURE

Common Area Designation: Literature

Embodied Activism (fall):

This course asks what it means to work toward justice, from radical acts of protest to community organizing. Over the fall, we will learn about theories of justice and community-building as they develop out of human rights, Disability Justice, and women of color

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feminisms. Together we will engage with literary and visual arts that draw attention to violence & call for multiple means of justice, particularly by and for disabled people, people of color, and women. *This course entails a commitment to a [Community-Based Learning](#) component as a way of engaging with the theories of activism & advocacy that we'll discuss.*

Inclusion in Pop Culture (spring):

In the spring, we will use our fall research into activism in the arts as a framework for analyzing how producers of popular culture bridge entertainment and advocacy. We will examine popular books, short stories, television, and films that draw from activist efforts & theories in their narratives, and question what is gained or changed when adapting complex ideas about community & justice to new media. Our focus will explicitly be on the discourse of inclusion in young adult media, as we think about what makes a particular story or show popular, which stories are excluded from mainstream popular culture, and who is asked to tell or feature in these portrayals. *This course entails a commitment to a [Community-Based Learning](#) component.*

CONTEMPLATION: THEORY & ACTION

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science or Studies in Religion

The Psychology of Mindfulness (fall):

What is all this hype about mindfulness? It seems everywhere you look there are mindfulness apps being advertised as well as magazine articles touting its usefulness in psychotherapy, job performance, school learning and even athletics. This seminar will explore the cultural mindfulness phenomenon including its usefulness for enhancing well-being and its psychological basis. We will examine the different kinds of secular mindfulness practices being used as well as their similarities to those used in contemplative traditions such as Buddhist meditation practices and Catholic prayer. Because one cannot understand mindfulness practices without experiencing them, the class will consist not only of the presenting and discussing of readings as in a traditional seminar but also the practicing mindfulness in guided exercises to experience the mental processes involved.

Contemplative Ethics (spring):

This course will explore various contemplative and meditative practices and examine how these contemplative practices might reorient and transform how we approach significant ethical and political questions. In particular, we will examine the relationship between contemplation/spiritual exercises and social justice by analyzing the social challenges of environmental degradation, innocent suffering, racism, and gender/sexuality. We will discuss the following authors: Plato, Ignatius of Loyola, Henry David Thoreau, Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Howard Thurman, Mary Oliver, Annie Dillard, Pope Francis, and Wendell Berry.

ENGAGED SPIRITUALITY

Common Area Designation: Social Science

Everyday Spirituality (fall):

How do Americans engage with spirituality, faith, and/or religion? How do these play out in people's actual lives? Starting with childhood and what parents want for their children, we move to the role of spirituality and/or faith in the lives of adolescents and college students: How do adolescents and college students seek and find meaning? Moving then through adulthood, we consider work, marriage and divorce, economic challenges, addiction, illness, and health care. We end by looking at spirituality, faith, and religion in aging and the end of life. Through a variety of readings, film, and media, we consider how people engage transcendence in their everyday lives. *This seminar has a [Community-Based Learning](#) component.*

A Faith That Does Justice (spring):

"A faith that does justice" is a Jesuit motto linking faith to the pursuit of justice. What does that look like? In this seminar we will examine the role that faith, spirituality, and religion can play in mobilizing social action such as starting social service programs, launching social movements, and/or engaging in advocacy. We will study leaders, movements, and ordinary citizen activists motivated by a wide array of religious and spiritual backgrounds to work towards making the world a more just place. We will also consider different religions' teachings motivating social action. Throughout the seminar, you will deepen your own leadership skills through a variety of readings, films, case studies, and a [Community-Based Learning](#) requirement.

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IDENTITY, DIVERSITY, COMMUNITY

Common Area Designation: Studies in Religion

Exploring Difference (fall):

One of the most important tasks for the human person as a moral being is to come to 'know thyself,' as the ancient philosophers recommend. But how do we do this? The African ethic of Ubuntu suggests that persons come to know themselves through other persons, that is, through relationships within diverse communities. Our willingness to place ourselves outside the boundary of our 'comfort zone' and compassionately encounter difference, disability, and 'otherness' may paradoxically lead us to a more honest and merciful knowledge of the self. Through film, readings in theology and literature, and Community-Based Learning placements in the Worcester community, we will consider difference and disability and how such encounters with others in their 'otherness' bring us to a more challenging and deeper knowledge of ourselves. *This course entails a commitment to a [Community-Based Learning](#) component.*

Exploring Leadership (spring):

The second half of our seminar will build on discussions of identity, diversity, disability, and community and focus on diverse ways of leadership. How do different social groups approach leadership? What ways of leading are privileged? What ways of leading are marginalized? How do we come to know ourselves through difference and leadership? How and in what ways does Holy Cross' Jesuit mission call us into leadership? With the help of film and readings in theology, leadership, and education, as well as continued involvement in Community-Based Learning and a case study in leadership, students will become knowledgeable about diverse and critical ways of leading, leadership styles that an increasingly diverse, global, and divisive world may require. *This course entails a commitment to a [Community-Based Learning](#) component.*

LOOKING FOR GOD IN ALL THINGS

Common Area Designation: Studies in Religion

The Divine in History (fall):

"Seeking God in all things" – a Jesuit motto – sums up one of many ways human beings have approached the 'Divine' or 'transcendent.' Such terms may refer to one God, or multitudes of spiritual beings, or an overall sense of 'the spiritual' in the world. This Fall, we will focus on ways ideas like this have been shaping culture and politics throughout history. We will use tools from social sciences, history, arts, literature, theology, and also incorporate direct experience of various events and performances. *This course entails a commitment to a [Community Based Learning component](#), ordinarily requiring a minimum of two hours per week at an off-campus site.*

The Divine in Daily Life (spring):

In the spring semester, we will focus on ways people continue to recognize, describe, and pursue personal and practical senses of the divine / transcendent. We will inquire how the practice of religion and spirituality has been shaped by the long human development we considered in the first semester. Making use of a variety of disciplines and practices we will also look at our own attitudes and experiences regarding 'the transcendent,' deepening our understanding of where they fit into the overall human story. *This semester continues a commitment to a [Community-Based Learning](#) component.*

THINKING FOR ONESELF

Common Area Designation(s): Philosophical Studies

Genius and Mediocrity (fall):

In this class we'll study the concept of genius, glorified as god-like by nineteenth-century philosophers in the name of truth, of freedom, and of meaningful life itself – as well as the literary and philosophical depiction of those who fail to reach its heights. We're all supposed to "think for ourselves," according to Socrates and the philosophical tradition, and also according to everyone else. But only the genius manages to think anything actually original – so what about the rest of us? Should we just stop with the thoughts and questions, and aim for happiness and conformity instead? Along with philosophical texts from Kant, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, we'll read literary texts from Sinclair Lewis, Flaubert, and E.M. Forster.

Machine and Revolt (spring):

When we stop thinking for ourselves, it can happen that we become mere instruments. In this class we'll look at the threat

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mechanization poses to human freedom – not the threat of machines becoming too intelligent, but of human beings becoming mechanized, machine-like, cogs in machines. We'll base our study in Marx's theory of alienation, and read Heidegger on technology and Arendt on the banality of evil. We'll also look at some ways of imagining how to break or remain free from this kind of power, depicted in Kingsolver's *Unsheltered* and Cohen's *Strangers and Cousins*.

GLOBAL SOCIETY

EARLY AMERICA AND THE WORLD

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies

Pirates to Patriots (fall):

We talk a great deal about "globalization" and "global economies" in the 21st century. However, people living in America were "globetrotters" touched by international webs of trade as early as the time of Columbus. This course will explore North America's first global age beginning in the 1400s and extending through the American Revolution. It examines this history thematically by focusing on various kinds of trades through the lives of people who pursued them. We will begin with the gold and silver that filled Spanish treasure galleons and the pirates who plundered them. We will end with the Patriots who eschewed tea for coffee as they boycotted English goods on the eve of revolution.

Canton to King Cotton (spring):

This course begins by looking at the formation of the Early Republic through a Pacific lens. We will explore the ways in which the fledgling nation's involvement in the China trade, linked together with the trade networks of the Atlantic World, enabled the florescence of American democracy. We will examine the social, cultural, economic, and political implications of these global trade connections as we question their effects on individual lives among people of African, European, and Native American descent. We will explore how such connections contributed to distinct regional identities in areas ranging from the South, New England, and the Far West, to Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean. These distinct identities often led to conflicts, the most notorious of which was the American Civil War.

GLOBAL ASIAS

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies

Spam Musubi, Chaufa, Boba (fall):

We think of Asia as a place far away, distantly related to our own lives here, if it all. But here in North America, we live with a variety of Asian presences. In this class, we will explore our connections to global Asias through food and foodways. What does it mean to have foodstuffs from boba to pho be an integral part of the ways we eat here? How do Asian foods and foodways travel and how do they take root abroad? What does it mean for food to be authentic and how does food relate to identity? How does the availability of Asian foodways here affect our understanding of what Asia or Asias are? These are some of the questions we will explore over the course of the semester. In doing so, we will examine essays, novels, films, and of course, partake of the food itself. And with any luck, we'll venture into Worcester's own small but vibrant Asian communities and food scenes.

Between 7 Samurai and Star Wars (spring):

What is George Lucas without Kurosawa Akira? What are the Wachowskis or even Quentin Tarantino without Yuen Woo-ping? Would Danny Boyle have faded into obscurity without the films of Bollywood? Popular culture here, film culture here is suffused with vocabularies from across global Asias. The films, music, TV, and books we love owe a large part to the circulation of popular cultures from across Asia's multiplicities. For this semester, we'll look to interrogate the ways in which Asia has been and has become global. We'll examine film, print, TV, and music from across global Asias in an attempt to both explore how the local and the global interact and question our understanding of Asia, or Asias, as something far away.

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LITERARY WORLDS & WORLD LIT

Common Area Designation: Literature

Global Issues in World Lit (fall):

This course explores both timely and timeless global issues as represented in fiction from across the 20th century and from a variety of literary traditions. Among others, we will address political and economic systems, imperialism, globalization, mass production, consumerism, reproductive technology, psychological manipulation, behavioral conditioning, fear of pandemic diseases, and censorship. By focusing on major novels from England, the United States, Portugal, South Africa, and India, we will discuss the relevance of these topics in our contemporary world and engage with contemporary debates in world literature and comparative literary studies.

Magical Realism in the World (spring):

What do we mean by realism when discussing works of literature and art? How is it different from magical realism? These are some of the driving questions that will help us read and discuss well-known novels from Latin America, Italy, India, and the United States. Such works of literature engage with specific reinterpretations of world historical events, (such as the Haitian Revolution, slavery in the United States, and India's transition from British colonialism to independence), while presenting elements that might be considered magical, unreal, fantastic, or speculative in otherwise realistic or everyday contexts. Throughout the semester we will explore some of the literary and aesthetic techniques used in this genre and ask why they resonate with both local and global readers.

LOVE AND WAR

Common Area Designation: Literature

Love, Text and Performance (fall):

Our intellectual inquiry in this seminar will center on the universal theme of love, through the lens of its myriad forms of artistic expression, including poetry, theater, film, visual art, narrative, and dance. While our primary focus will be on the literature of Spain and the Hispanic world, our explorations of different types of love (romantic, erotic, maternal, unrequited, and spiritual, to name but a few), will incorporate a variety of literary and artistic traditions. Texts will draw from the Early Modern to the Contemporary periods and will include works by Lorca, the Generation of '27 in Spain, Neruda, Paz, Lope de Vega, Petrarch, and others. Students will have the opportunity to explore self-expression through public speaking, performance and improvisation though no previous acting experience is necessary.

War and the Quest for Identity (spring):

The experience of war has always provided fertile ground for artists and writers. What does it mean to come of age in times of conflict? In this seminar, we will explore war and its repercussions through various modes of artistic expression. Together, we will read texts that address different periods of historical turmoil in numerous genres, and delve into the themes of exile, conflict, and alienation, among others. A sampling of texts will include: post-Civil War novels in Spain by Laforet and Rodoreda, as well as early modern works such as the picaresque novel and texts by Cervantes, including Don Quixote. Students will have the opportunity to explore self-expression through public speaking, performance and improvisation though no previous acting experience is necessary.

UNITY AND SOLITUDE

Common Area Designation: Literature

The Search for Unity (fall):

The desire and need to create intimate and group ties in the form of sexual and romantic bonds, friendships, families, and communities has been the driving force in the development of civilizations around the world. The joys and trials of these relationships have also been central to the stories that human beings tell. In this course, we will explore how narratives across thousands of years have grappled with the human longing for protection, support, companionship, love, meaning, and communion with the Divine, as well as the key role that storytelling plays in reinforcing pair and group identity. We will also investigate the dark side of the search for unity and connection, including the formation of cults and repressive communities. Texts include folklore, myth, Christian and Jewish scriptures, epic poetry, short stories, novels, memoir, visual art, music, and film.

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The Quest for Solitude (spring):

With the development of civilization comes its discontents, from the growth of elaborate hierarchies to the proliferation of temptations to weaken the body and soul. The quest for solitude in order to achieve personal freedom, mastery over desires, mental clarity, creative inspiration, or a greater connection with the Divine, or else to heal heartbreak or atone for crimes and sins, has been a major element in the development of philosophy, religion, art, and literature in cultures around the world for millennia. In this course, we will explore a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts that grapple with the motivations and rewards of rejecting social and personal bonds and the desire for connection that inevitably challenges the commitment to solitude. Materials include Christian and Buddhist scriptures; philosophical essays; poetry; short stories; novellas; memoirs; visual art; music; and film.

WORK, ART & POLITICS

Common Area Designation(s): Arts or Social Science

Art and Labor (fall):

Using images and texts, we explore experiences of work since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, especially movements in America, Britain and outward toward Europe and Asia, 1800-1930. Our focal point is Hull House Settlement, Chicago, with its exceptional, internationalist and synergistic activism through the Arts & Crafts movement, labor organizing, citizenship preparation, worker protection campaigns and political action. Artistic activity is both part of this history and our means to study it. We will practice methods of objective visual analysis and subjective reflection based on works of art. Activities include short written essays, prepared dialogues, visual exercises, and visiting local museums. In terms of art, this is a “looking” rather than a “making” course.

Democracy at Work (spring):

The course examines socio-economic and political developments in Western Europe in the late 19th, the 20th and the early 21st century through a comparative politics approach. The relationship between economic development (economic growth, the changing nature of work, redistributive policies, etc.) and democracy is at the heart of this course. We explore the connection between industrialization, the emergence of middle and working classes and democratization. Next, we analyze what factors make democracies stable and what institutions underpin Western European democratic regimes. We also investigate historical cases of democratic breakdown and deliberate on the challenges that democracies face today, including globalization, migration, economic crises and populism. Assignments include short essays, research projects and oral presentations.

NATURAL WORLD

(UN)NATURAL FOOD IN AMERICA

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies

The Rise of Modern Food (fall):

In this seminar, we will explore the dramatic transformation of the American food system. We will start from when diet was deeply shaped by where one lived and what time of year it was to our supermarket present, where one can walk into a grocery store and pick from tens of thousands of products no matter the day or where they live. This semester will examine the advances, events, and individuals that made this extraordinary abundance our expected normal, as well as the environmental and social costs of so much "cheap" food.

A More Natural Food System (spring):

The American system makes a lot of inexpensive food. But there are high hidden costs to this abundance, such as the plight of immigrant laborers or manure run-off from farms in Iowa slowly suffocating sea life in the Gulf of Mexico. In the spirit of a Jesuit commitment to forming 'women and men for others,' our seminar discussions will explore alternative visions for what a more 'natural' or harmonious food system might look like. We will make special use of contacts in greater Worcester and meet with representatives from local businesses and nonprofits who are leading the way towards a more just, sustainable, and equitable food system for all involved from field to fork.

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DEVELOPING MINDS

Common Area Designation: Social Science

Nature of Concepts (fall):

How do we go from crying, babbling infants to cognitively complex adults? How do we make sense of our surroundings—including objects, places, and people—and use our knowledge to reason about the world? In this course we will seek a better understanding of the developing mind. We will discuss central questions, key theories, and research findings in cognitive and conceptual development, with topics that include infants' early capabilities and how children develop theories in different domains of knowledge. At the intersections of developmental psychology, cognitive science, and education, the major themes of this course include the contributions of nature and nurture, mechanisms of change, and contextual factors in development.

Concepts of Nature (spring):

What makes humans smart (and not so smart)? In this course we will consider the cognitive representations and processes that serve as resources for and barriers to our understanding about the world. A major theme is that our default assumptions/intuitions about the world are limited and often inconsistent with scientific beliefs, and that these intuitions are influenced by the linguistic and cultural communities in which we reside. We will also examine the cognitive mechanisms that augment human cognition and support our learning about the world, with a focus on belief revision and conceptual change in scientific domains. *This course entails a commitment to a [Community-Based Learning](#) component.*

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Common Area Designation: Philosophical Studies

Me and the Environment (fall):

What kind of person should I be? What do I owe to others, and to myself? These two questions form the core of any ethics class, but we've recently added a third: What, if anything, do I owe to *non-human* others – animals, nature, the environment? We will always begin with some philosopher's abstract theory – Mill's Utilitarianism (concerned with pleasure and pain), Kant's ethics (concerned with respect), Regan's animal rights – and we'll always end up in some applied issue (factory farming, the new agriculturalism, animal use in medical testing, and anything else you bring up). Throughout, however, the emphasis will be on developing your *own* answers to those three questions. In the end, that's all that matters.

The Environment and Me (spring):

We'll continue to explore the ethics of our relationship to ourselves, human others, and the non-human others of the environment. We'll still be working with our three questions, but now adding a fourth: what kind of role can those non-human others play in *our own* moral development? There's no question that we affect the environment, but ... how does the environment affect *us*? We will be working with somewhat deeper, more holistic theories of human nature and the environment in this class – Aquinas' natural law, Aristotle's virtue ethics, Schweitzer's reverence for life, Leopold's concerns about ecosystems – and we will move on to different, more complicated applied issues. In the end, though, it comes back to you: what do *you* believe?

HABITAT

Common Area Designation: Arts

Germany's Greening (fall):

Germans' engagement with nature blossomed around 1800 during Romanticism and bore fruit almost two centuries later in the founding and subsequent parliamentary election of the Green Party. When Germany became the last European Nation to coalesce into a nation in 1871, industrialization brought not only the shift from steam energy to electricity but also the transformation of impoverished rural laborers into urban factory workers as well as democratic-minded activists. Escaping urbanization, pollution, and modernization to the country in order to recover from physical and psychological problems fueled all countercultural movements in Germany. One natural resource became a cultural, political, and economic symbol: the Rhine River, a natural border between Germany and France, a natural trade route between the Alps and the Atlantic—eventually drawing international attention from Greenpeace, providing the world with an exceptional environmental case study.

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Bauhaus: Design for Democracy (spring):

In 1919, Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus in Weimar. Gropius' students, with their diverse backgrounds, shared not only a multicultural experience but also lived like Holy Cross students with ecological concerns--then, students had to garden in order to feed themselves and to recycle war uniforms for warm clothing. Inspired by the medieval 'Bauhütte,' teachers strove for a holistic approach in their design ideas for a new Germany and a new century. In addition to introducing their students to working in different media, Gropius and his colleagues taught their students mindfulness and, most importantly, encouraged their creativity by challenging them to make the most out of a piece of paper and by staging theatrical happenings and celebrations. Circle, triangle, rectangle, cylinder ' the list of geometric figurations as design elements for costumes, furnishings, and buildings may be limited, but the combinations are endlessly pleasing, surprising, and visually challenging.

SUSTAINABILITY & ESG REPORTING

Common Area Designation: Social Science

Sustainability and Citizenship (fall):

Headlines are full of extreme weather events, climate change and global warming alarms and alarming statistics about resource scarcity. These issues raise concerns about the sustainability of our current economic and social systems. What is sustainability? And why should I care? This course will examine the concept of sustainability and also answer questions such as “What does it mean to be a good citizen?” Our discussion will begin with a focus on each one of us as individuals and discuss the changes we can make in our own lives to reduce our impact on the natural world. We will then examine ways organizations, whether they be for profit, not-for-profit or governmental, can assess their social and environmental impact and reduce their footprint on the natural environment. The concepts of sustainability and citizenship challenge the status quo and consider ways to apply systematic and integrated approaches to all aspects of an organization to bring about positive transformational change.

Sustainability and ESG (spring):

This course continues the fall semesters focus on sustainability and also expands to provide an introduction to ESG Reporting. The key bodies which have created reporting standards and frameworks to support the sustainability goals needed to support our natural world will be discussed such as the United National Sustainability Goals and the Global Reporting Initiative. For organizations, Environmental, Social and Governance factors are assessed and communicated as a way to improve overall organizational performance. This reporting includes both financial and non-financial sustainability metrics and indicators. We will discuss the mechanisms organizations use to capture this data and research how this reporting is used in practice today.

THE NATURE OF WORCESTER

Common Area Designation: Literature

Green Worcester (fall):

This course will introduce you to the city of Worcester through an environmental studies lens. We'll study the environmental legacies of the City's Native American and industrial histories, and Worcester's efforts now to rebuild a better environment for its diverse communities. We'll take field trips to the city's historic neighborhoods and museums and learn from local experts. We'll read about Worcester's past and present, and even imagine its possible futures by reading some great climate change urban fiction. This course has an extended time slot to allow for six field trips in Worcester during our class period. Normal class sessions will be 75 minutes to discuss course concepts, skills (writing, critical reading, presenting), and texts.

Green Island (spring):

Near Holy Cross campus is the historic, immigrant, low-income neighborhood of Green Island. In this semester we focus on this important neighborhood through the lens of environmental justice. Green Island is a vibrant community but is prone to flooding, lacks green space, and abuts an Interstate highway. The City of Worcester is working to solve these problems. The neighborhood also abuts the new development around Worcester's baseball stadium, Polar Park. Will neighborhood residents benefit from this influx of wealth or be displaced? Through site research and a community-based learning project, we will make a “story map” of this important neighborhood to document progress toward environmental justice for the diverse group of people who live there. *This course entails a commitment to a [Community-Based Learning](#) component.*

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WATER

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies

Water and Humans (fall):

This course addresses water both across the globe and through time. In it we will examine the hydrological cycle, consider the different types of water sources, and explore how water impacts human populations. We will see that this necessity is not only vital for survival and integral to daily life, but also that it could be destructive. By the end of this course, you will be able to form your own opinion about the influence of water on humans.

Humans and Water (spring):

This course addresses water both across the globe and through time. In it we will examine human interactions with water, consider how humans approach different types of water resources, and explore human impacts on waterscapes. We will see how human ingenuity is utilized to exploit this vital necessity, but also how human intervention can be destructive. By the end of this course, you will be able to form your own opinion about the influence of humans on water sources.

SELF

ACCOUNTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Common Area Designation: Social Science

The History of Accounting (fall):

Accounts have been kept for as long as humans have been able to record them. Accounting defines selves or entities, measures them, and communicates performance between them. What is measured and how it is communicated depends on the entities involved and the purpose of the communication. Accounting forms the nexus between dyads such as self and corporation, corporation and government, government and society and nation to nation. This course follows the evolution of accounting from a system of measuring stores at the individual level to a profession with shared language and values. The transformation of accounting is viewed through art, literature and film.

Accounting and Social Justice (spring):

This course explores how accounting provides a tool to effect change and improve our world. Critics of accounting claim accounting rules contribute to financial crises and fraudulent reporting, causing pain and suffering for governments, corporations and individuals. However, current trends in accounting focus on issues of social justice and sustainability. In the aftermath of financial crises, we often see the establishment of laws such as the Securities and Exchange Act and the Social Security Act which serve to protect investments, ensure the security of individuals in old age and relieve suffering. The role of accounting in addressing social justice issues and contributing to the well curated life in society, constitute the focus of this semester.

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

Common Area Designation: Social Science

Laboring Under an Illusion (fall):

In this seminar, we will explore the American way of birth. How does the way we 'do birth' shape birth practices, outcomes and experiences? What role do mass media and biomedicine play in birth and what are the personal, social and ethical implications of hospital births? Why is birth the only condition where 'well' people are admitted to hospitals? What role do alternative birth narratives play? What does it mean to mourn in the face of birth? Together, we will examine these questions and consider the influence of birth, infertility, and choosing to be child-free on our sense of social and personal selves. We will explore the polarizing tendencies of larger cultural debates over issues like abortion, designer babies and stem-cell research factor into the equation. Throughout, we will attend to the question of who gets to be the cultural authority on birth and why that matters. Drawing from popular media, history, psychology, anthropology, and especially sociology, students will learn to view birth as a social process, consider the politics of postmodern births and birthing, and give thought to their own assumptions about and encounters with birth.

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The Art of Dying Well (spring):

This semester, the central tenet is to frame death as the opposite of birth, not life. We will explore what death and dying mean, how they are experienced, and the role of rituals and/or cultural scripts in helping us make sense of them. By tracing our socialization about death and dying, we will examine how the Hippocratic oath and assumptions of personal responsibility for health shape dying in America, whether we in the contemporary West live in denial of death, and what 'dying well' means for each of us. By again interrogating who serves as the cultural authority on defining a 'life worth living,' we learn how close encounters with death or dying change people's experiences of life. Tackling the polarizing tendencies of cultural debates over medical aid in dying, transplantation medicine, burial rituals, and quality of life, we reflect on what makes 'a good life.' Using community-based learning in local hospices and nursing homes, we will bear witness to how people experience and give meaning to death. Drawing from popular media, history, psychology, anthropology, and especially sociology, students will learn to view death as a social process, to consider the politics of death and dying in our postmodern world, to interrogate past and present encounters with death, and to envision their own death and dying. *This course entails a commitment to a [Community-Based Learning](#) component.*

CAN YOU KEEP A SECRET?

Common Area Designation: Mathematical Science

Ciphers and Heroes (fall):

How are secret codes constructed? What weaknesses allow clever analysts to crack them? Welcome to cryptology, the study of encoding and decoding secret messages. We'll explore the mathematics of encryption while studying historical cryptosystems, including the nomenclator used by Mary Queen of Scots in her quest to dethrone her cousin Elizabeth, and the seemingly unbreakable ENIGMA machine used during World War II. We'll experience the ingenuity and perseverance of the codebreakers, including the Polish and British heroes who cracked ENIGMA, against all odds. What does it take to be a successful codebreaker? And what can we learn about our own potential by exploring the codebreaking world? *Students in this course should have a strong competence in high school algebra, and an aptitude for analytical thinking.*

Privacy in Digital Age (spring):

How is your private information kept secure online? What does your digital footprint reveal about your life? The internet is vital to modern society, and cryptosystems are at the heart of its security. These mathematical systems rely on the stunning development of public key cryptography, a concept born in the computer revolution of the 1970s. We'll study these systems and the visionaries who created them, while considering the digital world's impact on us. How does social media influence the way you present yourself and interact with others? Is there separation between your actual self and your digital self? And where do you draw the line? *Students in this course should have a strong competence in high school algebra, and an aptitude for analytical thinking.*

IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, & TRAUMA

Common Area Designation: Literature

Self and Conflict (fall):

Over the past century-and-a-half societies have changed rapidly and in often traumatic ways, leaving the individual as well as collective identities contested and confused. In this seminar, we will read a variety of literary texts to examine the political, social, and psychological construction, destruction, and reconstruction of identity within the context of major international conflicts. Likely texts include: Chinua Achebe's, *Things Fall Apart*; Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*; Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*; Claudia Rankine, *Citizen*; and excerpts from Jonathan Shay's *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*. These texts will lead us to larger investigations of how to locate personal agency in the face of structural and institutional oppression.

Memories, Stories, Histories (spring):

How do we create individual and communal narratives in relation to ideas of home, place, and the consequences of contemporary dislocation and migration? Specifically, we will explore the relationship between memory and story-telling to history and community-making through literary works by authors such as Jamaica Kincaid, Chang-Rae Lee, Toni Morrison, and Dorothy Allison. By examining together, the experiences of dislocation and trauma from diverse perspectives, we will consider how race, ethnic identity, gender, class and sexuality are constructed and interrelated. In the process, we will raise complex moral questions that challenge us to investigate the relationship between identity, community and justice and our own responsibilities as individuals and members of identity groups.

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PLACING THE SELF

Common Area Designation: Philosophical Studies

Selfhood and Place (fall):

Do you have a favorite place? Maybe it's a window seat in your bedroom or a public garden in your town. What is the significance of that place for you? In this course, we will examine the various ways that selfhood and place are intertwined. Geographers, philosophers, psychologists, and anthropologists have documented these connections: our sense of well-being, our sense of home, our personal and group identities, and sometimes our spiritual lives all depend on our connections to places. *This course entails a commitment to [Community-Based Learning](#) (CBL), a weekly service commitment in the Worcester community (15-25 hours per semester). CBL connects classroom learning objectives with civic engagement.*

This Place (spring):

For certain artists and writers, the connections between self and place are unusually explicit and strong. Henry David Thoreau, for example, anchored his most important text at Walden Pond, in nearby Concord, MA. Drawing on film, installation art, nonfiction, and poetry, we will study several pairings between specific creators and their places. We will ask how these artworks are informed by place and whether they illustrate some of the connections between self and place studied in the fall term. *This course will continue the commitment to [Community-Based Learning](#) undertaken in the fall. Students will be asked to reflect on, as well as create work from, their own growing connection to the "place" they have been serving in Worcester.*

PHOTO & SOCIETY

Common Area Designation: Arts

Picturing the Self (fall):

This photo studio course considers the nature and significance of photographic images that represent our lived experiences. Students examine and research how contemporary photographic artists create, promote, and utilize photographic imagery and portraits to communicate individual and collective identity. Students learn how to use and intentionally operate camera controls and editing software. Class members engage in a range of creative photographic and lens-based media expression and critique art projects. Students are required to supply their own digital camera with manual controls (DSLR or equivalent such as mirrorless). Course Studio Fee of \$115.

Context and Narrative (spring):

How does context impact our understanding of a photograph and our experience of the world around us? This photo studio course examines how we consume, digest, and use visual information about ourselves and the world: personally, locally, nationally, and internationally. Using examples from photojournalism, documentary photography, and fine art, we reflect on images that inspire a call to action, activism, and creation of community. Students conduct artist research and create related photography-based narratives and lens-based projects. Students are required to supply their own digital camera with manual controls (DSLR or equivalent). Course Studio Fee of \$115.

THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS

Common Area Designation: Social Science

Self Discovery (fall):

Influenced by Aristotle, John Locke coined the term 'pursuit of happiness.' Thomas Jefferson never explained his use of this phrase as stated in the Declaration of Independence. The social sciences, however, have plenty to say about it. Positive Psychology in particular makes a large contribution to this area of inquiry. Positive Psychology concerns itself with the use of psychological theory, research, and clinical techniques toward understanding resilient, adaptive, creative, positive, and emotionally fulfilling aspects of human behavior. As you pursue your own independence at the beginning of your college career, in this class you will explore what the science of happiness has to say about your own pursuit of happiness in the context of increasing autonomy.

Flourishing (spring):

So, what is the good life anyway? Who is capable of achieving it? What are the factors that sustain it? How can you achieve it for yourself? How do you know if you're living it? We all have opinions about these matters, but psychologists approach these questions

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scientifically, based on objectively verifiable evidence. Through the lens of Positive Psychology, you will tackle these compelling and life-enriching questions as you reflect on your own adjustment to college life, and exposure to those with serious life issues to address. *This course entails a commitment to a [Community-Based Learning](#) (CBL) component (a weekly service commitment in the Worcester community totaling 15-25 hours/semester). CBL connects classroom learning objectives with civic engagement.*