

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

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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-110AE The African American Essay

Fall. Credits: 4

In this first-year seminar, students will be introduced to and acquainted with the essay form as it has been endeavored by African American writers throughout the 19th and 20th century. This course emphasizes the essay as a written genre that is meditative, argumentative, and inquisitive; it is a form that open-endedly captures a course of thought, often times raising more questions than proffering secure answers to its inquiries. In this sense, the essay is characterized by the French etymological origins of the term which means "to try" or "to attempt." With these interpretative groundings, we will explore how Black writers have ventured thought, critique, performance, disorder and more through the rhetorical format of the essay.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

K. Maye

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110AG The Lives and Afterlives of Antigone

Fall. Credits: 4

Antigone's confrontation with the power of the state and her political dissent have made her one of the central global literary figures for political struggle. Reading plays, novels, and poems from Ancient Greece to 20th century Germany, Ireland, and South Africa and 21st Century Britain, Pakistan, and the United States, we will explore the question of a person's conflicted relationship with the demands of state law, family bonds, individual conscience, and collective justice and think about the role of literary representation as a form of historical witness. Writers include Sophocles, Bertolt Brecht, Kamila Shamsie, and Judith Butler.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

N. Alderman

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

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-110AS Art and Society*Fall. Credits: 4*

This course explores the interconnections between art and society using a sociological lens. We will examine topics such as the social construction of cultural authenticity; the relationship between cultural capital and group boundaries; and the legitimation of art forms.

*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-110BD Rooted Movements: Dance and Politics***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

In this course, we will look at dance as a form of political activism, focusing particularly on Black Dance culture. This will be a literary, media-based, and technical exploration, offering students the opportunity to think analytically and critically as they hone both their writing and discussion skills. Our goal is to understand and appreciate the historical, political, cultural, and social contexts that influenced the creation of Black Dance culture and how the Africanist presence has shaped American dance culture. We will learn and explore dance movement together in the studio, but no previous experience needed!

*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-110BT Talking Robots***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Have you ever wondered why Siri or Alexa doesn't understand things you say? Or wondered if actual robots can understand language as well as the ones we see in movies? In this seminar we will learn about social robots and what it takes for robots to converse with humans. We will read research conducted by computer scientists, linguists, and psychologists, as well as investigate representations of social robots in popular media and literature.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive**H. Pon-Barry**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110CB Cinema and the Brain***Not Scheduled for This Year. 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-110CL Representative Works of Modern Chinese Literature***Fall. Credits: 4*

The twentieth century started with the downfall of the Chinese monarchy, numerous humiliations at the hands of Western countries, and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911. In the spirit of reform and renaissance, a group of young writers, educated in both China and the West, spearheaded a new direction in Chinese literature. This group of writers abandoned the classical Chinese language, was keenly interested in social development and betterment, attacked Confucian tradition, and adopted Western ideals. The class will read representative works of these writers and try to understand their sociopolitical impact, while appreciating the artistic qualities of these writings.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive**Y. Wang**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

Not Scheduled for This Year. 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-110CW Goodbye, Conventional Wisdom

Fall. Credits: 4

One of the hallmarks of a liberal arts education is to draw on a broad base of knowledge in order to interrogate common assumptions. No one exemplifies this critical approach better than French philosopher Michel Foucault. One of the most influential thinkers of recent times, Foucault revolutionized several academic disciplines and even questioned the very notion of a discipline itself. He did so by revealing the history and transformations of ideas now viewed as self-evident. This first-year seminar invites students to develop similar analytical skills. Following Foucault's lead, the course pays special attention to preconceptions about government, freedom, identity, and sexuality.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive

J. Crumbaugh

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110DF Designing the Future

Fall. Credits: 4

For as long as there have been people, people have been thinking about the future. But who gets to decide what the future looks like? And what do our visions of the future reflect about ourselves? In this class, we'll use books, movies, and Mount Holyoke's own Archives to explore what people of the past and present imagined the future would be. We'll also engage in the practice of "futuring" to imagine possible, probable, preferable, and preposterous technological futures of our own and take a trip to the Fimbel Maker & Innovation Lab to get familiar with some current technologies we can use to build tomorrow.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

A. Burns

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110DV Adventures in Music

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

Designed for students with or without prior musical experience, 'Adventures in Music' explores the materials of music. Through reading, hands-on interaction with instruments and their players, discussions and recordings, students will explore concepts of pitch, time, space, structure and timbre, thereby enriching their perception of the world of sound. The best way to access the indescribable in music is often to make music. With this in mind the class will embark in mini composition projects culminating in a final project that utilizes the knowledge acquired over the duration of the course.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

T. Ng

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110EC The Economics of Happiness

Fall. Credits: 4

In this course, we will delve into the application of economic principles to our daily experiences, aiming to understand the factors influencing human happiness. Questions such as "What constitutes happiness?" and "How do we make choices that lead to happiness?" are central to our exploration. We will analyze consumer behavior, including preferences, store selection, and the influence of various factors on consumption decisions. Additionally, we will examine the economic implications of consumerism on trade and the environment. Moreover, we consider the role of ethics and empathy in both individual consumer decisions and policymaking endeavors.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

K. Lande

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 plate tectonics, climate change, and community preparedness and recovery.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

M. Markley

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110FE The Science of Food and Cooking*Not Scheduled for This Year. 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-110GA Gods and Monsters: Science and Scientists in the Modern World***Fall. Credits: 4*

Since its origins as a recognizable genre in the early 19th century, scientists have been central figures in horror literature. In these stories where they inspire anxiety, fear, and occasionally hope, scientific knowledge-makers, their practices, and their ability to manipulate the natural world are often placed in opposition to more traditional ways of being. This seminar examines significant episodes in the history of science over the last two hundred years – from the emergence of evolutionary theory in the 19th century through the quantum mechanical and biochemical revolutions of the 20th – alongside the enduring cultural responses they have inspired in horror literature and film.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive**W. Cotter**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110GF God, Free Will and Morality***Fall and Spring. 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-110GN South Asian Pasts Through Graphic Novels***Fall. Credits: 4*

If news debates, Facebook posts, and WhatsApp forwards now form arenas for contesting historical claims – once mainly a preserve of academic histories – what might supposedly low-brow media such as comics or graphic novels tell us about how history is produced and consumed? This first-year-seminar shall introduce students to key topics in South Asian history through a selection of comics, graphic novels, and primary sources. We shall read comics and graphic novels as narrative histories and speculative accounts of the lives of ordinary people and their experience of world historical events. In placing them alongside primary sources, the course shall encourage students to ask historical questions.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive**A. Medhi**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110HD Childhood***Spring. 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-110HP Happiness and the Good Life***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course introduces the skills needed to navigate college, with a focus on philosophical writing, analysis and argument. Our topic is happiness and 'the good life.' Happiness is something we all want but often struggle to define. We will look at what philosophers have said about the nature and importance of happiness in our lives, as well as recent positive psychology literature on what makes us happy and why. While we draw from multiple disciplines the emphasis of the class is on philosophical analysis and argument. Students will learn to integrate campus resources, such as LITS and the SAW Center, into their coursework, as they hone skills in clear, rigorously argued, analytic writing.

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

FYSEM-110HY Hybrid Identities: Latin America, Latinx Communities, and Spain

Not Scheduled for This Year. 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-Argentiniens, 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-110JE Liars and Pranksters on the Italian Stage

Fall. Credits: 4

Can serious artists play cruel jokes? Who laughs at Dante? This course explores the role of lies and practical jokes in Italian theater and the way the concept of humor has changed over time. We will investigate the intimate connection among power, religion, and laughter by reading some of the funniest (and politically charged) works of Italian theater. Our authors will take us through the streets of Renaissance Florence, eighteenth-century Venetian canals, as well as the improvised factory theaters of the 1970s. Readings include Dante, Machiavelli, Goldoni, Puccini, Fo, De Filippo.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

O. Frau

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110JT AI and Social Justice

Fall. Credits: 4

Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems are ubiquitous, ranging from digital personal assistants to healthcare management. While the benefits of AI are touted widely, how does AI negatively impact society? How do AI systems mirror and strengthen biases already embedded in the data used to train them and in our social structures? Via what mechanisms might AI stigmatize and further marginalize vulnerable populations? In this course we will gain an understanding of how AI systems work, explore the societal dimensions of technology, learn to evaluate, assess, and question its impact on society, and consider how AI can be used as a tool to achieve equity and increase social justice.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

L. Ballesteros

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110LG Slang: Community/Power/Language

Not Scheduled for This Year. 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-110LV The Lives of Animals

Fall. Credits: 4

Are crows self-aware? How do bees vote during collective decision-making? Do dolphins know each other's names? We will engage our collective curiosity as we explore animal cognition and social behaviors. Using peer-reviewed scientific literature as the foundation for our investigations, we will draw inspiration from videos, blogs, and observations of local wild and domestic animals to develop individual and collective projects based on our interests. In this first-year seminar, we will practice library research skills, draft and revise work based on feedback, and learn strategies for respectful peer engagement while creating a course website about animals.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

R. Brodie

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

Not Scheduled for This Year. 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

Not Scheduled for This Year. 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, Josefina López, Sherman Alexie, Junot Díaz, 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-110MT Measuring Merit: Who Belongs in College and Why?*Fall. Credits: 4*

Selective colleges like Mount Holyoke are prestigious, in part, because they admit less than half of the students who apply; but what specific traits make one worthy of admissions? Grades and test scores matter, as do field hockey prowess, the ability to play classical flute, participation in a Model UN summer camp, and struggles to overcome poverty or hardship. This class considers the origins and consequences of our understanding of worthiness in the context of college admissions. We will use the case of college admissions to address important questions about how social phenomena are quantified and compared, and how cultures of measurement represent power and shape inequality.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive**B. Gebre-Medhin**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110MX Living in A Material World***Fall. Credits: 4*

In a world full of designed objects made from a wide range of materials. What makes fabric stretchy? Why does gluten change the texture of food? What are the pros and cons of plastic? What is neodymium, how do we get it out of the ground, and why is it in your phone? Some naturally occurring materials require only a little work by humans to make a useful item, while engineered materials may involve complicated processes. We will examine the role of different materials in society, considering economic and ethical questions as we learn about scientific breakthroughs that enabled new products. Hands-on activities will help us better understand the topics.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive**K. Aidala**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110MZ Music and Childhood***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Unlike many other categories of identity, childhood is both universal and temporary. That simultaneous omnipresence and transience makes it easy to overlook the role played by children in the history of music. This course surveys significant instances of children as creators, performers, consumers, and subjects of music: from Mozart to Michael Jackson, playgrounds to orphanages, street musicians and choristers to the prodigies of TikTok. We will trace the enlisting of children, childhood, and the childlike across a range of musical traditions and pedagogical, aesthetic, commercial, and cultural-political agendas. Students will also contextualize their own memories of childhood musicking.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive**A. Mueller**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110NN The Nonhuman***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course will examine representations of figures not considered human, focusing on the nonhuman animal, with attention to the monster and the machine. We will analyze the literary and visual techniques with which these figures are depicted, the social and political concerns they address, and the tenuous boundary between human and nonhuman. Authors and filmmakers may include Cronenberg, Fowler, Hitchcock, Hurston, Kafka, London, Martel, Poe, Reichardt, Sewell, Spiegelman, Wells, and Woolf.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive**E. Young**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110NP Opera and Social Justice***Fall. Credits: 4*

This course investigates the intersection of opera and social justice in the context of American society over the past two decades. We will examine operatic works produced since the early 2000s via lectures, discussions, readings, and multimedia presentations, exploring how composers, librettists, directors, and performers have engaged with and responded to various social justice movements such as those related to civil rights, gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, environmental justice, immigration, and indigenous rights. We will explore the historical, cultural, and political contexts that have shaped these operas as well as their reception by and impact on contemporary audiences, considering the ethical responsibilities of artists, the power of opera as a tool for social change, and the evolving role of opera within contemporary culture. During the course, students will also have behind-the-scenes access to collaborative efforts currently underway to stage two upcoming operatic productions.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive**T. Ng**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110NQ Nature Is Queer***Fall. Credits: 4*

Queerness is all over the natural world. This class will highlight the diversity of sexual strategies in nature, and help dispel the notion that biology describes sex as binary or only heterosexual. In reality, biologists are well aware of the queerness of nature, but have struggled with how to study this sexual diversity and have often settled for convenient categories. Four billion years of evolution have produced myriads of sexual and reproductive strategies in diverse organisms: from the widespread occurrence of homosexual sex, to sex change, multiplicity of mating types, male pregnancy, selfing, etc; Nature has done it all! Class discussion will require an open mind, and developing comfort around conversations related to sex, reproduction, and the sometimes disturbing history of science. Students will be expected to write several assignments for the general public. One such assignment requires students dive deeply into the queerness of one organism of their choosing to produce a printed catalog page for public display.

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

FYSEM-110PE Performing the Self*Fall. Credits: 4*

How do we represent ourselves as we document our lives and communicate with others? In this seminar we will move beyond critiques of selfie culture, instead analyzing self-representation as an important avenue for forming identities. We will study forms of self-representation across history and will focus on visual and new media as platforms for performing selfhood. Students will discuss the politics and aesthetics of self-fashioning across these media forms, and will execute multiple forms of self-expression, including the argumentative essay, the op-ed, the blog post, and the tweet.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive**H. Goodwin**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110PP Pop Science: Science and Culture***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Pop science is the term for science communication that distills scientific discoveries for a general audience. Some of these scientific ideas can have striking cultural influence. For example, the "butterfly effect" as an explanation of the mathematical definition of chaos led to a cultural change from belief in a predictable universe to one where small changes can have big effects. Through a range of books, news articles, and social media from the 1980s until today, we will examine the cultural influences of scientific advances in popular understanding. In addition, we will consider critiques of pop science, including concerns about its accuracy and the effects of racism and sexism on science communication.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive**A. Hoyer-Leitzel**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-110PS Self-Portraiture***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

How do we represent ourselves? How can the self – that is to say, subjective experience, private life, identity, consciousness – be translated into written form? How, in turn, does writing fashion and construct the self? Throughout history, authors and thinkers have engaged these questions in countless texts and textual forms – in essays, confessions, autobiographies, and poetry. This seminar will sample influential and innovative works of literary self-portrayal from around the world, exploring how a wide variety of writers have rendered themselves in language, narrative, and text. Authors may include Augustine, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Joyce, Nabokov, and Plath.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive**S. Roychoudhury**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110PT Politics and Truth***Not Scheduled for This Year. 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. Darrow**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.**Advisory: for students in their first two semesters at the College only***FYSEM-110PY Anthropology of Play***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

We associate play with childhood, a time of spontaneous and creative activity, in contrast to the boring routine of adult responsibilities. And yet play is more than just fun and games. It is through play that children develop lasting cognitive and social skills. For adults too, there can be serious play—play that has real consequence—play that shapes the intimate lives of individuals, as well as entire social formations. In this course, we will explore play cross culturally, from the Balinese cockfight to American football, from gambling to role playing. We will design games based on the anthropological readings in order to appreciate the game-like qualities of many domains of life.

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

FYSEM-110PZ Interweaving Themes in Physics and Art*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Physics and art represent the world in seemingly different ways. They share, however, many common themes: the guiding role of symmetry, the tension between order and disorder, and the emergence of structure from many simple constituents. We will explore some of the big ideas in physics, including quantum mechanics, relativity, entropy, and chaos theory, by looking at how these underlying themes are represented in the visual arts. Islamic tessellations, Japanese Suminagashi paper marbling, and works by contemporary artists will guide us toward an intuitive understanding of some of the most exciting ideas in physics, without the need for any prior physics background.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive**S. Smith**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110QC Queer Church***Fall. Credits: 4*

Surveying contemporary LGBTQIA+ participation in mainline American Protestant denominations, this first-year seminar will consider recent congregational histories and emergent queer Christian theology that, together, form some public-square debate. Examining these phenomena in a multicultural variety of American Christian cultures, the course will privilege queer Christian voices through interactive primary sources: oral histories, site visits, and guest speakers. While homophobic and transphobic discourse in North America often has religious origins, this first-year seminar sheds light on the open and affirming ecclesial work of Christian activists.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive**M. Coleman-Tobias**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110QT Feminist and Queer Theory: A Critical Look at Identity***Spring. Credits: 4*

Identity, and the idea that progressive politics are centered around it, are at the root of the feminist and gay/lesbian movements from the 1970s onward. The queer turn in the 1990s multiplied relevant identities, but didn't question why identity politics had transformed the left, replacing the left's traditional focus on fighting against material exploitation with a concentration on countering cultural oppression. Various critics of identity politics, including queer-of-color critique, have pointed out this problematic shift. In this course, we will study theory, history, fiction, and films that show this enormous cultural transformation.

*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-110RE Religion and Climate Change***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Religion and climate change might seem to be an odd combination. After all, we tend to imagine religion as the domain of faith, emotion, and the otherworldly and the climate as the realm of science, objective knowledge, and the here and now. Nevertheless, this course investigates their sometimes surprising connections. For example, how do religious communities work to promote or oppose political action on climate change? How do religious conceptions about God's relationship with nature or with humanity impact adherents' views on climate change? How might the futures predicted by climate models and those prophesied in sacred texts affect people's actions today?

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive**W. Girard**Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.***FYSEM-110RJ Explorations in Restorative and Transformative Justice***Not Scheduled for This Year. 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-110RT Reproductive Rights and the State***Fall. Credits: 4*

What is the role of governments in regulating human reproduction? How has this changed throughout the 20th and 21st century? Is reproduction an area of our private lives that should be left outside the realm of government? Or is the state actually needed to safeguard our reproductive rights? This course analyzes the history of reproductive policies in the US and compares it with cases from the global South. From family planning to population control, from woman's right to reproductive justice, we will analyze the evolution of language to name this policy arena and the way this has affected policy design. Through the use of a variety of primary and secondary sources, this course will help students improve their critical thinking, argumentative writing, and analytical skills.

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

FYSEM-110RV Embodied Archives: Movement as a Way of Knowing

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

This course explores the premise of our bodies as archives, through which movement can become a means of knowing, learning, and deepening connections across varied disciplines and modes of thought. The course asserts that the body can be a critical site of knowledge production and discovery, shaping the ways in which we engage in creative and scholarly work. We will study theoretical concepts prevalent in dance research, and analyze those ideas at work in both the choreography of contemporary artists and our own creative bibliographies. In order to contextualize and challenge our thinking, guest speakers are woven into the course, providing varied perspectives on dance, movement and the notion of archive. The course is designed for anyone interested in embodied and creative practice. Dance experience may be useful, but is not required.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

B. Diewald

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110RY Sex, Drugs, and Psychopaths

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

The prevalence of misinformation and disinformation has weakened the public's trust in science. This course will challenge media's coverage of three major topics – sex, drugs, and psychopaths – against the latest findings from neuroscience research. Through readings, podcasts, movies, and class discussions, students will challenge common misconceptions about our brains, by examining the science behind infidelity, gender identity, addiction, mental health, and murder.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

J. Schwartzer

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110SD Performing the Self: Shakespeare and Identity

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

Best known as one of the literary canon's pillars, Shakespeare has also provided multiple templates for artists and storytellers who wish to challenge traditional concepts of literature, theatre, and history. Our class will explore four of Shakespeare's plays through the lens of identity, both those forms extant in Shakespeare's own time and those articulated in various contemporary adaptations, both stage and screen. In particular, we will focus on BIPOC, postcolonial, and LGBTQ adaptations.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

A. Rodgers

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110SV Sustainable Development and Its Discontents

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

Sustainable development has been the leading paradigm linking economic growth, poverty reduction, and environmental sustainability for decades. Yet, global inequality metrics are scarcely improving, and environmental issues like climate change and biodiversity loss are reaching extreme levels. This course examines the concept of sustainable development and various attempts to put it into practice around the world, as well as the limitations and contradictions of predominant approaches to sustainability and economic development. We will then explore alternatives to mainstream development advanced by global social movements, including food sovereignty, degrowth, and climate justice.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

K. Surprise

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110SX Sexuality and Society

Fall. Credits: 4

What is the impact of what is included and excluded in formal sex education programs? What does it mean to maintain good sexual health? How does sexual identity relate to behavior and attraction? As a class, we will explore sexuality at an individual, interpersonal, community, and societal level. Primary topics will include sex education, sexual identity, health, consent, relationships, and media portrayals of sexuality.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

C. Flanders

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110TC Why Are We Divided: Inequality, Politics, and Populism

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

This course explores the intersection of inequality and politics in the United States. We begin the course with an examination of racial, gender, and class inequalities in the U.S. The next section of the class considers the ways in which these inequalities both reflect and influence political divisions in the U.S. today. We end the course with an analysis of populism. While focusing primarily on the Trump campaign and presidency, we will also examine populist movements throughout the globe.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

K. Tucker

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

FYSEM-110TG Transgressive Music

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

The seminar will introduce and discuss various musical works and genres that fall under rock critic Ann Powers' definitions of 'Violator Art,' exploring them within the context of their wanton and disturbing appeal, as well as their often scandalous social impact. Topics will include the Second Viennese School, free jazz, protest music, punk rock, hip-hop, works such as J. S. Bach's 'Cantata No. 179,' Strauss's 'Salome,' Stravinsky's 'Le Sacre du printemps,' Billie Holiday's 'Strange Fruit,' George Crumb's 'Black Angels,' and artists such as Laurie Anderson, the Sex Pistols, Missy Elliot, and Nirvana.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

D. Sanford

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.

Notes: Students should be prepared for mature themes and some coarse language.

FYSEM-110TS Translating Language Diversity*Fall. Credits: 4*

Linguistic diversity is too often silenced in debates about equity and inclusion. In our seminar we'll consider the languages of each student, remembering that language is a plastic identity that can be learned. We'll identify the translations in our scholarly, professional and personal lives and ask how does Mount Holyoke's mission of "purposeful engagement in the world" depend upon translation both on campus and globally? We'll also explore the role of translation in the communication revolution of A.I. tools given digital disparities and language privilege. Our goal is to define language justice and to develop linguistic self-reflexivity through individual translation projects

*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-110UF The Agency of Things: Reflections on Stuff and Material Culture***Fall. Credits: 4*

What is a thing? What is stuff? Water bottles, trash, smartphones, photos, dirt, a broken printer, your favorite socks... Where do they come from and where are they going? In this course we'll gain an understanding of the political, historical, philosophical, ecological, and affective agency of objects and non-human things. We will study how artists, writers, collectors, environmentalists, and migrants engage with the stuff around us. Our study will be enlightened by several excursions to see collections of non-human things, such as the MHC Skinner Museum and the Botanic Gardens. Students will also have a chance to decipher the meaning and global trajectories of their own stuff, in addition to making things in Mount Holyoke's Fimbel Maker & Innovation Lab.

*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-110VE The Inevitable Element: Why Carbon Is At The Root of Our Climate Change Crisis***Fall. Credits: 4*

Have you ever wondered why we are so concerned with our carbon footprint? Why don't we worry about our oxygen footprint? Or silicon? What makes carbon so special? This first-year seminar will delve into the reasons that carbon, and uniquely carbon, is central to climate change. We will discuss the properties of carbon and why those properties have resulted in a fossil fuel-based economy. We will cover nucleosynthesis of elements, the formation of earth and the solar system, the origin of life and information flow in living organisms, how time and heat resulted in reserves of energy-rich petroleum buried in the earth, why these fossil fuels have made a convenient foundation for our modern economy, and the resulting impact carbon emissions have on the atmosphere. Finally, we will discuss how carbon capture can be used to mitigate the impact of climate change.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive**A. van Giessen**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-110WK Women and Work in the Global Economy***Fall. Credits: 4*

The reorganization of production across national borders has transformed labor markets around the world, with profound effects on workers' lives. What role have social constructions of gender played in shaping employment outcomes in different countries? What has been the impact of these employment dynamics on gender relations? This course will engage with these questions by examining the impact of labor market transformations on women's work in the global economy. Students will learn to engage critically with multiple perspectives and to formulate and articulate their own arguments in writing.

*Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement**Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive**L. Pickbourn-Smith**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.

Not Scheduled for This Year. 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.

FYSEM-110YP Cryptology: How Governments, Institutions and People Protect Their Secrets

Fall. Credits: 4

Cryptology is the study of secret communication between different groups of people. From ancient Egypt when secret hieroglyphs were used to communicate to today when credit card numbers are encrypted to be transmitted over the internet, cryptology has been a necessary part of human life. In this class we will read and write about some of the famous examples of cryptosystems. We study the mathematics needed for these systems and how these concepts connect to what you studied in high school. Why is division complicated and how can we use raising numbers to high powers and division to encrypt messages? In particular, we will use worksheets and Jupyter notebooks to work with examples of these systems.

Applies to requirement(s): Meets No Distribution Requirement

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

M. Robinson

Restrictions: Mount Holyoke first-year students only, by placement.