

MONTSERRAT COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
FALL 2019 – SPRING 2020

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

BETTER TO BE FEARED OR LOVED?

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science

US Abroad: Ideals or Interests? ((fall):

Every political community, when making foreign policy, has to make choices. Those choices often involve a key tension between moral principles and what is known as the national interest. Sometimes, decisions that fit in one category simply do not fit in the other. Can we make moral foreign policy choices? What causes us to choose national interest over ideals? Is it ever as simple as choosing one over the other? And can these two aspects of foreign policy decision-making be reconciled? In this seminar, we will draw on readings from Shakespeare to Alexander Hamilton, and across the spectrum of U.S. history, as we grapple with these fundamental moral and statecraft questions about when, where, and how we decide our foreign policy.

Crises in Context (spring):

In the previous semester, we explored and defined the choices that national leaders make between moral principles and what is called the national interest. In this seminar, we will apply what we have learned through an examination of germinal events in American foreign policy making in order to understand the principles that guided these actions. How and why did particular decision makers make that choice? And how did their decision ultimately affect the American political community? Together, we will analyze case studies including U.S. “interventions” in Latin America, the War on Terror, American responses to international human rights crises, and other defining events from across U.S. history.

CONFORMISTS, REBELS, LOSERS?

Common Area Designation(s): Literature

Lights and Shadows of the Past (fall):

Are we in control of our memories, or are these memories modeled by social norms? While we all have both lights and shadows in our past, our perception of those antagonistic aspects of the past is the result of a complex negotiation between our moral values and the values of our community. In this seminar, we will explore how works of art can be a bridge between personal memories and the collective memory of a community. We will critically analyze literary works, films, TV shows, and podcasts that examine the everlasting conflict between individual needs and social norms. In-class discussions will be paired up with meditative exercises to promote self-reflection and personal growth.

Loving, Longing, and Leaving (spring):

Why, in the age of communication, would we give an on-line “Like” to somebody whom we have never met but not say “Hi” to our classmates? Why is it so difficult to talk about certain topics such as sexuality, hidden desire, and death? With more modes of communication at our fingertips than ever before, we often still struggle to express ourselves meaningfully, making us feel like outsiders even in our closest communities. With a new series of literary readings, films, podcasts, and meditation practices, we will examine the duality between interpersonal struggles with communication as shaped by and impacting the community.

EVIL EMPIRES: FICTION OR FACT?

Common Area Designation(s): Historical Studies

C.I.S. Concentration(s): Peace and Conflict Studies

Commies, Yanks, and Nukes (fall):

The superpower struggle that shaped the world after 1945 involved competition not only for military might, but also for moral supremacy. During this time, leaders of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. each sought to demonstrate the alleged superiority of their country’s social system and the purported failures of their rival. In this seminar, we will explore this clash of values during the decades after the Second World War and examine how certain norms were promoted, enforced, and at times challenged in each country. Drawing on both political and cultural sources, including movies, short stories, and newspaper articles, we will compare and contrast the different perspectives on global events that circulated in the U.S. and the U.S.S.R..

A New Russia? A New U.S.? (spring):

In 1991, when the Soviet Union came to a surprising and ignominious end, U.S. leaders celebrated what they believed would be the birth of a democratic and capitalist Russia. Some political theorists even spoke of the “end of history,” predicting the triumph of liberal democracy across the world. These optimistic forecasts proved to be untrue and also spoke to the ability of U.S. policymakers to misunderstand both Russia and the wider world. In this seminar, we will look at the collapse of Soviet Communism and the

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evolution of Russia over the past 30 years from a country we imagined to be an ally-in-training to one we now perceive as a terrible foe.

GANDHI, MLK & NON-VIOLENCE

Common Area Designation(s): Historical Studies
C.I.S. Concentration(s): Peace and 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.

RACE, RACIST, ANTI-RACISM

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science
C.I.S. Concentration(s): Africana Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies,
Latin American, Latinx, and Caribbean Studies

Race and Ethnicity in America (fall):

How have race and ethnicity shaped American life over time? In this seminar, we will explore the complex interlockings of race and ethnicity in the U.S. through a social construction perspective. Together, we will examine major topics, such as slavery, Jim Crow and its legacy, residential racial segregation, immigration and changing conceptions of race, European colonialism’s influence on race-making in the United States, as well as social movements and resistance to white supremacy. Readings will draw on sociology, political theory, philosophy, history, African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Chican@ Studies, Latin American and Latino Studies, and Gender Studies. We will also engage critically with poetry, art, music and documentary photography where appropriate.

Global Race and Ethnicity (spring):

How do people experience race and ethnicity around the globe? With a particular eye toward societies shaped by European colonialism in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, we will examine how race and ethnicity can both give life meaning but also be a force of social, political, and economic oppression. Together, we will look at how people around the world contest such relations through anti-racism movements and other forms of solidarity and peacebuilding. Readings draw on sociology, political theory, philosophy, history, Africana Studies, Latin American Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies and Genocide Studies. We will also engage critically with poetry, art, music and documentary photography where appropriate.

CORE HUMAN QUESTIONS

DIVIDED LOVE

Common Area Designation(s): Literature

Marriage Plots (fall):

“Let me not to the marriage of true minds/admit impediments,” Shakespeare writes in a sonnet. Impediments, however, make love stories worth telling, whether the result is comic or tragic, in fiction, drama, or film. In this seminar, we will trace the history of romantic comedy, beginning with Shakespeare’s and Jane Austen’s marriage plots to the screwball comedies of Hollywood’s golden age and the popular success of contemporary rom-com films. We will ask how this seemingly light, entertaining genre takes on grave cultural issues through lovers divided by race, class, religion, and more. Throughout, students will be reading closely and writing analytically in order to hone their critical thinking skills.

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Love Noir (spring):

Film noir is a style of French cinema known for being dark, bleak, and moody. Love noir – dark, atmospheric stories of doomed love – can describe works ranging from classic and crime novels to Broadway musicals, from *Wuthering Heights* to *West Side Story*. In this seminar, we will ask how cynical tales of thwarted love offer critical insight into the cultural norms and taboos that divide would-be lovers. We will also peer into the psychological depths of lost, impossible, or unreciprocated love. Students will undertake a culminating research project to hone their independent learning skills.

FRIENDSHIP: PROMISE & DISCONTENT

Common Area Designation(s): Philosophical Studies

In Praise of Friendship (fall):

Aristotle famously observed that, “Without friends, no one would choose to live, though he or she had all other goods.” Friends make life liveable and worth living. But there is something surprising about friendships in real life: whereas Aristotle theorized that a friend is a “second self,” friendships in fact frequently occur between rather unlikely people. Each friendship is phenomenologically unique. In this seminar, we will read literature on famous friendships and as we go beyond Aristotle’s understanding of the philosophy of friendship. Our driving question will always be: how can we become better, more present friends ourselves?

Friendship Deferred (spring):

We live in an age in which we are socially networked around the globe, but a host of studies from the social sciences show that we have fewer close friends than did previous generations. Millennials and Gen-Zers are reporting alarming levels of loneliness. Meanwhile an array of philosophers, from Nietzsche to Charles Taylor, and theologians, from Karl Barth to Jean-Luc Marion, argue compellingly that modernity cracked up the self and society in such a way that makes deep friendship insupportable. In this seminar, we will explore together an array of readings to ask the following questions: What gets in the way of friendship these days? Can postmodern philosophy, precisely through a deconstruction of the modern self, give us new hope for friendship?

ROMANCE AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Common Area Designation(s): Literature

Good Romance (fall):

From medieval troubadours to romantic film comedies such as *Notting Hill* and *The Holiday*, this seminar will visit key moments in the development of what we have come to call the genre of “Romance.” Literature, music, theater, film, and art will be our way in to discussing why and how “romance” continues to attract artists and audiences. Along the way we will ask questions about how the genre expresses and shapes our notions of love, honor, beauty, desire, and family. How does “romantic” love fit in with the demands of everyday civilization? What kinds of imaginative work are pop songs doing, and asking us to do? How do more recent rom-coms relate to the medieval tales they inherit? Key authors will include Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Howard Hawks, Freud, and The Beatles.

Bad Romance (spring):

In this seminar, we will spend time exploring the dark underside of romance: the obsessive, the deranged, the mad, the tangled, the broken. From its inception in our earliest literature, Romance has always been haunted by its others: gothic tales of loss and revenge, stories of impossible or broken relationships, delusional fantasies, violence. In what ways do these texts revise or deny the possibilities that more “conventional” romances enable? Key authors will include Shakespeare, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Bram Stoker, E.M. Forster, Alfred Hitchcock, Toni Morrison, and Lady Gaga.

SEEING OR BELIEVING?

Common Area Designation(s): Philosophical Studies

Seeing (fall):

We can look at a person and see that she is sad, or happy. Recognizing that we see a person is called “looking at.” Recognizing the mood of that person is called “looking through.” In this seminar, we will discuss this distinction in terms of a philosophical theory of perception. Together, we will apply both ways of looking to ordinary cases of seeing and our reactions to works of art. Our readings will include two novels by Tolstoy, *The Cossacks* and *Anna Karenina*, and a philosophical book by Nicolai Hartmann, *Aesthetics*. We will also visit the Worcester Art Museum and the Museum of Russian Icons as we explore perception theory and our attention.

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Believing (spring):

How can people believe in something that is opposite from what their eyes tell them? How can they believe in something so firmly that they are willing to give their lives in defense of their beliefs? Can our beliefs take us into fanaticism if we do not take into account the evidence of the senses? What is the proper way to combine seeing and believing? To address these questions, in this seminar we will read a novel by Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, and the dramas of Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus at Colinas*, and *Antigone*. The theoretical part of our course will be based on the book by Rollo May, *The Cry for Myth*.

DIVINE

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Common Area Designation(s): Philosophical Studies

C.I.S. Concentration(s): Africana Studies, Peace & Conflict Studies

Listening (fall):

This class will start with Socrates, who was executed by the state of Athens, because he refused to apologize for speaking freely in the pursuit of truth. It will ask what free speech meant to Socrates, particularly in relation to the famous “paradox of learning.” What kind of listening is necessary for true learning? We will study Augustine and Kierkegaard, who both suggest there is no authentic or free speech without the kind of radical listening that is able to respond to the paradox of learning. *This course entails a commitment to a Community-Based Learning component.*

Protest (spring):

If the question of the freedom of speech is usually approached in terms of what we *may* say, this seminar will suggest that it is also about what we *must* say. If part of what we hear going on around us now is unjust, then that will require a response. In this seminar we will look at the tradition of resistance to racial injustice that consists in speaking freely even when that means breaking the law. Starting with John Stuart Mill, who argued that no opinion should be suppressed, we will go on to study J.L. Austin who challenged the hard and fast distinction between words and acts. We will study a range protest works, ranging from Malcolm X and Steve Biko, to film and poetry from the U.S. and South Africa. *This course entails a commitment to a Community-Based Learning component.*

IDENTITY, DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY

Common Area Designation(s): 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 relationship 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 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.*

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IMMORTALITY IN ANCIENT GREECE & ROME

Common Area Designation(s): Literature

Greek Gods & Mortals (fall):

How did ancient Greeks communicate with the divine? How did many of these mortals *become* divine? In this seminar, we will closely read poetic and philosophical texts from the ancient Greek world, with an eye on the authors' involvement of the gods, and on how that involvement reflects their understandings of the human condition. We will be especially attentive to Greek ways of communicating with and hearing from the gods. We will also consider together how characters such as Homer's Achilles and the protagonists in Greek tragic plays, as well as real historical figures such as Socrates and the participants in Athenian mystery cults, made efforts to breach the boundary between human and divine, mortal and immortal.

Roman Lives & Afterlives (spring):

As we continue our study of human engagement with the divine in the ancient Mediterranean world, we will turn to Greece's geographical and cultural neighbor Rome, whose literature and physical monuments also interrogate the nature of deities, and are similarly steeped in the desire for dialogue with divine beings. Together, we will look closely at mythological, philosophical, religious, and areligious texts, along with memorializing objects such as honorary sculptures and funeral monuments. We will also be attuned to the echoes of Roman ideas about the divine in later eras and into our own times.

GLOBAL SOCIETY

IDENTITY IN FILM & MEDIA

Common Area Designation(s): Arts

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

Gender in Film & Media (fall):

You are what you watch...or do you watch what you are? Is being male the same thing as being masculine? Does being a girl automatically mean you'll one day be a woman? Most importantly, where do we get those ideas and do we have the power to change them? In this seminar, we will look at a variety of gender representations in film, television, and other media to interrogate these questions. Students will explore developmental theory about masculinity and femininity and apply them analytically to films and television shows such as *Mean Girls*, *Psycho*, *Deadpool* and *Friends*. Our goal is to be able to think critically about the way representations and identity both shape and are shaped by our understanding of gender.

Sexuality in Film & Media (spring):

We live in an environment in which marriage equality and the popular catch phrase "No Homo" coexist, albeit not in harmony. What does it mean to be Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning or Asexual in 2018? For that matter, how has being straight evolved in relationship to these identities? Furthermore, how do we understand the orientations of Transgender and Intersex people? For close to a decade now, a national program has been promising at-risk GLBTQIA youth that "It Gets Better," and this seminar is going to follow-up on that question by using film, television and media to analyze what progress has been made. Together, we will use a variety of Queer theories to investigate whether these representations reflect or even enact a social or political agenda. Our goal is to develop a critical eye for analyzing dynamic representations of sexuality and orientation.

IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, AND TRAUMA

Common Area Designation(s): Cross-Cultural Studies or 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*; Solmaz Sharif, *Look*; 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, Edwidge Danticat, Toni Morrison, and Harry Crews. By

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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.

IMAGES FROM LATIN AMERICA

Common Area Designation(s): 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? 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, humor, history, globalization, politics, memory, and religion 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 begin the spring semester with a role-immersion game that focuses on a wide range of movements and styles present in 20th through 21st century art from Latin America that ask the following questions: In what ways do Latin American artists dialogue with European, African, and indigenous aesthetic traditions? What are the implications of framing painting as “art for art’s sake” or creating art for political purposes? How do gender, ideology, and race interface with artistic production? What are some of the different ways that Latin American public art has functioned since the 1970s to the present day? Students will perform close readings of art works with a focus on the formal elements of painting. Together, we will take trips into the local Worcester community to see public art and we will participate in a collaborative art project.

INVENTING THE MENA

Common Area Designation(s): Cross-Cultural Studies

Travels in the MENA (fall):

How has travel literature created our conceptions of different parts of the world? Throughout history, explorers, merchants, pilgrims, and armies (to name a few) have journeyed great distances in order to discover, document, and (sometimes) conquer far flung, mythical, or sacred destinations, encountering new cultures and producing travel accounts, diaries, and other forms of documentation along the way. As repositories of lived experience and of first-hand observation, travel literature was (and continues to be) a part of “worldmaking” namely, the process of creating and constituting knowledge about places and peoples beyond our own experience. In this seminar, we will examine travel accounts as lenses into the invention of the region known today as the “Middle East,” or what scholars often refer to as the MENA (Middle East/North Africa). Together, we will examine travel literature produced by people from the region and from Europe in order to think about how we know what we know about this complex and fascinating part of the world.

The MENA Through film (spring):

In this seminar, we will build on our broader theme of “Worldmaking” by considering how the MENA region has been imagined and depicted in American cinema. What tropes have US film makers drawn upon in their depictions of the MENA and of Muslims? How have these tropes evolved or remained the same over time? How have historical events such as the Six Day War, the 1973 Arab oil embargo, and 9/11 influenced American cinematic representations of the MENA? This seminar will hone student research and writing skills and will lead to the production of a podcast and final presentation at the end of the semester.

SEEING OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Common Area Designation(s): Arts

The Art of Identity (fall):

In the past, a portrait might have been an oil painting created to mark the acceptance into an artist’s guild; today, such an image might be one’s best pose made on a Smartphone to share with family and friends around the globe. How have these images changed over time and what might they reveal—or even conceal—about individuals and their world? Who is the person and what are the cultural forces behind these visual productions? In this seminar, we will explore these questions together as we examine a wide range of portraits throughout art history and across diverse geographic contexts. Through a variety of exercises, we will

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sharpen our observation and writing skills to interpret a fuller meaning of portraiture and to understand better how the visual arts contribute to the creation of identity and community in a global context.

Drawing From Within (spring):

Unlock the power of communicating through drawing! In this seminar, students will learn how to see and explore 3-dimensional space and objects and experiment with different media and processes to create 2-dimensional art work. Together, through the connected practices of reading, drawing, and writing, we explore and discuss identity, environment, and both social and political issues. Group critiques and discussions will help solidify students' understanding of visual imagery. Students will also conduct research to compose narratives supporting their drawing projects. During the semester, we will work with an array of media, including charcoal, ink, graphite, watercolor, and other drawing materials. Students will use a sketchbook to practice drawing and to document their work. This course requires no prior drawing experience. This studio art course carries a standard \$70 fee for course supplies.

SOCIAL PRACTICE STUDIO

Common Area Designation(s): Arts

Art on the Hill (fall):

How can artists serve as agents of social change? In this seminar, we will explore how major artists, such as Andy Goldsworthy, the Guerilla Girls, and Francis Alÿs, use their art to respond to contemporary challenges and to intervene in public political discourses. Our observations will serve as the basis for students to create projects and to perform direct actions that engage, question, and explore the world around them. In particular, we will look for inspiration to social spaces and pressing issues on the Holy Cross campus. Drawing from activism, architecture, social organizing, as well as the arts, students will create temporary site-specific works individually and in small groups, utilizing the Millard Media Lab, digital imaging, and video to document their work. This studio art course carries a standard \$70 fee for course supplies.

Art Outside the Gates (spring):

How can we create meaningful artworks in collaboration with others? Social Practice Art or Socially Engaged Art is a contemporary movement in which artists partner with the public as participants to discuss, educate, debate, and interact to create a work of art. The act of collaboration is a key element of this practice, making the physical art material or object less important than the actual process of creation. Together, we will embrace this process-oriented approach as we shift our exploration of art and politics off campus to nearby Quinsigamond Village. Working with community partners, students will research the neighborhood's historical and contemporary relationships to the city, and the issues that matter most to our Holy Cross neighbors. Students will take what they have learned and create collaborative art pieces in the neighborhood. This studio art course carries a standard \$70 fee for course supplies. *This course includes a Community-Based Learning component.*

THE JOURNEY TO IDENTITY

Common Area Designation(s): Arts or Literature

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

The Quest for Love (fall):

What does it mean to truly know another? Does knowing one's self require knowledge of the Other? The experience of love and connection has always provided fertile ground for artists and writers. In this seminar, we will explore numerous forms of artistic creation from the Hispanic world including poetry, fiction, theater, film, visual art, and performance. Primary sources will inspire us to delve into the themes of love, conflict, and alienation, communion, and loneliness. A sampling of texts includes works by Lorca and the Generation of '27 in Spain, Neruda, Paz, Lope de Vega, Petrarch, and others. Performance and improvisation will have a central role in the course. *No previous acting experience is required.*

The Quest for the True Self (spring):

In this seminar, Spanish novels from different periods will provide the scaffolding for the consideration of the meaning of self, self-expression, and the nature of identity. Our intellectual inquiry will center on universal questions such as the nature of truth versus fiction, madness versus sanity, and self versus society. Texts include works such as *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes, as well as post-Civil War novels by Rodoreda such as *In the Time of the Doves*. Performance and improvisation will have a central role in the course. *No previous acting experience is required.*

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WORLD MIGRATIONS ON FILM

Common Area Designation(s): Arts or Cross-Cultural Studies
C.I.S. Concentration(s): Africana Studies, and Peace and Conflict Studies

African Migrations (fall):

The African continent is not only the cradle of humanity, but it stands as the historical starting point of all human migration. Modern Africa is both at the crossroads of multi-secular civilizations and the subject to the crosscurrents and appeal of globalization. Through film (primarily) and text (memoir, fiction, news reports), this seminar will examine the persistent phenomenon of migrations within and without Africa. We will pay particular attention to internal displacements (rural to urban exodus, forced movement), intra-African cross-border migrations, as well as international (overseas) migratory trends from the 1950s up to present day. We will also consider closely the broader contexts within which the need to migrate emerges, the migrant experience and its inherent social, cultural, racial, and economic implications on receiving communities and communities of origin. Films of focus will include *La Pirogue*, *Paweogo*, *Heremakono*, *Pièces d'identité*, *Black Girl*, *Bamako*, *Africa Paradis*, *Paris selon Moussa*, *Visa (La Dictée)*.

European Migrations (spring):

Europe has a long history of human migration, and population movements both into and within the continent have included numerous military invasions as well as significant migration patterns during the Roman Empire and the Jewish diaspora. In the twentieth century, migration within the European Union increased after the 1985 Schengen Agreement. Immigration from outside Europe increased in the post-World War II era and following the decolonization period. This process has accelerated in speed and scale in the late twentieth century, until today, and the term “migrant crisis” is now widely used in the media to describe rising numbers of refugees attempting to enter Europe from across the Mediterranean Sea and overland from southeast Europe. In this seminar, which focuses on the period from 1950 to the present, we will examine these complex patterns of human migration into and within Europe through film (primarily) and text (including fiction and news reports).

NATURAL WORLD

(UN)NATURAL FOOD IN AMERICA

Common Area Designation(s): 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 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Common Area Designation(s): Philosophical Studies

Justice in Theory (fall):

We certainly have a problem: the way we live is damaging the environment, but we need that environment if we are going to keep living satisfying lives. This problem seems to require government action, but what should the government do? Should we just worry about existing people? What about future people? Or also about animals, or ecosystems, or “the environment itself,” whatever that is? And how do we even begin to answer those questions in meaningful and respectful ways? In this seminar, we will study two political theories (liberalism and conservatism) and four theories of the environment (anthropocentrism, sentiocentrism,

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biocentrism, and ecocentrism) to see how other people have answered those questions. In the process, we will work toward answering these pressing questions for ourselves.

Justice in Practice (spring):

The U.S. has one of the most extensive environmental regimes in the world, with more laws and more extensive regulation than almost any other nation. As a result, we have certainly made progress toward protecting our environment -- or at least some parts of it -- the last 60 years or so. And yet, we still have so many environmental problems. What can we *do*? In this seminar, we will look at two further political theories (green theory and capabilities) and three examples of what “we” can do, talking about the costs and benefits of each: government regulation, business innovation, and grassroots protest movements. In the end, each of these options leads us back to a slightly different question: what can *we* do? Us, you, and me – what can *we* do? It is a question worth asking and answering.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATHEMATICS

Common Area Designation: Mathematical Science

Modeling the Environment (fall):

If we continue to use fossil fuels to generate energy for transportation, what effects can we expect to see from the pollution they generate? Are there realistic alternatives to those fuels? Our ability to develop answers to such important questions and to understand the political, economic, and social issues involved depends on understanding quantitative information. Mathematical models--equations of various sorts capturing relationships between variables involved in a complex situation--are fundamental for understanding the potential consequences of the choices we make. In this seminar, we will introduce a number of basic techniques for constructing models and seeing the ways they are applied to pressing environmental issues. *Students in this course should have a strong competence in high school algebra and an aptitude for analytical thinking.*

Analyzing Environmental Data (spring):

Are we experiencing global climate change? Does a high-fat diet lead to increased risk of certain cancers? Statistical thinking is one method humans have developed to discern underlying patterns in quantitative information. Statistics form an ever-growing component of our public debate on issues in the environment, human health, and politics. In this seminar, students will learn some basic tools of statistical inference (that is, the process of inferring the presence of a general pattern from the data contained in a smaller sample) and how and why those tools actually work. In the process, students will develop an appreciation of the power and the limitations of statistical thinking and learn to analyze claims backed by statistics. *Students in this course should have a strong competence in high school algebra and an aptitude for analytical thinking.*

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 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 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.

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NATURALLY UNNATURAL

Common Area Designation(s): Philosophical Studies

Reason & Self-Mastery (fall):

Beginning with Plato, Aristotle and the ancient schools, and culminating with Descartes, we will consider the various ways these thinkers understood *human nature* and its fulfillment. We will focus on their attempts to live out the rational, contemplative life—a life that was truly free, authentically human or even divine. In particular, we will look at their methods for attaining tranquility or harmony of the soul through study of and attunement to the order of Nature. We will question these practices, noticing the different ways philosophers understood the movements of the internal world, the soul or life principle, as a microcosm of the external. The semester will lead towards an articulation of the problem of a radical division between the soul and the body and how this sense of alienation or rupture—along with attempts to heal or regain this connection with the world—mark the beginning of modern philosophy.

Freedom & Self-Creation (spring):

In this seminar, we will trace the essentially modern concern of finding ourselves at a distance from Nature, uncertain of what this might mean for any conception of *human nature*. It is hardly a coincidence that while industrialization, and the domination and manipulation of Nature were ramping up in the 19th Century, all-encompassing, anchoring worldviews disintegrated. We will think about how this fragmentation played out in the philosophical movements that followed, from Romanticism through Existentialism. Reading Rousseau, Thoreau, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger among others, we will ask: Does it still make sense to talk about human nature? How do our changing views of Nature and Self inform each other? Can the language of alienation or harmony, mastery or submission, still speak to us (and for us) in an age of institutionalized philosophy, advanced technology and ecological crisis?

THE STORY OF HERE

Common Area Designation(s): Literature

Mapping Nature at Holy Cross (fall):

At the foot of Holy Cross campus is the Middle River—part of the mighty Blackstone River, which powered the industrial revolution—and yet many do not even know it is there. In this seminar, we will learn to read the landscape just outside of our gates. We will uncover the story our river tells from its geological past to its urban present, and how human and natural energies combined to form the place we see today. It is a singular but also familiar American story—one perhaps shared by your own hometown. Together, students will produce a digital map of the river that explores its meaning as the kind of waterway on which so much of American life did and still does depend.

Mapping Change in Worcester (spring):

Worcester is going through fascinating changes—a new baseball stadium is scheduled to open in 2021, new businesses are pouring in, and handsome old factories are being converted to trendy loft apartments and cafés. At the same time, Worcester wants to be a greener walking city and adapt its rich industrial fabric to lifestyles today. The heart of that transformation is the Canal District—home of the now buried canal that connected the city to the Blackstone River. In this seminar, we will research and map how the story of the neighborhood has inspired its physical transformation while addressing a critical question plaguing American development today: will this greener, developed city truly benefit all populations, including low income residents who live here now, or just the well to do and visitors?

WHY AREN'T WE ALL FROGS?

Common Area Designation(s): Natural science

What is the Nature of Embryos? (fall):

What is the nature of an embryo? What are the biological principles that direct the complex molecular and cellular dance to generate the adult body plan from a single cell? What makes one body the same or different as another body? Indeed – why aren't we all frogs? In this seminar, we will use the study of developmental biology to help us explore the cellular and molecular biology that underpins the massive complexity of creating an adult body plan. We will examine the similarities and differences between different embryos, and how nature and evolution have shaped the biology of those embryos to create different body plans.

Can Embryos Become Unnatural? (spring):

In this seminar, we will use our knowledge from the fall to explore the ethically complex underbelly of developmental biology. Together, we will consider what interventions might be ethically valid in the face of naturally occurring malfunctions in embryo biology, as well as what might be our obligations to understand and regulate the massive technological advances that can help

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change embryo biology. Among the many questions we will explore include: What happens when the nature of the embryo is disrupted? What do we consider to be unnatural and where, if anywhere, do we draw the line between natural evolution and unnatural human intervention? What are the consequences of malfunctions in the complex cellular and molecular dance that creates the adult body plan?

WRITING/READING PLACE

Common Area Designation(s): Literature

13 Ways of Writing Nature (fall):

In this seminar, we will strike out on a ramble through contemporary creative nonfiction nature writing. Together, we will explore how writers create the world on the page and use adventure as a means of discovery. Students will learn to read as writers, paying close attention to the choices writers make to produce certain effects in their essays and books. Students will also practice bringing together their emotional side (How does this make me feel?) with their analytical side (What formal choices has the writer made that could explain the way I'm feeling?). Weekly creative nonfiction assignments and adventures in the field will give students opportunities to experiment with their writing and help them build towards drafting a longer essay that we will workshop at the end of the semester.

The Myth of the Frontier (spring):

Since America's beginnings, the frontier has shaped our national identity and values. Frederick Jackson Turner claimed that westward expansion defined the American character because the wilderness forced pioneers to leave behind their old ways: "It takes him from the railroad car and puts in the birch canoe...Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe...here is a new product that is American." In this seminar, we will read writers who critique the myth of the American frontier and examine the impact of our conquest on Native American. We will also explore how the story of westward expansion changes depending upon the gender or ethnicity of the person recounting it.

SELF

BIRTH AND DEATH AS RITUAL

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 is post-partum depression and why might it be on the rise? Is it possible 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 turn our explorations from birth to death. What is death, and is it the same for everyone everywhere? Do people in the contemporary West live in denial of death? What is it like to work with people who are dead or dying? Why do only some people get to decide to end their lives? Where do we learn how to die? Can we be taught to "die well"? What is the social significance of birth-related deaths from miscarriage, still birth, or sudden infant death syndrome? 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. Together, will we 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, and interrogate their past and present encounters with death as well as envision future experiences of death and dying.

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CAN YOU KEEP A SECRET?

Common Area Designation(s): Mathematical Science

Ciphers and Heroes (fall):

How are secret codes constructed? What weaknesses allow them to be cracked by clever analysts? Welcome to cryptology, the scientific study of encoding and decoding secret messages. In this seminar, we will explore the mathematics of encryption, while investigating the development, strengths, and weaknesses of historically significant cryptosystems. These include the nomenclator used by Mary Queen of Scots in her quest to dethrone her cousin Elizabeth, and most thrillingly, the ENIGMA machine used during World War II. Along the way, we will delve into the lives of code creators and the clever analysts who cracked the codes, such as the Polish and British heroes who cracked the seemingly unbreakable ENIGMA. *Students in this course should have a strong competence in high school algebra, and an aptitude for analytical thinking.*

Privacy in the Digital Age (spring):

How does Amazon.com keep your payment information secure when you order online? Does the nature of social media influence the way you present yourself and interact with others online? Is there a divide between your actual self, and your digital self? Secure electronic communication is vital to modern society in many ways, and cryptosystems are at the heart of this. These mathematical systems rely on the stunning development of public key cryptography, a concept born in the computer revolution of the 1970s. In this seminar, we will focus on these modern cryptosystems, the visionaries who created them, and the advances in computing that make them secure. We will also examine the significant impact that electronic communication has on the self. *Students in this course should have a strong competence in high school algebra, and an aptitude for analytical thinking.*

DEATH & SOCIETY

Common Area Designation: Social Science

Making Sense of Mortality (fall):

What does death mean to us? Informed by the disciplines of history, anthropology, and sociology, students in this class will examine the practical and existential dilemmas posed by Western medicine's treatment of dying, look at what mortality has meant to people in a few other cultural and historical contexts, consider how death's meanings are shaped by inequality and injustice, and interrogate the popular claim that people in the global north "deny" death. As we travel through these topics, we will take breaks to plan for next semester's course, where students will be afforded the opportunity to volunteer in hospice.

Caring for Our Dead and Dying (spring):

How do we care for people when they are dying or dead? What is it like to work in a nursing home, hospice, or funeral parlor? In addition to reading about end-of-life caregiving, students in this class will volunteer in a nursing home or hospice, talk with medical, funeral, and spiritual care professionals, and witness a cremation. The experiential dimensions of the class will deepen students' understanding of death's medicalization, hospice's institutionalization, and the sociology of gender, caregiving, and emotional labor. *The class has a Community-Based Learning component and is ideal for students interested in the health professions.*

GENDER IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science

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

Defining Gender (fall):

What is gender? How does gender develop throughout our lifetime? What is gender normativity and why does gender have such a powerful impact on our everyday lives? How do the borders between genders become constructed? In this seminar, we will explore these questions and more, attending to the ways that gender shapes us and is shaped by us. Drawing primarily on sociological studies of gender, students will learn to think critically about gender in their own lives and understand the impact that gender has on their conception of self. We will explore topics such as masculinity, femininity, understanding how the social world impacts our notions of what is (and is not) biological, and gender in childhood and in popular culture.

Redefining Gender (spring):

Gender is a powerful social construct. But how do people challenge gender normativity in everyday life? In this seminar, we will consider the countless ways that people challenge gender expectations and work to shift the norms associated with masculinity and femininity and, in some cases, deconstruct the borders altogether. Through the use of social scientific research, non-fiction, and historical accounts, we will explore ongoing questions such as: how do women in leadership positions respond to gender-based stereotypes? How do stay-at-home dads negotiate expectations of being a breadwinner? What do we learn about gender from people who are gender nonconforming or who transition their gender? What has feminism contributed to these conversations? What are the cumulative effects of various challenges against societal gender norms?

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SPIRITUALITY & SOCIAL ACTION

Common Area Designation(s): Historical Studies

Solitude (fall):

How does one find authentic meaning and purpose in an increasingly complex, knowable, visible, and interconnected world? By exploring the history of American religion, spirituality, and social thought, we will examine this and other questions at the core of modern life. Particularly as society became more complex, competitive, and “noisy,” religious “seekers” who defined and defied the social norms of their day upheld the value of *solitude* not only as a path to self-knowledge and spiritual transcendence, but also to a deeper understanding of the world and their obligations to it as moral agents. *This course carries a Community-Based Learning component and is ideal for students interested in journalism and social policy research.*

Solidarity (spring):

What does it mean to be “women and men for and with others”? In what ways have individuals’ search for personal meaning informed their understanding of and commitment to the world? In this seminar, we will examine the religious roots and spiritual meanings of the major social reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth century. We will also consider the ways individuals and communities cultivate networks of belonging, meaning, and social power in a society that has become increasingly suspicious of traditional social, religious, and political institutions. Students will examine the value of these institutions in an ever-expanding marketplace of ideas, values, and social movements. *This course entails a commitment to a Community-Based Learning component.*

THE ETHICS OF SILENCE

Common Area Designation(s): Studies in Religion or Arts

In Spirituality (fall):

What is the role of silence in spiritual life, moral practice, and the formation of an authentic self? What is the relationship between silence and suffering? Can both silence and speech be forms of resistance to injustice and a culture of noise? In this seminar, we will explore how spiritual traditions, especially the Ignatian tradition, adopt practices of silence in contemplation and resistance. With a foundation in theological reflection on silence, we will examine contemporary moral challenges in which silence and/or the failure to listen have undermined human dignity.

In Stories (spring):

In this course, we will explore the craft of narrative – fiction and creative nonfiction – within the context of silence. What kind of silence allows for authentic stories, both our own and the stories of others, to be heard and find form? What kind of silence distorts or cancels out our real stories? And how do we – as writers, thinkers, learners and community members – grow our capacity to listen? In a culture that often privileges speaking and writing, we will give attention to exploring the possibilities of listening and hearing. Students will approach creative writing not only as an art but also as a craft, a practice that can help us locate, question, and give expression to our authentic selves.

THE GOOD EDUCATION

Common Area Designation(s): 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 labelled 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. Compulsory education is intended to socialize and educate students in order to maintain a stable society. Yet, schools vary wildly in their mission, values, and practice. Visits to schools and discussions will explore what is meant by, and the implications of, labeling and attending schools that are perceived as “good” or “bad” on both students, as they discern their sense of self and place in the world, and on society as a whole. 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 types of schools they hope society will provide for future generations.

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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.*