

MONTSERRAT SEMINARS

FALL 2021 – SPRING 2022

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

DISEASE AND POP CULTURE

Common Area Designation: Natural Science

Knowledge from the Macabre (fall):

Fear within a viral “hot zone” will influence decision-making. Under these circumstances how does the essential scientific endeavor instill a calm and measured approach? What can we learn about the science of infection? How is an emerging virus identified and then countered during these conditions? What are the ethical concerns of trying to save lives under these extreme public health emergencies? We will explore how data are collected and these questions are answered in the midst of pandemics. Specifically, we will use literature and film to examine the science behind some of the pathogens that have threatened humanity throughout its history.

Epidemics as Social Commentary (spring):

Pandemics and epidemics have shaped history and have invariably led to social, political and cultural changes. These unique historical moments can also highlight inequities, prejudices and inequalities as peoples and governments struggle to adequately and effectively respond. The varied responses may also foster malignant conspiracy theories and create opportunities for the spread of damaging misinformation. We will examine the impact of several epidemics on the evolution of society and the long-lasting consequences of events and decisions made in the backdrop of these public health crises. Our focus will be on the impact on science, both as a discipline and its relationship to society.

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 not just as internal moods or sensations, but rather as socially constructed feelings that have real social effects? How do we learn which feelings to feel and how to express, suppress, or even commodify them? In this seminar, we will examine the way emotions are socially constructed in the private spheres of the body, the home, and the family, 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. 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.

GANDHI, MLK & NON-VIOLENCE

Common Area Designation(s): Historical Studies

C.I.S. Concentration: Peace & Conflict Studies

De-Colonizing India (fall):

Time magazine compared Gandhi to influential twentieth-century figures like FDR and Albert Einstein, calling Gandhi the single most important figure in the “crusade for civil rights and individual liberties.” How did Gandhi become such a central figure in the global struggle for human dignity? What was persuasive and effective about his method of nonviolence that brought down the British Empire in India? How did his strategies become a grammar of resistance for the various anti-colonial struggles around the world? In this seminar, we will explore together these questions and seek to understand how Gandhi grappled with local and global structures of power as he sought to build an ethically and morally just society in India.

Visions of Justice (spring):

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who had never met Gandhi, was nevertheless deeply influenced by the “truth force” that was the lynchpin of Gandhi’s non-violent political philosophy. King particularly connected Gandhi’s “truth force” with Christian teachings to argue that it was possible to oppose non-violently the evils of racism without opposing those committing evil. In doing so, King made religious faith and moral considerations inseparable from his visions of justice. In this seminar, we will examine in-depth how King deftly interlinked non-violent political praxis, Christian doctrine of love, and various American political traditions of civil disobedience to make a powerful case for an inclusive democracy in America.

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LIVING IN A MUSLIM WORLD

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies

Social Lives of Muslim Youth (fall):

How does religious identity shape the political activism and social life of Muslim youth under age 25? We will use ethnographies, social science analyses, graffiti and music videos from the U.S., Egypt, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia to answer questions including: how do community expectations affect Muslim youth as they date, write hip-hop songs, and play football in Michigan and New Jersey? How did Egyptian youth participate in anti-government demonstrations during the “Arab Spring”? How did Moroccan youth build online communities for social and political reform, and how did government hacking affect their efforts? How did young Saudi feminists campaign for the right to drive?

U.S. Policy in the Muslim World (spring):

How do the recent politics of Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen explain armed conflict there? What do those conflicts tell us about how the U.S. government, companies, and citizens should and do shape international affairs? We will use political science theories, Congressional debates, video diaries, and meetings with U.S. and foreign activists to examine questions including: how did Syria, where religious minorities faced little discrimination before 2011, become a center of sectarian conflict? How have Syrian refugees worked with people in Worcester and elsewhere to rebuild? Do U.S. weapons companies bear any responsibility for civilians killed with their arms in Yemen? Who defines the U.S. role in proxy wars like Yemen: the President or Congress?

MODELING OUR WORLD

Common Area Designation: Mathematical Sciences

Data to the Rescue? (fall):

Have a problem to solve? Let’s collect some data! If only it were that simple... How can we collect “good” data? Who owns the data? What types of questions can we answer? And which ones can we not? However, good data is worthless if you can’t also properly analyze it and communicate your findings with others. In this course we’ll look at data and consider questions related to clinical trials, public polling, and the 2020 Census. What does the data tell us? Are the conclusions reasonable? Can we even “trust” the data?

Math is Everywhere (spring):

Hidden in plain sight, mathematical models are often used to help people navigate an increasingly complex world. Do you need directions? Or a recommendation for a movie? There’s a mathematical model waiting for you! However, these models are only as good as the assumptions used to create them. As George E.P. Box once said “all models are wrong, but some of them are useful.” In this course we’ll look at how simple mathematical ideas can be used to model the world we live in and the assumptions that are built into these models.

THE GOOD EDUCATION

Common Area Designation: Social Science

The Good Student (fall):

Who is “a good student?” In this seminar, we will examine conceptualizations of the “good student” that include not only academic achievement, but also self-reflection, empathy, perspective taking, open-mindedness, ethical and moral decision making, participation in civic life, and contribution to the common good. We will also attend to the social construction of “the bad student.” What is meant – and what is missed – when students are labeled as troublemakers, unmotivated, and struggling? This seminar will encourage participants to reflect upon the students they aim to be as they begin their college journey, as well as their hopes for student development in the kindergarten through twelfth grade public school system.

The Good School (spring):

What is a “good school?” In this seminar, we will examine conceptualizations of the “good school” that include policy, curriculum, physical plant, culture, and relationships. We will explore what is meant by, and the implications of, labeling and attending schools that are perceived as “good” or “bad” on both students and society as a whole. We will also discern how language and power influence our assumptions and beliefs about schooling. This course will encourage students to reflect on their own perception of schools, how attendance at their own k-12 schools impacted their sense of self and what they know, and what types of schools they hope society will provide for future generations.

THE SHINING CITY UPON A HILL

Common Area Designation: Social Science

US Abroad: Security or Ideals?(fall):

The United States often faces tough choices when making foreign policy. Often, these choices involve a key tension between fulfilling idealistic goals, like spreading democracy, and the “national interest,” such as enhancing security. Choosing and

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distinguishing between them is not easy: sometimes no choices are made and sometimes appeals are made to one to justify the other. How are those choices made? How does the identity of the United States factor into the decision making? With readings covering the spectrum of American history, this course will define these two poles, discover the source of the United States' identity, and try to answer these questions: when, where, and how can we decide?

The Indispensable Nation (spring):

In the previous semester we learned of and defined the choices that the United States makes between ideals and the national interest. Now, we put what we've learned into action. Through seminal events in American foreign policy making, we attempt to answer the following questions – which principles guided that action? How did those decision makers make that decision? And how did their decision ultimately affect the American political community? We will examine events including: American "interventions" in Latin America, the War on Terror, American responses to international human rights crises, and other defining events from across American history.

CORE HUMAN QUESTIONS

LITERATURE AND ETHICAL THINKING

Common Area Designation: Literature

Finding One's Place (fall):

In this year-long course, we will study works of modern literature that engage with such questions as: How should one live a fulfilling life? What ethical responsibilities do we have to our family, community, country, and planet? Our literary readings will be complemented by works of philosophy that take up similar concerns. In the fall, we will begin with the personal and local, discussing how the individual might find a satisfying path through life (and reading fiction by Virginia Woolf and Albert Camus). We will then move to the national level, considering one's responsibilities in confronting injustice and discrimination (and reading work by Richard Wright, Jesmyn Ward, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcom X).

Engaging with the Unfamiliar (spring):

In the spring, we will shift our focus to the global. Here, we will begin with a unit on how we might engage ethically with people who come from cultures very different from our own and hold very different values than we do. We will read fiction by Teju Cole and W.G. Sebald, alongside the philosophy of Kwame Anthony Appiah. Finally, we will broaden our focus to include non-human animals and consider what responsibilities we might have to them. Writers and thinkers studied in this final unit will include Peter Singer, J.M. Coetzee, and David Foster Wallace.

RELIGION AND EXISTENCE

Common Area Designation: Studies in Religion

Christian Existentialism (fall):

When we talk about existence, we mean a state of radical freedom undetermined by supernatural beliefs and entities. So Christian existentialists, that is, Christians committed to this view of existence, seek to rewrite traditional Christianity, treating it not as a set of impossible beliefs imposed by God but as a free decision to grow in a certain way. But what can it possibly mean to be a Christian without creeds, without miracles and without God in the usual senses of those words? Take the course to find out! We will consider several Christian existentialists, including Pascal, Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky. We will watch the movies *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, *The Third Man*, and *Breathless*.

Existence Without Religion (spring):

We now turn to atheist authors who delete God and Jesus Christ from existence. We begin with the "New Atheists" who reject a caricature of theism. Next we consider a variety of serious arguments against theism. But theism isn't just a matter of mere logical argument, so we must also consider theologically literate atheists such as Feuerbach and Nietzsche who strike at the existential heart of Christianity. Finally, and surprisingly enough, we will turn to the Bible itself, to *The Book of Job*, for an analysis of the absence of God and for a critique of religion that do not lead to formal atheism. We will watch the movies *21 Grams*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and *The Seventh Seal*.

REWRITING THE FAMILY

Common Area Designation: Literature

C.I.S. Concentration: Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

Tough Love (fall):

For many centuries, the stories we have often used to define ourselves have revolved around familial relationships. In the first

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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 interfamilial conflict and disconnection, from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* 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 (including *Fun Home*, a graphic memoir by Alison Bechdel), and documentary 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 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 series of creative writing exercises, culminating in an extended personal narrative.

SUFFERING AND MEANING

Common Area Designation: Literature

C.I.S. Concentration: Peace & Conflict Studies

War, Glory, Death (fall):

We will read the *Iliad* of Homer and the *Aeneid* of Virgil to explore and discuss the conflicts that trigger war and how crises are resolved (or not) in war. Each work offers multiple perspectives on war, glory and death as revealed in a wide variety of battle scenes and family encounters. Analysis of rhetoric in Homer will enhance our understanding of the power of persuasion in all the works we read. We also will learn about visual representations of these works from antiquity up through contemporary art. Selections from Jonathan Shay’s book, *Achilles in Vietnam* and films such as *Night and Fog* and *Europa Europa* will be integrated into this course.

Homecoming, Exile, Memory (spring):

Does war really end for heroes? What does “homecoming” mean for them? What happens when refugees from war must seek out a “new” home? Are they continually haunted by trauma, dreams, and memories that affect their sense of their identity? How do they transform the past into stories? Has their perspective on “glory” changed? To begin to grapple with these questions, we shall read the *Odyssey* of Homer, the *Oresteia* (a trilogy of Greek tragedies) of Aeschylus, the *Ajax* of Sophocles, and the *Aeneid* of Virgil. Jonathan Shay’s *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*, and films such as *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* and *Cold Mountain* will be integrated into the course.

THE RENAISSANCE

Common Area Designation: Philosophical Studies

From Faith to Fantasy (fall):

This year-long course will traverse the historical period from the beginning of the thirteenth to the beginning of the seventeenth century, starting with Francis of Assisi and ending with Francis Bacon. In the first semester we will explore how the scholastic focus on faith and man’s relationship with God opened up for the incredible flights of imagination and the rebirth of humanism and naturalism. Our readings this semester will include the writings of Francis of Assisi, selections from Thomas Aquinas, the poems of the troubadours, Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*, the legend of the Holy Grail, and Nicolas of Cusa’s *Of Learned Ignorance*.

From Fantasy to Fabrication (spring):

Continuing our discussions from the first semester, we will examine how new and imaginative explorations in all areas of human experience led to the fascination with artifacts, the advent of technology, and attempts to recreate the world in the image of man. We will begin by studying the notebooks and works of Leonardo da Vinci (in comparison to Raphael, Michelangelo and Botticelli), Ficino’s writings on imagination, Erasmus’s *The Praise of Folly*, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, and selections from Francis Bacon’s *The New Organon*. During this semester, we will visit the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston.

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DIVINE

CHRISTIAN CRITICS

Common Area Designation: Studies in Religion

Biography as Theology (fall):

This course will take a “biography as theology” (James Wm. McClendon, Jr.) approach to the study of Christian social ethics in 20th century America (with a few notable exceptions outside of the United States). In keeping with the Divine cluster theme of “in person,” we will study the lives and work of significant Christian figures including Walter Rauschenbusch, Howard Thurman, Reinhold Niebuhr, Dorothy Day, and Martin Luther King Jr. Exploring the character, callings, and contributions of these and other important Christian thinkers will provide a window not only into how Christian concepts are embodied “in person,” but also the role Christianity plays in social, economic, and political criticism in the United States.

The Beloved Community (spring):

Despite their status as moral exemplars, each of the figures we studied in the fall emphasized the importance of Christian community. This course challenges the “biography as theology” approach to Christian social ethics. It does so, first, by exploring important critiques of this approach by various feminist, black feminist, womanist, and other liberationist thinkers; and second, by considering various Christian conceptions of community and their role in social, economic, and political criticism in the United States. Finally, we will study the mission and work of various contemporary Christian communities and organizations.

GOD, THE SENSES, AND US

Common Area Designation: Studies in Religion

Theology of Making (fall):

This seminar takes its name from artist Makoto Fujimura, who proposes that “making” (through art and more) gives human persons access to God’s being and grace as it permeates our lives. Using Fujimura’s insight as a guide, we shall examine selected works from the Bible, theologians, philosophers, and visual artists to grow in understanding of (1) how human lives and communities are made and, in the face of brokenness and trauma, remade, and (2) how “making” relates to the question of truth, as this relates to “sense” in that word’s many meanings. *This course entails a commitment to a community-based learning component*, so students may see how community is (re)made “on the ground.”

World(s) of Sense (spring):

Is there such a thing as “the world,” a singular basket in which all things we experience, know, and do neatly fit? This seminar will begin with a carefully reasoned “no” to this question, preparing us to examine the word (and reality) “global,” as it pertains to visual art, religion (especially “global Catholicism”), and, given time, selected matters of social ethics. We will continue to consider the question of truth, as it is complicated by the plurality and ambiguity that comes when truth-seekers are creatures of “sense.” *This course entails a commitment to a community-based learning component* so students may deepen their understanding of the interconnectedness of the “local” and the “global.”

IDENTITY, DIVERSITY AND 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 projects 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.*

Modifying Technologies (spring):

The second half of our seminar will focus on the ways in which advances in modern western reproductive and genetic medicine and technologies challenge our notions of “normal” and “disabled” and how we understand the boundary between them. As these advances bring us the hope of cure as well as more choice and control over our bodies and minds, what might be lost with the diminishment of difference and diversity? With the help of readings in bioethics and social ethics, as well as continued involvement in Community-Based Learning, we will consider the following question: Can the human community thrive while those who are outside the “norm” are increasingly stigmatized, isolated, and perhaps eliminated? Students will become knowledgeable about

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medical and genetic technologies that may be used to diminish diversity and reinforce boundaries between "normal" and "disabled."
This course entails a commitment to a Community-Based Learning component.

PROTEST

Common Area Designation(s): Literature or Philosophical Studies

Embodied Activism (fall):

This course asks how being "in person" means to take up space, both in terms of protest like marches or sit-ins and the representation of who is visually seen and counted. Our course will rely on ideas about embodied knowledge and personhood, two concepts from human rights and women of color feminisms that shape how we understand fundamental beliefs about truth and dignity. Together we will examine art (including visual, performance, literary, and music) and other forms of activism that have drawn attention to violence done against bodies, particularly those of women and other people of color. *This course entails a commitment to a Community-Based Learning component.*

Struggles for Truth (spring):

In this class we will ask, along with Virginia Woolf: what happens *after* one has "killed the angel in the house"? Were we to be freed from stereotypes or external forms of oppression, once we have become "free," perhaps by means of protest as activism, to what reality do we attest? Who is the subject I am trying to give voice to? Virginia Woolf and many early feminists put the question in terms of what it means to be a woman: if a woman is not an aspiring Victorian "angel," what is she? We will study the way Plato's dialogues, at the "beginning" of philosophy, dramatize the personal struggle to articulate truth, protesting conformity for the sake of a radical freedom; and the way the Existentialists in the last century argued that freedom is never "accomplished" once and for all, because one is never free except in relation to this struggle for the truth. *This course entails a commitment to a Community-Based Learning component.*

SEARCHING FOR GOD IN ALL THINGS

Common Area Designation: Studies in Religion

Divinity and History (fall):

"Seeking God in all things" – a Jesuit motto – sums up one of a multitude of ways in which human beings have approached "the Divine" or "the transcendent." Such terms may refer to one God, or a multitude of spiritual beings beyond ordinary sense experience, or an overall sense of "the spiritual" in the world. During this fall semester of the seminar, we will focus on ways in which ideas of this kind have shaped culture and politics throughout history, and continue to do so. We will use tools from several disciplines, including social sciences, history, arts, literature, and theology, and incorporate direct experience and Community Based Learning into this inquiry. *This course entails a commitment to a Community-Based Learning component.*

Divinity and Daily Life (spring):

In the second semester of the seminar, we will focus on ways in which people have recognized, described, and pursued a *personal* and *practical* sense of the divine, and continue to do so. We will try to understand how the *practice* of religion and spirituality has been shaped by the long human development we considered in the first semester. Continuing to make use of a variety of disciplines and practices (including Community Based Learning), we will also look at our *own* attitudes and experiences regarding "the transcendent," to deepen our understanding of where we might "fit" into the overall human story. *This course entails a commitment to a Community-Based Learning component.*

GLOBAL SOCIETY

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

Common Area Designation: Arts

Forming Space (fall):

Are memories created by our experiences in physical spaces? Do spaces influence how you feel or make decisions? Learn and practice techniques in studio art to create two dimensional and three-dimensional works of art examining fictional and physical spaces. Experiment with different processes and media such as graphite, charcoal, light, paper, ink and various small tools to create drawings and forms. Gain exposure on how artists are using and have used the topic of space to communicate and create public works of art. Topics of reflection and inquiry focus on place, community, environment and social issues. Such topics will fuel your creative work. This studio art course carries a \$50 fee for course supplies. This course requires no prior drawing experience.

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Telling Stories with Drawings (spring):

Do images tell stories or do stories inspire the creation of images? The spring semester starts with the introduction of the creation of narratives. We access the Nevins graphic novel collection for an in-depth study into the connection between visual imagery and text. Building on the artistic skill set of the previous semester we practice different styles of drawing and create a balance between writing and drawing. Students explore their imagination through creative writing, build the inner voice and create and tell stories through drawing. This studio art course carries a \$50 fee for course supplies.

COMPETING VISIONS OF FREEDOM

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies
C.I.S. Concentration: Peace & Conflict Studies

Republics of Liberty (fall):

What did Americans mean when they claimed the United States was founded as a “republic of liberty”? What did this liberty entail and who was entitled to it? In this seminar we will examine several chapters in late 18th and 19th century U.S. history in which Americans debated competing ideas about the nature of republicanism, democracy, and equality. These include: slavery and the abolitionist movement, westward expansion and Native American removal, and immigration and the making of a multicultural society. In each case, we will make global connections to similar movements beyond the United States, while also examining how cities have played essential roles in these struggles. *This course entails a commitment to a Community Based Learning project that involves volunteer work with organizations engaged in local social justice initiatives in the Worcester community.*

Human Rights and Wrongs (spring):

Building on our work in the first semester, this course will examine how Americans wrestled with questions regarding democracy, equality, and justice in the 20th and 21st centuries and how these questions connected to similar concerns around the world. Topics include movements for economic justice, civil rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and peace, as well as related human rights struggles in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Much attention will be paid to the life stories of people involved in these movements, especially the development of their self-awareness as members of an oppressed group and commitment to bringing about social and political change in the service of justice. As in the fall semester, we will continue to examine how cities and urban spaces have played an important role in these movements. *This course entails a commitment to a Community Based Learning project that involves volunteer work with organizations engaged in local social justice initiatives in the Worcester community.*

GLOBAL URBAN HISTORIES

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies

CityScapes, Near & Far (fall):

In the past 200 years, humans in unprecedented numbers relocated to cities around the globe. While urbanization and the emergence of mega metropolitan centers are the hallmark of modernity, the city as a site of human habitat has existed for thousands of years. In this seminar, we will explore the histories of cities from antiquity to late modernity, from Rome of Julius Caesar to colonial Bombay, 20th century Cape Town and Worcester, Massachusetts (among many others). What makes people want to build and live in urban environments? How do cities sustain themselves? What kind of unique cultures emerge in the city? We will explore themes such as marginality and struggle, crime and policing, race and gender perspectives, and globalization and capitalism.

Cities & Societies of the MENA (spring):

The Middle East has had a long history as an urban civilization. From the ancient city-states of the Hellenic world to early Islam’s Mecca and Medina trade centers of Arabia. In the modern era, rapid urbanization impacted the region and cities often became the intersection of European imperialism, global capitalism and emerging nation-states. This seminar will explore the rich urban cultures and histories of the Middle East and North Africa, from the Prophet Muhammad’s Medina, to the port cities of Jaffa and Beirut, the holy city of Jerusalem, and revolutionary hubs such as Tehran (Iran) and Algiers (Algeria). We will explore these multifaceted histories through the lens of religion, colonialism, class and race. Using primary and secondary sources, films, art and literature, this seminar will introduce us to the everyday life and urban cultures of the region that transcend stereotypes of “forever war” and religious conflict.

IMAGES FROM LATIN AMERICA

Common Area Designation: Arts or Cross-Cultural Studies
C.I.S. Concentration(s): Latin American, Latinx, and Caribbean Studies

Latin America Through Cinema (fall):

Tropical beaches? Spicy tacos? Mega cities? Merengue dancing? Narcotrafficking? What do you think of when you hear “Latin America”? In this seminar, we will explore cinema from and about Latin America to expand our understanding of this culturally diverse region comprised of more than twenty countries and territories. Together, we will examine topics such as gender, identity,

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displacement, migration, politics, and memory through the lens of films by Latin American screenwriters and directors. Students will gain experience in film analysis, learning how to articulate the relationship between content and artistic form. Through this cinematographic encounter, we will begin to see and understand Latin America in a new way.

Diverse Art of Latin America (spring):

We will begin the spring semester with a role-immersion game, *The Prado Museum Expansion: The Diverse Art of Latin America*, that introduces a wide range of movements and styles present in 20th through 21st century Latin American art. In what ways do Latin American artists dialogue with European, African, and indigenous aesthetic traditions? What are the implications of framing paintings as “art for art’s sake” versus creating art for political purposes? How do gender, ideology, and race interface with artistic production? Students will perform close readings of art works with a focus on the formal elements of painting and will hone their public speaking and argumentative writing skills. We will also explore public art in 20th and 21st century Latin America. Together, we will document and share different examples of public art in our communities and participate in the creation of a public art project.

NAVIGATING HISPANIC LITERATURE

Common Area Designation: Arts or Literature

C.I.S. Concentration: Latin American, Latinx, and Caribbean Studies

Routes of the Heart (fall):

Is human connection possible in the context of the alienation we often suffer in the city? The experience of love and union has frequently incited artists to create great works. In this seminar, we will explore numerous forms of artistic innovation from the Hispanic world including poetry, fiction, theater, film, visual art, and performance. Primary sources will inspire us to delve into the themes of isolation, conflict, and wholeness. A sampling of texts includes works by García Lorca and the Generation of '27, Neruda, Paz, Lope de Vega, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and others. Performance, improvisation, and public speaking will have a central role in the course. No previous acting experience is required.

Highways and Byways (spring):

In this seminar, we will read one of the most important novels of all time, *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes, as well as a post-Civil War novel by Rodoreda, *In the Time of the Doves*. The consideration of the meaning of self, self-expression, and identity will form the foundation of our explorations as we probe universal questions such as the nature of truth versus fiction, madness versus sanity, and self versus society. Performance, improvisation and public speaking will have a central role in the course. No previous acting experience is required.

SUPER HEROIC AMBASSADORS

Common Area Designation: Literature

Origins of Heroic Ambassadors (fall):

Despite being a uniquely American folklore, superheroes are often tasked with “saving the world” from a variety of possible global apocalypses. Additionally, many of these iconic US pop culture figures are themselves *not* American, but symbolic ambassadors from other worlds or nations. Therefore, this course will explore these potential contradictions by returning the comic book origins (and early reboots/revisions) of many of geekdom’s most iconic superheroes, such as Superman, Wonder Woman, The X-Men, and The Avengers. The course will closely examine their narrative content while also contextualizing them alongside the global politics in which they arose via lectures, group discussion, as well as individual research projects and presentations.

21st Century Mythic Revisions (spring):

Superheroes have begun to appear in multiple forms of media across the globe, and many of have had their mythos or classic stories updated or revised in response to new global challenges and changing reader demographics. Moreover, other countries and cultures are beginning to create their own versions of superheroes: the Russian film *Guardians*, the Japanese sensation *My Hero Academia*, and the Spanish parody *Superlópez*, to name only a few. Therefore, this course will examine international versions of superheroes alongside updated versions of American characters, such as Miles Morales/Spider-Man, The White Lantern, House Of X, and The Ultimates, and ask the question of what it means to be a superheroic ambassador in the global 21st century.

NATURAL WORLD

(UN)NATURAL FOOD IN AMERICA

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies

The Rise of Modern Food (fall):

In this seminar, we will explore together America’s transformation from a nation of farmers to one of industrial food giants. Along the way, we will examine debates over diet and the meanings of “natural,” “modern,” and “pure” food through primary and

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secondary sources. Readings will include the Biblically-based arguments of the first vegetarians of the nineteenth century, Upton Sinclair's 1905 exposé *The Jungle*, a history of modern milk production, and food advertisements that have attempted to convince consumers that one product is more "natural" than a competitor's offering. We will investigate together how the history of American food production and consumption reflect much larger questions of gender, class, race, environment, and so much more than what is on your dinner plate.

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. The semester will culminate in small group projects that offer one way we might make our food system better for all involved.

EMBRYOS, EVOLUTION, AND EQUITY

Common Area Designation: Natural Science

Embryos and the Race Myth (fall):

Developmental biology explores the fundamental principles that drive the beautiful variations in form that exist across species. Embryo development is shaped by intricate and complex cellular and molecular interactions, where even minor changes in these processes can lead to dramatic variations in the final mature body plan. In studying embryo development, we recognize the continuum along which variations in these body plans occur, as well as the obligation to use this knowledge to best help our communities. In the fall, we will start our exploration of embryo development. We will also explore the relationships between ancestry, genetics, embryos, and evolution to debunk the myths surrounding the practice of grouping humans using minor differences in embryo development.

Embryos and Diverse Bodies (spring):

Science provides us with a knowledge base from which we can advocate for equity and inclusion within our communities. In the spring, we will explore how diverse body plans are generated in the embryo, from variations in limb development, to the role of neural crest cells in building facial features, to complex contributors of sex determination. We will examine how diverse body plans are generated on an evolutionary scale, as well as the ways in which the human body plan also develops along a continuous spectrum in the embryo, as well as in aging of the mature body form. Throughout these explorations, we will continue to examine the necessary role for advocacy and equity.

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Common Area Designation(s): 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 EXPLORATIONS

Common Area Designation(s): 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 entity to coalesce

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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. In this seminar, we will explore German countercultural movements that look to “Nature” and the countryside as means to escape urbanization, pollution, and modernization in order to recover psychological and physical well being. One natural resource in particular became a cultural, political, and economic symbol in these movements: the Rhine river. Together, we will investigate how this natural border between Germany and France, and the trade route between the Alps and the Atlantic, eventually drew international attention from Greenpeace, providing the world with an exceptional environmental case study.

Bauhaus: Design for Democracy (spring):

In 1919, shortly after WWI ended and Germany embraced democracy for the first time, Walter Gropius founded the fine arts and crafts school called the Bauhaus. Gropius’ students, with their diverse backgrounds, shared not only a multicultural experience but also lived with ecological concerns. In this seminar, we will explore the creative world of the Bauhaus. Gropius and his colleagues strove for a holistic approach in their design ideas for a new Germany and a new century. Bauhaus instructors 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, as well as nature-oriented celebrations. Circle, triangle, rectangle, cylinder ... the list of geometric figurations as design elements for costumes, furnishings, and buildings may seem limited but, as students will discover, the combinations proved endlessly pleasing, surprising, and visually challenging.

MUSIC, SOUND, AND ENVIRONMENT

Common Area Designation: Arts

Sounding the Environment (fall):

The American composer, John Cage, said, “I love sounds just as they are.” The way we experience sounds involves a relationship between our bodies as receivers of sound and the producers of the sound--a relationship built not only on hearing but also on listening. Hearing is the way our bodies experience sound; listening is what we do with those sounds and how we make meaning from them. Listening is a kind of empathy, allowing us to know our environment through its sounds. This course will explore how the relationship between humans and sounds is shaped by our surroundings, emphasizing how we come to learn about and to listen to our environment and to each other.

Performing the Environment (spring):

“Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do,” says Christopher Small, who coined the verb “musicking.” How do people express, conserve, experience, and perform the environment through music? Building on our study of sound, we will consider how people communicate their relationship to their sonic environment through their musical creations, and we will explore the role music plays as a resource in shaping our understanding of and our relationship with the environment. Just by listening we participate in the ecology of the performer-listener-composer relationship. At a time of environmental crisis, music offers us an artistic way through which we can approach sustainability and activism.

WRITING THE ENVIRONMENT

Common Area Designation: Literature

Tropical Fictions (fall):

A Google search for “tropics” turns up photos of pristine beaches and lush vegetation. This image of the tropics—as distant lands of bountiful resources, untouched by human hands—can be traced through fiction, film, and visual art across the past several centuries. In this seminar, we’ll explore notions of tropicality in Latin America and think critically about its portrayal in a range of media, from conquistador narratives to playful and subversive contemporary art. As we reflect on the appeal of these depictions, we’ll contrast accounts from within the region and beyond.

Fictions of the Future (spring)

The second semester of this year-long course builds upon the first semester's focus on representing the environment and projects it into the future. Imagining the future is a key aspect of human experience, perhaps as important as remembering the past. From prophecy to forecasting, humans have developed complex strategies to engage with the ultimate unknowability of what is to come. This course will examine some of the modern cultural approaches and concepts (such as Utopia and dystopia) that have been used to imagine the future. Our particular focus will be how literature—ranging from speculative fiction to science journalism—attempts to imagine through writing the environment of the future as it will have been altered by global warming. Analyzing these representations will lead us to explore core questions about the nature of human flourishing in both the present and the future.

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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 affect 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 pursuit of social justice and the impact on the self, however defined, constitutes the focus of this semester.

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science

Laboring Under an Illusion (fall):

In this seminar, we will explore the American way of birth. How does it 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. 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 post-modern births and birthing, and give thought to their own assumptions about and encounters with birth.

The Art of Dying Well (spring):

This semester, we will explore what death means, and how it is experienced. Do people in the contemporary West live in denial of death? What is it like to work with people who are dying or dead? Where do we learn how to die? Can we be taught to “die well”? We will question who gets to be the cultural authority on whether one has a life “worth” living and how close encounters with death change people’s experiences of life. Using community-based learning in local hospices, we will consider the costs and benefits of portraying death as the opposite of life as we explore 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, consider the politics of death and dying in our post-modern world, interrogate past and present encounters with death, and envision our own death and dying. *This course entails a commitment to a Community-Based Learning component.*

BELONGING AND ESCAPE

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies or Literature

Reading the Self (fall):

Self-definition and self-discovery remain essential human projects. And yet to define who we are, we first must examine the people and cultures we come from. Indeed, writers of autobiography often portray their identity as a reaction to or against the situation of their birth, while striving for, or imagining, future community. This course will explore narrative—specifically autobiography and memoir—as a tool for self-discovery and self-creation. How, we will ask, do place, language, and race inflect identity? How does storytelling present or question “the authentic self” as a self-conscious project? Students will critically engage a variety of memoirs, autobiographies and novels.

Writing the Self (spring):

In this course we will explore ways to tell our own stories. How, we will ask, does turning life into literature allow us to present or discover ourselves? What questions or uncertainties arise when we write our lives? (How does the self become a character? How do we find the artistic distance to dramatize our own experiences? How does literary or dramatic performance change or reveal our senses of self and identity?) Using our readings from first semester as models, we will tell our own stories in different creative

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mediums: short stories, memoir, Moth-style presentations, poems, and a final short play festival. This course will not require or assume any previous experience with creative writing.

HIP-HOP AND IDENTITY

Common Area Designation: Arts
C.I.S. Concentration(s): Africana Studies

Hip-Hop & Musical Identity (fall):

Our identities come from our lived experiences. As hip-hop is the expression of lived experience, it is also the expression of one's identity. In this class, students will explore how hip-hop, an art form originally from the Bronx, NY c. 1970, forms and depicts various identities. We will investigate how hip-hop gives voice to an individual's race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. We will also question how a hip-hop artist's self-expression intersects and merges with the identities of their listeners. For example, we will tackle issues such as, can one be a feminist and also a fan of hip-hop? Can Jesuit values be expressed in hip-hop?

Hip-Hop & the Community (spring):

Hip-hop began in a close-knit community in the Bronx, NY c. 1970 and now is a global phenomenon. In this course, students will study the four main components of hip-hop—DJing, MCing, breakdancing, and graffiti art—not only to understand the movement musically and artistically but also a way of understanding the communities that shaped its evolution. We will explore how hip-hop impacts and is embedded into physical geographic communities, as well as in more broadly conceived communities such as in academia and U.S. politics. Students will both learn about and participate in their local hip-hop scene of Worcester through a community-based learning project. *This course entails a commitment to a Community-Based Learning component.*

IMAGE AND SOCIETY

Common Area Designation: Arts

Optics and Chemistry (fall):

Photography has played an immense role in shaping the public attitudes of societies in the Industrialized World. This semester will cover photography's inception at the intersection of the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution to the onset of World War II. Class time will be devoted to visual lectures with supplemental technical demonstrations. Course work will consist of written responses to readings and small-form, photography-centered projects with a focusing on conceptual development. You will be expected to acquire a foundation of media literacy, as demonstrated through your independent critical analysis of visual imagery. This art course carries a \$30 fee for supplies and digital printing.

Press and Processors (spring):

This term continues the fall semester, looking more closely at the divergent uses of lens-based imagery from its historical use in popular print media to social media and related mobile technology. With emergent technologies, the initial inspiration for its creation is often superseded by a reinvigorated utility that can reshape culture. Class time will be devoted to visual lectures with supplemental technical demonstrations. Course work will consist of written responses to readings and small-form, photography-centered projects with a focusing on conceptual development. You will be expected to acquire a foundation of media literacy, as demonstrated through your independent critical analysis of visual imagery. This art course carries a \$30 fee for supplies and digital printing.

MAPPING THE SELF

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies or Literature

Mapping the Self Inward (fall):

Who are you? How does your unique personal geography "map" who you are, where you came from and who you will become? What gets mapped and what is unmappable? How do gender, race, sexuality, geography and trauma play into concepts of identity? We will study "maps" as a metaphor for life's journey, and then we will apply these ideas to works of literature, film and popular culture (in translation) from the Spanish-speaking world. You will curate your own parallel introspective odyssey as you reflect on these ideas and document them on an ArcGIS story map.

Mapping the Self Outward (spring):

This semester we will consider how the sense of self curated and examined in the first semester shifts and changes as it turns outward. How does social media (Instagram, Rinsta versus Finsta, TikTok and Snapchat) influence how you construct and reveal your identity? How do these same media impact issues of gender and race? We will move from the selfie to the self portrait and explore how individuals have been expressing and presenting their constructed identities to the world over the centuries. Finally, we will use memoir to explore how culture and history contribute to the idea of self. You will continue your ArcGIS story maps as you bring your story out to the world.

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THE CONTEMPLATIVE IN ACTION

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies

American Contemplatives (fall):

The value of becoming “contemplatives in action” is at the heart of a Jesuit liberal arts education. But what does it mean to be a contemplative? What questions have historically driven individuals’ desire to know the world and find meaning within it? How have ways of discerning and articulating one’s self—including one’s obligations to and needs from society—changed over time? In exploring such questions, we will encounter a range of voices from the past. Some were loud and well-known; many were not. Others were deliberately silenced in their pursuit of the many truths of human experience, the natural world, and the forces that shape our lives. This history seminar will introduce students to methods of critical reading and research that conceptualize and contextualize questions at the core of modern society. It will also hone essential writing, oral, and visual presentation skills that make these concepts and experiences accessible to multiple audiences.

American Activists (spring):

If one question emerges above all others for the “contemplative in action,” it is this: “how, then, are we to live?” This course will revisit the contemplatives explored in the fall semester—and many others—to explore how answers to this question have shaped the course of history. How did they, and those that they inspired, enact various forms of political action, protest, and policy that reflected their vision of a more just world? How have evolving communication strategies and technologies shaped how individuals engage these struggles? In grappling with these questions, students will continue to develop essential tools of historical investigation and communication.

THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS

Common Area Designation(s): 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, and “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 and adaptive, creative, positive, and emotionally fulfilling aspects of human behavior. As you pursue your own independence at the beginning of your college career, you will explore in this seminar what the science of happiness has to say about your own pursuit of happiness.

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 scientifically, based on objectively verifiable evidence. Through the lens of Positive Psychology, students will tackle these compelling and life-enriching questions as they reflect on their own adjustment to college life, a Community Based Learning project requiring 2 hours/week on site, and exposure to those with serious life issues. *This course entails a commitment to a Community-Based Learning component.*