

MONTSERRAT SEMINARS

FALL 2020 – SPRING 2021

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL IDENTITIES

Common Area Designation: Literature

ABC, 123 (fall):

Exploring the art of and values inherent to Children's Literature, we will read and analyze a wide range of stories that engage the imagination, intelligence, and emotions of developing minds. Children's literature is not simple in purpose or creation. We will define the characteristics of a "good" story, and ask how these stories shape our ideas about social identity. What does a culture hope their children will learn from reading stories? What lessons linger in the cultural consciousness? What is challenged and changes? Literacy is more than the ability to decode the alphabet and the words that those letters form. We cannot underestimate how crucial "Kiddie Lit" is to the construction of social and personal identity.

Minds Meet Culture (spring):

Human infants are born with certain tendencies in how they process information. The meeting of these processing biases with information supplied by the sociocultural environment results in particular understandings of the social world, for example, about gender, race, status, and power. How do children acquire these important facets of personal identity? What are the costs and benefits of these constructions? Are there ways we can disrupt these developmental processes? Should we? Building on the first semester's investigation of children's literature and literacy, this course will turn to developmental science in order to continue our investigation into social identities. A special focus will be on how we can create opportunities for optimal and equitable developmental outcomes.

CRAFTING IDENTITIES

Common Area Designation: Literature

The Truth of Masks (fall):

Do we choose who we are, or is our identity completely modeled by social norms? We must admit that in social settings we all emphasize certain aspects of our personality while hiding others. Our identity results from a complex negotiation between our moral values and the values of our community. But, if we all wear a mask, what is the truth behind it? Drawing on a variety of sources, including literary works, films, TV shows and podcasts, we will explore how works of art can open a space of intimacy in which we can free our identity from societal norms. By combining in class-discussion with CBL work with our community partners, we will be able to reflect upon the effects of both intellectual debate and real-life experience in shaping our identity. In addition, we will be conducting meditative exercises during the course of the semester to promote self-reflection and personal growth. *We will incorporate direct experience and Community Based Learning into our inquiries as conditions allow.*

Love, Death and Power (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 still so difficult to address certain facets of our personality such as sexual desire, fear of death and thirst for power? With more modes of communication at our fingertips than ever before, we often still struggle to express ourselves meaningfully over these topics, 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 our notion of identity. As with the fall semester, CBL work will be a key component of the course to bridge the gap between our literary experiences and our experiences in real life. *We will incorporate direct experience and Community Based Learning into our inquiries as conditions allow.*

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

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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.

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? What is gender normativity and why does gender have such a powerful impact on our everyday lives? How do theories of intersectionality help us to understand the ways that gender and social structures such as race, class, and sexuality interact and co-construct our lives? Drawing primarily on sociological studies and theories of gender, we will explore these questions and more, attending to the ways that gender shapes us and is shaped by us. Students will learn to think critically about gender in their own everyday lives and will also explore topics such as masculinity, femininity, stereotypes in popular culture, bodies, and the impacts of COVID-19 on gendered lives.

Redefining Gender (spring):

Gender is a powerful social construct. But how do people challenge gender normativity and sexism in everyday life? Through the use of social scientific research, memoir, and feminist theories and praxis, we will consider the countless ways that people challenge binary constructions of gender and systems of oppression. We will explore questions such as: what can we learn about gender through learning about the experiences of trans and nonbinary people? How do race and social class impact trans experiences? What can we learn about contemporary approaches to social change from U.S. feminist movements of the past? More specifically, how are theories of intersectionality applied in contemporary movements such as #SayHerName and #MeToo?

LIVING IN A MUSLIM WORLD

Common Area Designation: Social Science

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

Social Lives of Muslim Youth (fall):

How does religious identity shape the political activism and social life of Muslim youth? We will use ethnographies, social science analyses, graffiti and music videos from two democracies – the U.S. and Indonesia – and two authoritarian regimes – Egypt 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”? Why have more young women started veiling in Indonesia since the country became a democracy? Why do Saudi male youth express dissent by drag racing, and how did young Saudi feminists campaign for the right to drive?

US 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?

TO BE AS A 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

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fulfilling idealistic goals, like spreading democracy, and the “national interest,” such as enhancing security. Choosing and 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

MATHEMATICS, CHAOS AND ORDER

Common Area Designation: Mathematical Science

Data and Decision (fall):

We live a time (for the first time in history, thanks to the internet) where information is plentiful and easy to access for many people. But that information is often unreliable and difficult to interpret, and its sheer volume overwhelms our capacity to think about it effectively. Our first semester will explore some of the tools and habits of thought that mathematicians use to cut through this chaotic fog of information in search of order, with applications to both public policy and personal decisions. In particular, we’ll take a look at the mathematics behind polling, voting, the census, and the electoral college as we head into the fall presidential election.

Imagination and Precision (spring):

Understanding and using mathematics and science effectively requires both imagination and precision. But this is also true of literature, art, and other humanistic contributions to our shared intellectual tradition. We’ll see how mathematics has emerged in many cultures throughout history, and we’ll look at the ways mathematics has been used in literature, film, art, and music, with an eye to our general theme of bringing order into the chaos of human experience. While our mathematical tools in the fall semester were primarily taken from probability and statistics, our explorations this semester will take us farther afield, into geometry, chaos theory, logic, and computation.

PUBLIC LIVES, PRIVATE SELVES

Common Area Designation: Literature

Modern Privacies (fall):

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

Postmodern Publics (spring):

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

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RELIGION AND EXISTENCE

Common Area Designation: Religious Studies

Existence Christianized (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.”

SUFFERING AND MEANING

Common Area Designation: Literature

C.I.S. Concentration: Peace and 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 MEANING OF LIFE

Common Area Designation: Philosophical Studies

Quest for Virtue (fall):

According to the traditional way of thinking, proper ethical behavior and ethical excellence lead to a meaningful life. Our moral qualities are tested the most in times of crisis, like pandemics and wars. In the course of the semester we will examine what it means to live a virtuous life in times of crisis and whether living in that way would indeed lead to a meaningful existence. We will read the following books: Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Victor Frankl, *Man’s Quest for Meaning*, *The Book of Job*, *Selected Dialogues* by Plato, and *Tao de Ching*. We will also watch the following movies: “The Thin Red Line,” “Gandhi,” and “The Road Home.”

Quest for Happiness (spring):

If not highly virtuous individuals, then certainly those who are happy should be able to live a meaningful life. We will examine various sources of happiness, including love, creativity, grace, and sheer luck, and analyze how they may be related to our life’s meaning. In the course of the semester we will read the following books: Albert Schweitzer, *Autobiography: Out of My Life and Thought*, Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, Hermann Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, and Erich Fromm, *The Art of Living*. We will also watch the following movies: “Casablanca,” “Everything is Illuminated,” and “Water.”

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DIVINE

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Common Area Designation(s): Philosophical Studies
C.I.S. Concentration(s): Africana Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies

Perception: Freedom and Truth (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. For Socrates, our freedom to speak does not depend on whether there are laws in place that protect speech: it depends on whether we are blinded by ignorance, or able to perceive the truth. Being free to say something we don't really mean is no freedom. The class will read texts from the philosophical tradition which engage the questions of perception, blindness, and faith in the pursuit of truth.

Protest: Freedom and Action (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 of protest works, ranging from Malcolm X and Steve Biko, to songs, film and poetry from the U.S. and South Africa.

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 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 engagement in the experiences of marginalized communities, 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. *As conditions allow, we will incorporate direct experience and Community Based Learning into this inquiry.*

Modifying Technologies (spring):

The second half of our seminar will focus on the ways in which advances in modern western reproductive medicine and genetic 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 engagement in the experiences of marginalized communities, 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.” *As conditions allow, we will incorporate direct experience and Community Based Learning into this inquiry.*

IMMORTALITY IN ANCIENT GREECE & ROME

Common Area Designation: Literature

Greek Gods and Mortals (fall):

How did ancient Greeks interact with and try to understand the divine? How did many Greek mortals *become* divine? In this seminar, we will closely read literary 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 the variety of ways of contacting and communicating with greater beings and forces. As part of this inquiry, we will 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 boundaries between human and divine, mortal and immortal.

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Roman Lives & Afterlives (spring):

As we continue our study of human engagement with the divine and the eternal in the ancient Mediterranean world, we will turn to Greece's geographical and cultural neighbor Rome, whose works of literature also interrogate the nature of deities, and are similarly steeped in the desire for dialogue with something greater. Together we will look closely at a broad range of mythological, philosophical, religious, and a-religious texts. We will also be especially attuned to Roman "afterlives" of another sort – in the echoes and adaptations of Roman ideas in later eras and into our own times.

LOOKING FOR GOD IN ALL THING

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 into this inquiry, using the resources of the Donelon Office for Community Based Learning. *We will incorporate direct experience and Community Based Learning as conditions allow.*

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. *We will incorporate direct experience and Community Based Learning into this inquiry as conditions allow.*

GLOBAL SOCIETY

DISPLACEMENT, DIASPORA, IDENTITY

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies

Global Migration (fall):

What makes people leave their homes and embark on a journey, sometimes even dangerous ones, to a new place? What kind of paths do they take? And once they arrive at their destination, how do they adapt to a new place? In this course, we will focus on the often-marginalized experiences of migrants. Through literary texts, memoirs and films, this seminar will highlight places of origins, winding roads and high seas – the myriad paths in which people traversed, sometimes against their will, always with dread and uncertainty, en route to new homes. We will also examine the ways in which migrants forge new homes, adapt to strange cultures, and are accepted (or not) by host societies. We will especially pay attention to the roles that gender, race and class play in human mobility and the creation of new migrant communities.

Migrants & Refugees of MENA (spring):

This seminar focuses on migrants and refugees in and of the Middle East. We are going to look into the histories of human mobility within and from the region in the past two centuries, as certain ethnic and religious groups became precarious minorities in search of safe haven. We are also going to examine histories of migration to and from the Middle East and North Africa in search of fame, fortune, and the good life. In short, we will pay close attention to the reasons Middle Easterners have migrated, and how some ended up refugees and asylum seekers as a result of war, persecution, or other forms of violence. We will then explore how Middle Easterners and Muslim migrants have been received in the US and Europe, focusing, among other things, on migrants' experiences of islamophobia, racism, and other forms of exclusion.

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DRAWING CONNECTIONS

Common Area Designation: Arts

Identity Networks (fall):

Who am I? Where do I go? What do I do? Let us embark on a journey to find the self. This course will explore identity through artistic process. Expression of the self is implemented through a multitude of art practices. Draw, cut, shape, mark, form, speak, move and dance! Students will gain experience in the creation of artwork. Coursework will cover techniques in drawing, portraiture, collage, relief and experimental approaches to expression. We gain exposure to a variation of artists working in different disciplines. Individual and group projects focus on making connections between informal research and concepts for the creation of work. The group engages in presenting personal work, analysis of visual imagery and dialogue. This studio art course carries a standard \$50 fee for course supplies.

Visualizing Systems (spring):

We use the spring semester to widen our lens and examine how artists have used identity and systematic approaches to create social and public works of art. Utilizing studio art practices we take a closer look at our community's infrastructure. What critical systems provide our basic needs to live? How do we use our natural environment? The course investigates concerns of water use, waste management and food distribution. We will gain a further understanding of the complexity of the city's infrastructure through inquiry. Getting exposure to these systems will fuel the continuation of artistic practices for individual and group projects. Projects focus on enhancing and empowering the student voice through artmaking. This studio art course carries a standard \$50 fee for course supplies.

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):

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 **race**, gender, identity, globalization, 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 focus on a wide range of movements and styles present in 20th through 21st century art from Latin America, engaging with 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.

MIGRATION & HUMAN RIGHTS

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies or Literature

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

African Migrations (fall):

The course builds on film and literature to tackle a very important contemporary African issue: population displacement. Whether these migratory trends occur within national boundaries, across borders within Africa, or involve destinations overseas, they happen for complex reasons. The texts and films highlight some of the persistent root causes of migrations: human rights abuses, insecurity, educational opportunities, environmental crisis, poverty, etc. The course examines ways and actions to address the difficult choices Africans must make as well as it emphasizes African agency in the making and, most importantly, in working to solve the challenges facing the youth and disenfranchised of the continent.

Writing Human Rights (spring)

What is a human right—and who is responsible for protecting those rights? How does the way we read and write about human rights impact the way they are articulated, understood, and enacted? This seminar explores human rights through writing: by reading testimonies of human rights violations in literature and by using our critical and creative writing to come to terms with our

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own responsibilities for upholding a culture of human dignity in our global world. Together, we will examine the way that authors use texts to help readers empathize with others, reflect on the past, learn about injustices, and imagine new realities. Through writing projects that analyze, challenge, and extend authors' points, we will seek to understand the way that words both fuel and mitigate conflict—in potentially productive and destructive ways.

TRUTH, FICTION AND IDENTITY

Common Area Designation: Arts or Literature

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

Seeking the "Other" (fall):

The experience of love and connection has frequently provided the impetus for artists to create great works. In this seminar, we will explore numerous forms of artistic creation from the Hispanic world including poetry, fiction, theater, film, visual art, and performance as we ask, "can we ever truly know another human being?" Primary sources will inspire us to delve into the themes of love, conflict, and alienation. 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.

Writing the Self (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.

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 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 – to animals, living beings, the environment? Each section of this course begins with a traditional ethical theory – Mill's Utilitarianism (concerned with pleasure and pain) and Kant's ethics (concerned with respect) – that was designed to answer the first two questions. Once we have it down, we'll push on it to see what kinds of answers it gives to that all-important third question. We'll test each theory against

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contemporary issues like 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. You're not going to live your life according to other people's answers.

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 *your own* moral development? There's no question that we affect the environment, but how does the environment affect us? We'll be working with somewhat deeper, more holistic theories of human nature and the environment in this class – Aquinas' natural law theory and Aristotle's virtue ethics as well as Schweitzer's reverence and Leopold's ecocentrism – and we'll move on to different, more complicated applied issues. In the end, though, it comes back to you: what do *you* believe?

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND MONSTERS

Common Area Designation: Natural Science

Building Fantastic Beasts (fall):

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? In the fall, 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 explore the similarities and differences between different embryos, and how nature and evolution have shaped the biology of those embryos to create different body plans. In short, we will explore the biology of building fantastically complex beasts.

Creating Mythical Monsters (spring):

What are the consequences of variations or malfunctions in the complex cellular and molecular dance that creates the adult body plan? We will use our knowledge of developmental biology to create some classic mythical monsters. We will also explore real life challenges in developmental biology. We will ask what interventions are ethically valid in the face of naturally occurring malfunctions in embryo biology? What are our obligations to understand and regulate the massive technological advances that can help change embryo biology? We will use our knowledge from the fall to explore the ethically complex underbelly of developmental biology.

HABITAT EXPLORATIONS

Common Area Designation(s): Arts

Germany's Greening (fall):

Germany's 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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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; calm, cerulean waters; 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 tropicity 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 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 works of literature—ranging from speculative fiction to science journalism—attempt 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.

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 in History (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

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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 significant historical events 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. *We will incorporate direct experience and Community Based Learning into our inquiries as conditions allow.*

FINDING AND MAKING THE SELF

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science

Self as Story (fall):

What is the self? Is the self singular or multiple, constant or changeable? How is our sense of self related to the stories we tell about ourselves? Drawing on readings from psychology, literature, and history as well as selected autobiographies and memoirs, this course will explore the process by which individuals create and tell the stories of their lives. Topics include the nature of autobiographical memory, the place of language and culture in shaping the self, the difference between life as lived and life as told, the challenge of differentiating the factual and the fictional, and the role of life stories in the creation of personal identity.

Stories of Self (spring):

What does it mean to tell our own story? What does it mean to have someone else tell our story - or for us to attempt to tell the story of another? In this class we’ll read examples of all those sorts of narrative and try to understand how they succeed and where they fall short. We’ll investigate what happens to the self on the page - how through the act of storytelling it can become simplified or complicated, glorified, reduced or revealed. But this will primarily be a writing course, in which students will explore the craft of writing by practicing different forms and styles, each one a way to illuminate, perhaps, a different aspect of self.

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?

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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, including Worcester, as well as in more broadly conceived communities such as in academia and U.S. politics.

IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, AND TRAUMA

Common Area Designation: Literature or Cross-Cultural Studies

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*; Hala Alyan, *Salt Houses*; and excerpts from Jonathan Shay's *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*. These texts will lead us to larger investigations of how to locate personal agency in the face of structural and institutional oppression.

Memories, Stories, Histories (spring):

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

MAPPING THE SELF

Common Area Designation: Literature, Cross-Cultural Studies

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? How do gender, race, sexuality, geography and ethnicity play into your identity? We will study how notions of self are created by looking at examples in translation from the Spanish-speaking world. How are notions of self expressed through art, literature, film, music and popular culture? Students will trace their parallel introspective odyssey by designing an ArcGIS story map of their personal story.

Mapping the Self Outward (spring):

Drawing from literary works from the Spanish speaking world (in translation) 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) impact how you construct and reveal your identity? How do these same media impact issues of gender and race? What face do you choose to show the world? How many faces do you have? To whom do you show your "true" self? We will continue your ArcGIS story maps as you bring your story out to the world.

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

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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 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.

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. *We will incorporate direct experience and Community Based Learning into our inquiries as conditions allow.*