

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR 102

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Spring Semester, 2012

102 – First Year Seminar "*Border Crossings: Migrations in Latin American History*"

Section 1	2:30-3:20	MWF	Stephens	4
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Over the past two hundred years, migration and immigration shaped the course of history in nearly all countries in Latin America. Spurred by economic downturns, political turmoil, or family ties, people have been on the move both to and from Latin America. This course examines the history of immigration and migration in Latin America from the end of the Independence movements in the 1820s to the present day. By examining both primary and secondary materials, the history of Latin America will emerge through the travels of its peoples. Students will be expected to think critically and analytically through writing assignments, group discussions, and a final research project.

102 – First Year Seminar "*The Titanic*"

Section 2	1:30-2:50	TR	Threlkeld	4
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How do we know what we know about the past? How much of our understanding of history is based on movies, magazines, and popular culture, and how much is based on scholarly research? What are the differences between those two ways of understanding? This course will explore these questions by studying the sinking of the *R.M.S. Titanic* and its legacies throughout the twentieth century. Using newspapers, government records, memoirs, and other materials, we will investigate first how the sinking was reported and understood in 1912. Then we will turn our attention to how the disaster has been represented at various moments since it happened, paying particular attention to the themes of class, gender, technology, and "progress," and to the processes of history and historical memory. The *Titanic* has been an object of fascination for almost one hundred years; our challenge in this course will be to analyze how that fascination has changed over time, and to examine how the ship has become such a strong cultural symbol.

102 – First Year Seminar "*Gender, Sexuality, Cinema*"

Section 3	9:30-10:20	MWF	Schlotterbeck	4
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This course will explore the portrayal and cultivation of identity and desire in the movies. By studying films such as the body-building documentary *Pumping Iron*, the anti-war film *Dogfight*, and the 1950s melodrama *All That Heaven Allows* we will study expressions and constructions of masculine and feminine identities in contemporary society. Both popular and marginal filmmaking will be understood as cultural spheres in which performances of gender and sexuality are enacted. Central topics include new queer cinema, the melodrama, theories of gendered spectatorship, the status of female directors in the industry, normative masculinity, and the analysis of film form.

102 – First Year Seminar "*Math & Theory of Games*"

Section 4	1:30-2:20	MWF	Lall	4
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We will study the mathematical theory of games and their impact on society. The course will cover three broad topics. First, we will study probability theory and counting in order to better understand how games of chance work. Second, we will delve into the math of Game Theory, a discipline at the intersection of mathematics, computer science, and economics. Finally, we will look into how games can have a profound impact on our lives and the world we live in.

102 – First Year Seminar "*Musical Politics of Brazil*"

Section 5	1:30-2:50	TR	Rogers	4
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Through the 20th century, music has been at the center of political life of Brazil. The populist revolution of the early part of the century was spread by samba, a popular dance music created by and representing the underprivileged and underrepresented majority of Brazilian culture that had long had no say in traditional colonial government. In the middle of the century, a new softer style emerged. Publically outlawed, bossa nova, or new beat, was named more for the aspirations of its followers than the laid-back rhythms it purveyed and was secretly presented in small cafes and coffee shops around the country. Finally, in the later part of the century, tropicalia, would come to represent a dramatic shift in Brazilian aestheticism that would include not only music but all arts, and in turn, dramatically shift the political landscape. This course will investigate these three major musical forms and the political environments they helped to both change and create.

102 – First Year Seminar "*Philosophy of Human Nature*"

Section 6	1:30-2:20	MWF	McHugh	4
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We are human beings. But what does that mean? Does it mean that we are radically different from other things in nature? If so, how are we different? Are our faculties radically unique? Are we made of a special kind of stuff? Do we have a special origin? Our status as human beings might also imply that we should aspire to live a certain way and/or that our sheer existence has a special kind of meaning that we should be sure to fulfill. If so, what is the source of this conception of a good and/or meaningful human life? What would such a life look like? Which components of our complicated and often conflicted selves should be in charge and which should be subservient? Furthermore, how do and should we relate to other human beings? What about animals? And what if our humanity does not automatically spell out a special kind of life for us? What do we do then? Are we hopelessly lost? Does anything go?

In this class, we will explore several classic attempts to grapple with these and related questions. Readings will include selections from Plato, Mencius, Aristotle, Descartes, Hobbes, Hume, De Waal, Singer, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Frankl.

102 – First Year Seminar "*Renewable Energy/Sustainability*"

Section 7	1:30-2:20 2:30-4:20	MWF W	Walter	4
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Energy and sustainability are becoming increasingly important issues in our society. After a survey of conventional energy sources, we'll study a variety of renewable energy options, such as solar power, wind power, and biomass. We'll learn how each of these energy sources work and evaluate their potential benefits and challenges. Further topics will include advances in transportation (including hybrid and plug-in electric cars) and home energy efficiency. Activities will include hands-on experiments in lab, field trips to a coal-burning electric plant and Denison's Homestead, and assessments of energy usage in volunteer's houses. A major goal of the course is to provide you with the skills to make good choices concerning energy and the environment, both now and in the future. There will be some quantitative problem-solving, but only at the level of high school math, and there are no prerequisites other than an inquiring mind.

102 – First Year Seminar "*Religions in America*"

Section 8 10:00-11:20 TR Moore 4

Religion in America has always been vital and diverse. Why? What forms has this religious vitality taken? What is specifically American about religions in the United States? What happens when the obligations of citizenship clash with the diverse claims of religious belief? We'll explore these questions through a range of materials, from Puritan sermons and slave poetry to Mormon scripture and contemporary film. As we gain a working knowledge of American religious traditions, we'll keep our eyes on such important issues as revivalism, race, immigration, gender, and religious freedom.

102 – First Year Seminar "*In Search of the 'Real' Japan*"

Section 9 8:30-9:50 TR Davis 4

Japan often conjures images steeped in tradition such as samurai warriors, sumo wrestlers, and geisha clad in kimono. At the same time, contemporary Japan is just as easily associated with businessmen, anime, automobiles, and high technology. How have "tradition" and "change" fueled competing visions of what it means to be "Japanese?" How does one go about reconciling these conflicting views? How have these debates evolved over time? How have variously situated individuals and groups in society negotiated shifting circumstances? These questions will be at the heart of this course as we consider case studies from different segments of Japanese society including Japanese rap artists, day laborers, international couples, and the experiences of those from marginalized groups such as women, Burakumin, Ainu, Zainichi Koreans, and Okinawans. A range of material will be treated as "texts" for analysis and discussion including anime, manga, literary works, and films as well as published scholarship on Japanese society. In addition to providing students with a dynamic understanding of contemporary Japan, this course will devote considerable attention to considering some the challenges that accompany coming to terms with the complexity of human societies in general and Japanese society in particular. Course evaluation will be based on class discussion, multiple writing assignments, an in-class presentation, a midterm exam, and a final project.

102 – First Year Seminar "*Leadership Excellence*"

Section 10 1:30-2:50 TR Whisner 4

Students in this course will learn about leadership, defined by Denison's SAO, crafted by the Higher Education Research Institute. This course introduces students to theories of leadership and practices of effective leaders. The course examines various world leaders and their impact on social issues regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or religion. The course provides "opportunities for growth and development in their (the students) intellectual, physical and social lives." In addition students will strengthen their reading and critical thinking skills as well as enhance their writing skills as they engage in class discussion and assignments. Using case studies, debates, guest speakers, designated readings and community-based learning components, students will study the benefits of effective leadership.

102 – First Year Seminar "*Communities of Hate: Genocide in the Twentieth Century*"

Section 11 10:00-11:20 TR Revesz 4

This writing-intensive course takes as its point of departure the question regarding the uniqueness of the Nazi Holocaust, which is often evoked in premonitory terms of "never again." Yet genocide - the systematic destruction of an entire people - continues to plague humanity. The "ethnic cleansing" of Muslims in Bosnia and the massacre of Tutsi in Rwanda are two recent examples of genocidal mass murder, and the near annihilation of Native Americans on our own soil arguably falls into this category as well. While the latter event took place in the 19th century, we shall also take a look at this instance of "ethnic cleansing," as well as the first genocide of the 21st century, namely the mass rapes and killings of black Sudanese in Darfur. At the center of our inquiry will be the question of the extent to which U.S. intervention and involvement have been able to halt genocide. Our primary text will be Samantha Power's 2003 Pulitzer Prize-winning study, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, along with Hannah Arendt's detailed commentary on the trial of the Nazi henchman Adolf Eichman in her *Report on the Banality of Evil*, Dee Brown's Native American history, *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee*, and John Fagan's excellent account of the Darfur crisis. Films will include *Schindler's List*, *Killing Fields*, *Hotel Rwanda*, and excerpts from Lanzmann's *Shoah*.

102 – First Year Seminar "*Communities of Hate: Genocide in the Twentieth Century*"

Section 12 1:30-2:50 TR Revesz 4

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102 – First Year Seminar "*The Short Story*"

Section 13 11:30-12:20 MWF Barickman 4

This course will study the range and innovation of the short story and trace its continuous development through many literary periods: Romantic, Gothic, Modernist, Magical Realist and Postmodernist. In its small compass, the short story encompasses the literary techniques and cultural significance for us to be sharper readers and develop a more sophisticated grasp of language. American writers from the 19th century include Poe, Hawthorne, Melville and Gilman. From the 20th, Hemingway, Faulkner, Ellison, Woolf, Lawrence, O'Connor and O'Brien. Among international writer we will select Chekhov, Borges and Marquez.

102 – First Year Seminar "American Humor"

Section 14 3:30-4:20 MWF Barickman 4

"Every joke is a tiny revolution," wrote George Orwell. To explain why, we will study the genres and techniques of two centuries of American humor, from Mark Twain to Kurt Vonnegut. We will analyze the range of humorous archetypes (the trickster, bumpkin, fool) and the comic devices (satire, parody, absurdity) that express the writer's approach, whether it produces mere whimsy or passionate criticism. The course will also cover the theories of humor so as to trace its deep-seated sources and appreciate its subversive power to unsettle the status quo.

102 – First Year Seminar "Women in Islam"

Section 15 8:30-10:20 MW Diamanka 4

This course will introduce students to the complexities of Muslim women's lives and experiences from a multidisciplinary perspective. A variety of issues will be explored as we look into the historical, social, political and economic conditions that affect the roles, status and rights of women in Muslim societies. Topics will include women's rights in Islam, veiling, seclusion, violence, health, etc. The course will draw on examples and case studies from many Muslim countries around the world including Morocco, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Egypt, Malaysia, Mali, Sudan and Somalia (to name just a few) to get insights on the experiences of Muslim women.

102 – First Year Seminar "Hunger Management"

Section 16 10:30-11:20 MWF Hunstiger 4

When ordering food in a restaurant, pushing a button on a vending machine or choosing where to buy your groceries, do you think about where those food or drink products came from? Does that or should that influence what you eat? Do our food and drink choices really matter?

This course will examine how we view and manage food in America. We will start with an overview of the evolution of food from pre-historic times until the present. Then we will follow the footsteps of a meal, from seeds to the table, addressing issues such as farming, trading, processing, retailing and consumption. And finally, we will take a look at the food industry and the role it plays regarding health issues, obesity and disease.

102 – First Year Seminar "20th Century Jewish Literature"

Section 17 8:30-9:20 MWF Newmark-Klein 4

The initial impulses of first generation American Jews to assimilate created a kind of anxiety of "fitting in" seen in Philip Roth's, Portnoy's Complaint and Woody Allen's "Annie Hall." American Jewish writers sought to sooth uneasiness and defuse difference with humor and self depreciation. At the same time the post Holocaust decades created an intellectual and creative Diaspora and the facts on the ground demanded an immediate need to define evil. In this course we will seek to identify in fiction, memoir and poetry Jewish narrative. We will be reminded of the Shtetel by I.B. Singer, the Cossacks by Isaac Babel. Through Philip Levine's poetry we will look at issues of class and the spirit of place in urban America. We will investigate the short fiction of Nathan Englander and Leonard Michaels to see how the preoccupations of Jewish culture chaff against the larger more dominant culture and finally we will read Nicole Krauss novel, Great House to see how the voices have evolved in the new millennium.

102 – First Year Seminar "*Philosophy of Human Nature*"

Section 18 2:30-3:20 MWF McHugh, J. 4

We are human beings. But what does that mean? Does it mean that we are radically different from other things in nature? If so, how are we different? Are our faculties radically unique? Are we made of a special kind of stuff? Do we have a special origin? Our status as human beings might also imply that we should aspire to live a certain way and/or that our sheer existence has a special kind of meaning that we should be sure to fulfill. If so, what is the source of this conception of a good and/or meaningful human life? What would such a life look like? Which components of our complicated and often conflicted selves should be in charge and which should be subservient? Furthermore, how do and should we relate to other human beings? What about animals? And what if our humanity does not automatically spell out a special kind of life for us? What do we do then? Are we hopelessly lost? Does anything go?

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102 – First Year Seminar "*War, Peace and Human Nature*"

Section 19 3:00-4:20 TR Klemetti 4

Are we essentially an aggressive and violent ape with only a veneer of civilization? Or are humans natural cooperators, and civilization only serves to force peaceful people into violent situations? To gain insight into the roots of human nature, we will explore the behaviors of our evolutionary cousins, bonobos and chimpanzees, and cultural histories of violence and cooperation in multiple cultures, including our own. Ultimately, we will attempt to better understand what makes people fight and how peace might be achieved.

102 – First Year Seminar "*Gender, Sexuality, Cinema*"

Section 20 9:30-10:20 MWF Schlotterbeck 4

This course will explore the portrayal and cultivation of identity and desire in the movies. By studying films such as the body-building documentary *Pumping Iron*, the anti-war film *Dogfight*, and the 1950s melodrama *All That Heaven Allows* we will study expressions and constructions of masculine and feminine identities in contemporary society. Both popular and marginal filmmaking will be understood as cultural spheres in which performances of gender and sexuality are enacted. Central topics include new queer cinema, the melodrama, theories of gendered spectatorship, the status of female directors in the industry, normative masculinity, and the analysis of film form.