FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS

Overview and Contact Information
The First-Year Seminar Program welcomes students to Mount Holyoke College, inviting them to join in the pleasure of an intellectually adventurous education in the liberal arts. In these small, discussion-based seminars, students work with faculty to achieve the first Learning Goal of the Mount Holyoke curriculum, which will form the foundation for their education here: the ability to think analytically and critically by questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, and articulating well-reasoned arguments. All First-Year Seminars are writing-intensive.

All entering first-year students must complete a First-Year Seminar in their first semester at Mount Holyoke. Transfer students and Frances Perkins Scholars who enter with sophomore or junior standing are exempt from this requirement, although encouraged to take a First-Year Seminar.

First-year seminars do not meet other graduation requirements and must be approved courses at Mount Holyoke.

All first-year seminars share the same FYSEM subject designation, but they are taught by faculty from departments across the College.

Contact Information
Jennifer Jacoby, Director of the First-Year Seminar Program
https://offices.mtholyoke.edu/academicdeans/firstyear/seminars

Learning Goals
• Students will develop their ability to think analytically and critically by questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, and articulating well-reasoned arguments.
• Students will develop their writing skills. All first-year seminar courses are "writing-intensive." This designation means that the process of writing in English is a significant focus of the course. There are frequent opportunities for writing (usually at least 15 pages over the course of the semester in at least four assignments or stages of a larger project). Students have opportunities to draft, receive comments, and revise writing, as well as opportunities to reflect on their writing process and progress. Finally, students meet individually with their professor or SAW mentor — ideally both — for further discussion of their development as writers.

Course Offerings
FYSEM-110 First-Year Seminar

FYSEM-110AM Art and Words
Fall. Credits: 4
True, a picture is worth a thousand words, but how do we know which words to use exactly? In this seminar, we will focus on the work of language in relation to the visual arts, and learn to distinguish between different kinds of writing, including art history, art criticism, poetry and fiction. We will visit the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum and the Skinner Museum, and develop provocative ideas about original works of art. We will practice critical thinking and writing on our own, and work collaboratively on various projects. We will find a deeper relationship between words and the arts by expanding our definition of writing to include speaking thoughtfully, listening actively, and cultivating leadership skills by striking idea-driven discussions on the arts.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
A. Sinha
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110BD Rooted Movements: Black Dance Culture
Fall. Credits: 4
In this course, we will look at movement as a dance form and as political activism. This will be a literary, media-based, and technical exploration of the history and influence of Black Dance culture. This class will concentrate on understanding the roots, influences, and Africanist presence in American dance culture. Students will be required to think critically and analytically while articulating their thoughts about the material orally and in writing. The classroom experience will seek to understand and appreciate the historical, political, cultural, and social contexts that influenced the creation of Black Dance culture.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive
S. Barron
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110CB Cinema and the Brain
Fall. Credits: 4
Cinema is a form of art that uniquely captures and portrays the human mind. In this course we will explore how mental experience is encoded in the brain, using film as our object of study. Students will, through movies, analyze major topics in psychology and neuroscience such as memory, mental time travel, addiction, and empathy. Course readings and class discussion will further offer students the opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills in order to better understand the multiple layers of cognitive processes and behaviors depicted in movies.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive
M. Sabariego
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.
FYSEM-110CE College
Fall. Credits: 4
In this course, we will study college from a variety of perspectives. What is a college? What is the history of college? Why do individuals go to college? What are the economic and social returns to attending college? What is the financial model of a college? What are revenues and costs? How does a college determine what price to charge (tuition, aid: need based and merit)? How does college admissions work (early decision, affirmative action, SAT scores, and need blind admissions)? Who is admitted and why? How is a college run? What does the administration do? What determines the curriculum and majors? What are the challenges facing colleges?
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
M. Robinson
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110CP What’s to Be Done About Capitalism?
Fall. Credits: 4
From the writings of Adam Smith in the 18th century to present-day arguments by Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the benefits and costs of capitalism in human society have been hotly debated. Do the benefits of capitalism outweigh the costs? Is it possible or desirable to "tame" markets to maintain their good elements while minimizing the harm? How has a debate dominated by Europeans and North Americans considered or overlooked perspectives from the rest of the world? In exploring these questions, we will engage with some of the key thinkers on capitalism from Adam Smith and Karl Marx through major thinkers in both the developed and developing world to the present day.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
C. Mitchell
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110CU Introduction to Latin American Cultures
Fall. Credits: 4
Examines the confrontation, assimilation, and transformation of Indigenous, African, and European cultures in Latin America from the sixteenth century to the present. Focuses on the processes in which distinctive self-images emerged in the region and how these images have been challenged and changed over time. Uses films, literature, and folk traditions to complement scholarly analysis of the emergence of a New World mentality.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive
A. Pitetta
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110CZ C.S. Lewis
Fall. Credits: 4
A professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at both Cambridge and Oxford, C.S. Lewis was one of the most famous public intellectuals in the 20th century. He is best known for his children's books (The Chronicles of Narnia) and his Christian apologetics (Mere Christianity), but he also wrote widely, examining things like literary criticism (An Experiment in Criticism), the existence of a universal moral code (The Abolition of Man), the nature of physical laws (Miracles), and the types of love (The Four Loves). This seminar features a lot of reading, exploring how these works, other essays, and Lewis' autobiography (Surprised By Joy) become a means of thinking through questions of perennial interest.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
J. Hartley
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

Fall. Credits: 4
Advances in computing allow entities in business and government to gather and analyze data in increasingly large quantities. We will try to understand what data science is, why it matters, and what knowledge is needed by consumers and practitioners of data science. We will look at case studies drawn from science, industry, and government and use these to discuss the societal impacts and ethical issues that should be on the minds of data scientists.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
J. Sidman
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110EL Politics of the Self
Fall. Credits: 4
In an era where Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are ubiquitous, self-presentation is a constant concern and practice. What are the politics of self-presentation and -cultivation, if any? Do the choices we make about diet, how to dress, where to shop, and our friends have any political valence? To what extent can these choices be thought of as a form of resistance to popular culture in an era where rebellion is marketed to us? This course will probe these questions by considering the connections among self, appearances, discipline, and the way these are dependent upon the recognition of others. Readings will include the Stoics, American transcendentalists, Rousseau, Nietzsche, and Foucault.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
A. Aslam
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110EQ Disaster Science: Earthquakes, Floods, and Volcanoes
Fall. Credits: 4
This course explores the sometimes catastrophic intersection of geology with people’s lives. Earthquakes, volcanoes, and floods are geologic events; they are also natural hazards that pose significant challenges to communities in high risk areas. Where are these risky areas? Why? Is it possible to predict when and where catastrophic geologic events will occur? How do we assess geological risks? Using case studies from around the world, we explore these three natural hazards in the context of evolving geologic research on plate tectonics and climate change.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive
M. Markley
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.
FYSEM-110FE The Science of Food and Cooking  
**Fall. Credits: 4**  
This course is rooted in hands-on exploration (including a lab experience) of the science of food and cooking. After being introduced to the key chemical and biochemical molecules that comprise food, we will discover how to manipulate these molecules during cooking. The topics that we will discuss include taste, baking, fermentation, whips, and foams. Related cultural and historical approaches to food and cooking will be discussed throughout the course. Readings will complement our hands-on explorations and lab work. Be prepared to taste/eat food and work in small groups throughout the semester and to experiment in the kitchen!  
*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*  
K. McMenimen  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*

FYSEM-110FJ Celebrated Science: Fluorescent Jellyfish, River Blindness, and CRISPR  
**Fall. Credits: 4**  
What do the Nobel Prizes have to do with everyday life? Are Nobel Laureates extraordinary scientists, or singled out from others equally worthy? During the semester you will read autobiographies, essays, short fiction, and scientific papers, and try many styles of writing. When the 2022 Nobel Prizes are announced in October, we will study press coverage to analyze how scientific discoveries are reported. You will each become an expert on a Nobel laureate, placing scientific achievements in historical context. Our semester will end at the time of the awards ceremonies in Stockholm with our own celebratory banquet.  
*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*  
R. Fink  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*

FYSEM-110GF God, Free Will, and Morality  
**Fall. Credits: 4**  
This first year seminar is a critical thinking boot camp. Students will learn to charitably interpret, logically reconstruct, and critically evaluate arguments. The arguments come from classic and contemporary readings in philosophy about God, free will, and morality. We will focus on questions such as: Does God exist? Is it rational to believe in God? What should I do if I want to do the right thing? When is it ok to criticize other cultures? How much do I owe to others? Do we have free will? Can we ever be held responsible for anything? Students will come out of the class better thinkers, better writers, and better equipped to tackle difficult questions like these with rigor and care.  
*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*  
K. Vavova  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*

FYSEM-110HD Childhood  
**Fall. Credits: 4**  
Did you really learn everything you needed to know in kindergarten? In this course we will explore how children's development, with a focus on early childhood (ages 0-8), is shaped by the family, school, community, cultural, and policy contexts in which they participate and live. We will read research conducted by psychologists, sociologists, and education researchers, as well as investigate representations of childhood in popular media and literature.  
*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*  
J. Jacoby  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*

FYSEM-110HT Herstory: Writing Your History  
**Fall. Credits: 4**  
This course invites students to think about their place in this historic institution. Given Mount Holyoke’s unique place as a learning space for women, students will have the opportunity to explore the institution’s history. Students will also reflect on how they are a part of the institution’s history and the multiple histories they live through and create as individuals who are part of a broader community.  
*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*  
A. Mandal  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*

FYSEM-110HY Hybrid Identities: Latin America, Latinx Communities, and Spain  
**Fall and Spring. Credits: 4**  
With a historical and transnational approach, this course will explore bi/multicultural identities and communities in the Spanish-speaking world, primarily of the 20th and 21st centuries. Mestizos, Cuban-Americans, Chinese-Argentinians, Afro-Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Moroccans and West Africans in Spanish cities... Is Catalonia Spain? Through literary, visual, and theoretical texts, we will put a wide range of ethnic and linguistic encounters in dialogue with one another and examine how hybrid communities and identities, particularly in an era of global homogenization, reclaim rights and space, are represented, aspired to, separated, and often slip away when we try to define them.  
*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*  
M. Saltzman  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*

FYSEM-110LG Slang: Community/Power/Language  
**Fall. Credits: 4**  
Language is a living system. It grows and changes, despite efforts to preserve it. This course examines how slang participates in these changes. What separates slang from standard language, and who sets the standard? Through readings in linguistics and literature, this course examines how we use language to connect, create, and control.  
*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*  
M. Shea  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*

FYSEM-110MG Myth, Magic, and Vibration: Exploring the Human Bond to the Natural World  
**Fall. Credits: 4**  
Humans could simply view nature as a repository of material resources for our use. Many would argue that this is the primary perspective of modern society. And yet mythology, history, and science show that there is a much deeper connection to the natural world – one that provides spiritual and psychological sustenance as well as multiple forms of physical support. In this first-year seminar, we will explore the human bond to nature through readings from a wide variety of sources and disciplines, and also through short field trips out into the local landscape.  
*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*  
T. Farnham  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*
FYSEM-110MK Race in the Marketplace
Fall. Credits: 4
This course looks at the central concerns of consumer culture through the lens of race and ethnicity. Through exploring issues such as multicultural marketing and advertising, discrimination in e-commerce, consumer boycotts, and urban food deserts, students will gain theoretical and empirical insight on the ways that racial and ethnic boundaries shape, and are shaped by, consumption.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
P. Banks
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110ML U.S. Multiethnic Literatures: Refracting America
Fall. Credits: 4
This course examines African American, Asian American, Chicana/o-Latina/o, and Native American literature and cultural politics. Examining the historical intersection of race, gender, and sexuality, we will explore themes of cultural identity, segregation and community formation, citizenship, labor, class, and family. Authors may include Toni Morrison, Danzy Senna, Josefin S algo, Sherman Alexie, Junot Diaz, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Joy Kogawa.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
I. Day
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110PK Pharmocracy: Humans, Animals, Power and Knowledge in the Pharmaceutical Era
Fall. Credits: 4
Since the 1950s, the pharmaceutical industry, one of the world’s largest economic sectors and a core constituent of globalized corporate power today, has built a transnational empire that affects not only health and food chains, science, politics, stock markets, and the private/public distinction, but has completely changed what it means to be human or animal. We will study several key examples of these transformations, and how pharma produces knowledge on the backs of impoverished humans and animals as trial subjects. This course will also help students develop their composition skills which, through content and form, can decompose the structures that sustain corporate power.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
C. Gundermann
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110PQ Politics of Inequality: Social Movements in the U.S.
Fall. Credits: 4
The course explores comparative racial and ethnic politics in the U.S. during the twentieth century. We will analyze the creation and maintenance of structural inequalities through laws and policies targeted at persons of color in the areas of healthcare, transportation, immigration, labor, racial segregation, and education. Through readings, lectures and films, we will discuss critical histories of community struggle against social inequality, registering the central impact that race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship have had on efforts toward social justice.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
D. Hernández
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110PT Politics and Truth
Fall. Credits: 4
What is the relationship between truth and politics? Does democracy require truth or pervert it? Can truth thrive in any type of government? What’s really at stake here? In this course, we will explore a variety of classic texts, ranging from such authors as Plato to Karl Marx to Hannah Arendt to Martin Luther King, Jr. to contemporary feminist theorists. We will focus on developing the ability to reflect on your own beliefs, analyze authors’ arguments, and to articulate and defend your own perspective.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
R. Darow
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.
Advisory: for students in their first two semesters at the College only

FYSEM-110RJ Explorations in Restorative and Transformative Justice
Fall. Credits: 4
This course is a first year seminar on the principles and practices of restorative justice. Restorative justice is a movement that seeks to reimagine justice by building on indigenous theories and practices of human community. Students examine principal restorative justice models and programs for how they understand and respond to harm, especially as they reflect the accountability of key stakeholders (victims, offenders, communities and justice systems). Restorative justice approaches are contrasted with conventional western ways of addressing harm, be they small or large ruptures in the social fabric. The ideas of key activists and theorists in restorative justice circles are critically engaged in institutional settings ranging from schools to prisons.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive
L. Wilson
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110RM Confronting Power and Authority in Ancient Rome
Spring. Credits: 4
Romans hated kings, and when they founded their Republic they did so on principles of shared governance and popular sovereignty in order to prevent the rise of monarchy. Yet in times of crisis Romans tolerated and even promoted leaders with absolute power. How did this ideal of popular sovereignty square with the need for dictators? What happened when populism confronted authoritarianism? How did Romans represent power and authority—in literature, ceremony, architecture, and art? This course will consider these and other related questions through the careers of Julius Caesar and Augustus, who oversaw the transformation of Roman political culture from Republic to monarchy.
Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
G. Sumi
Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.
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<td>P. Scotto&lt;br&gt;Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.</td>
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FYSEM-110TS The Work of Translation  
*Fall. Credits: 4*  
Mount Holyoke's mission is "purposeful engagement in the world" but in a multilingual world, our goal can only be achieved with the help of translators and interpreters. As the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts a 46% increase in translation work 2012-2022, this course will consider translation as a scholarly, professional and lay activity. Challenging stereotypes of translation as derivative or faulty, we reflect on the wealth of languages and cultures at Mount Holyoke College and how the curriculum depends on the work of translation. Students discuss what is gained, lost or simply transformed in translation. This introduction to translation studies is especially valuable to students with a background or interest in languages.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*  
*C. Shread*  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*

FYSEM-110UA Adolescence in the U.S. Today  
*Fall. Credits: 4*  
What does it mean to be an adolescent? Popular culture has a lot to say about this life stage, not all of it rooted in evidence. In this course, we will examine the range of adolescent experiences in the United States and critically question common assumptions. We will consider how social context and relationships influence youth as they navigate school, college and career expectations, extracurricular activities, and social media. Our interdisciplinary approach will draw on readings from psychology, sociology, history, education as well as media resources.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*  
*K. O’Carroll*  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*

FYSEM-110VT Jack the Ripper and the Making of Late-Victorian London  
*Fall. Credits: 4*  
In the summer and fall of 1888, a series of gruesome murders captured the attention of Londoners and brought questions of class, gender, race and social-economic change to the forefront of public debate. Though the culprit was never identified, Jack the Ripper became synonymous with the perceived dangers of late-Victorian London. Using newspapers, periodicals, police archives, and other sources from the period, this course will set students on an historical investigation of the "Whitechapel Murders," seeking to understand the event, its historical context, and the way historians have interpreted its meaning.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive*  
*D. Fitz-Gibbon*  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*

FYSEM-110WR The West and the Rest: Muslims in Post-9/11 Europe and the U.S.  
*Fall. Credits: 4*  
This course traces the administrative and popular categorizations of Muslim populations in Europe and the United States following the events of September 11, 2001. The course examines the mechanisms through which Muslims are designated as a coherent, timeless category associated with backwardness, violence, and an urgent threat. By the end of the semester, the students will gain a critical, comparative perspective to identify and analyze some common mechanisms such as racialization, securitization, and gendering, as well as practices of border-making and border-crossing that travel across time and space to define certain groups as "dangerous others."

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement*  
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*  
*E. Babül*  
*Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.*