

Anatomy of a Few Small Machines
Gene Clough FYS 084
One can treat the products of technology as “black boxes”—plain in purpose but mysterious in function. A more flexible and exciting life is available to those who look on all such devices as mere extensions of their hands and minds—who believe they could design, build, modify, and repair anything they put their hands on. This course helps students do this primarily through practice. Only common sense is required, but participants must be willing to attack any aspect of science and technology. Field trips are required.

Experimental Music
William Matthews FYS 127
Whether in classical, jazz, popular, or category-defying music styles, experimentalists challenge inherited definitions and social conventions of music by favoring expanded sound sources, unconventional formal structures, and radical performance practices. This seminar examines the roots, history, and musical documents of American experimental music from Benjamin Franklin to Frank Zappa.

Hamlet
Martin Andrucki FYS 150
This course undertakes an intensive study of Shakespeare’s play, with particular emphasis on the various ways it has been interpreted through performance. Students read the play closely, view several filmed versions, and investigate historical productions in order to arrive at a sense of Hamlet’s changing identity and enduring importance.

Power and Perception: Cinematic Portraits of Africa
Elizabeth Eames FYS 172
Most Americans have “seen” Africa only through non-African eyes, coming to “know” about African society through such characters as Tarzan and such genres as the “jungle melodrama” or the “nature show.” In this seminar, films from the North Atlantic are juxtaposed with ethnographic and art films made by Africans in order to examine how to “read” these cinematic texts. Related novels and ethnographic texts help to answer central questions about the politics of representation: What are the differences in how African societies are depicted and why are different issues and points of view privileged?

Sex and Sexualities
Erica Rand FYS 177
This course studies the representation of sex and sexualities, both “queer” and “straight,” in a variety of cultural products ranging from advertising and novels to music videos and movies. Topics may include connections between sex and gender queerness suggested by the increasingly common acronym LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer); the advantages and inadequacies of using such labels; definitions and debates concerning pornography, sex education, public sex, and stigmatized sexual practices such as sadomasochism; the interrelations between constructions of sexuality and those of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, and class; and the necessities and complexities of ensuring consent.

The Changing Climate of Planet Earth
Michael Retelle FYS 190
The climate of planet earth is constantly changing over vast spatial and temporal scales, from short-term and local to long-term and global. The geological records for the mid-latitudes of North America, for instance, illustrate periods alternately dominated by tropical reefs, lush coal forests, glaciers, and expansive arid deserts. This seminar investigates the evidence, possible causes, and impacts of climate change through studies

of climate records ranging from glacial stratigraphy, tree rings, written historical accounts, and recent instrumental data. A special focus is directed toward understanding the possible effects of a human-induced global warming and its potential environmental, societal, and political impacts.

U. S. Relocation Camps in World War II
Atsuko Hirai FYS 234
During World War II, the United States government interned more than 110,000 American citizens of Japanese descent and resident Japanese in “relocation camps” far away from their homes. This course studies the history of Asian immigration to the United States; the political, social, and economic conditions of the United States prior to internment; the relocation camps themselves; and the politics of redress leading to the presidential apology over the wartime “mistake” a half-century later.

Epidemics: Past, Present, and Future
Paula Schlax FYS 236
The course covers principles of epidemiology, mechanisms of disease transmission, and the effects of diseases on society throughout history. The emergence of new diseases, drug resistance, and biological terrorism are discussed. Social effects of bubonic plague, typhoid, tuberculosis, smallpox, yellow fever, Ebola, Marburg, AIDS, hantaviruses, and Legionnaires’ Disease are studied.

Fakers, Forgers, Looters, Thieves
Rebecca Corrie FYS 266
Beyond the public face of museums lies the complex world of collecting: the art market, art law, and their sinister underside, art crime. In the last decade, as victims of the Holocaust have sought to recover collections looted by the Nazis, these issues have become more visible, but in fact they are myriad and confront every curator, dealer, collector, and art historian. This course explores a wide range of topics in their legal and ethical contexts from the work of famous forgers such as Joni and Van Meegeren to the looting of Asia and Africa by colonial powers, the clandestine excavation and illegal trading of antiquities around the world, and the pillaging of museums by Russian, German, and American soldiers during World War II.

Into the Woods: Rewriting Walden
Gwen Lexow FYS 271
On 4 July 1845, Henry David Thoreau declared his independence and moved to a shack in the woods near Walden Pond. Ever since, many individuals have repeated his experiment in one form or another. This course examines a number of these Thoreauvian experiments and their historical context. Why do these individuals take to the woods? What do they find there? What do their experiences say about American culture and society? In seeking answers to these questions, students read a variety of literary, historical, and autobiographical texts.

Physics in the 20th Century
Hong Lin FYS 274
An introduction to great twentieth-century discoveries in physics, including the wave-particle duality of light and matter, quantum effects, special relativity, nuclear physics, and elementary particles. Laboratory experiments such as the photoelectric effect and electron diffraction are incorporated into the seminar. This seminar can substitute for Physics 108 and is designed for students who had a strong background in high school physics.

The Fantastic in Modern Japan
Sarah Strong FYS 277
From the surreal novels of Murakami Haruki to the utopian and dystopian visions of Miyazaki Hayao’s animated films, contemporary Japan offers the international world a rich array of cultural products centering on the fantastic. Western response tends to see the futuristic visions of these novels and films as expressive of Japan’s level of comfort with the post-industrial world of high technology, but is that impression accurate? What is the genre of the fantastic? How is it used by writers and filmmakers in Japan today? What questions do they raise about self, society, and the environment? What answers do they offer? This course examines the nature of the fantastic as an artistic genre and its expression in a variety of recent Japanese films and stories.

Hell’s Fire
Denis Sweet FYS 278
The idea of hell and damnation plays a crucial role throughout much of Western culture. It provides a dark shadow of religious belief and evocative imagery to continually evolving concepts of divine justice, sin and its commensurate punishment, and the end of time. This seminar undertakes an archeology of knowledge regarding the history and practice of hell and damnation. Students investigate philosophical and religious writings, great works of literature such as Dante’s *Inferno* and Goethe’s *Faust*, and view representations of hell in the arts and film. The seminar concludes by posing the question: Do hell and damnation, now secularized and this-worldly, continue to live on in the modern period, as in Auschwitz and the Gulag?

Luck and the Moral Life
Susan Stark FYS 288
Our lives are deeply subject to luck. Many human needs are subject to fate yet are necessary not only to a good life, but to a morally virtuous life as well. This course explores the relationship between luck and morality, beginning with the metaphysical problem of free will. Then, turning to Aristotle’s virtue ethics, students examine the role friendship plays in the moral life and the way it protects us from bad luck. Finally, they look at Kant’s attempt to make morality “safe” from luck alongside Euripides’ *Hecuba*, which dramatically highlights the issue of whether virtue can ever be immune from misfortune.

The Life of the Buddha
John Strong FYS 289
The Buddha Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Sakyamuni, is famed as the founder of the Buddhist religion. Though he lived in Northern India about 2,500 years ago, most of what we know about him consists of legends that were developed by Buddhists over the centuries. The course examines these legends, with an eye on the factors that led to their evolution, and the ways in which changing conceptions of the Buddha reflect developments in Buddhist thought. At the same time, it serves as a basic introduction to the fundamental teachings and practices of Buddhism.

Exploring Education Through Narratives
Patricia Buck FYS 300
In this seminar, stories, once the primary way knowledge passed from one generation to another, are the basis for examining educational topics and issues. Students read fictional, biographical, autobiographical, and other narratives to learn more about some aspects of education and/or schooling. Topics include teachers and teaching; teacher/student roles; gender identity; students’ experiences in school; and how race, class,

ethnicity, sexuality, or other differences may cause some to feel like outsiders. Students conduct field work and independent research.

Corporal Culture: Body and Health in America
Kathryn Low FYS 305
This seminar addresses a variety of topics related to body and health, from body image to body dysmorphia. Students read both primary sources (largely research) and first-person accounts related to eating disorders, diet and nutrition, body image, drug and alcohol use, smoking, sexuality, cosmetic pharmacy, fashion, definitions of physical and psychological “health,” sex and gender, exercise, and organ transplantation. The seminar involves weekly writing assignments, occasional in-class assessments, student presentations, and a final writing project.

Reading and Writing Lyric Poetry
Lavina Shankar FYS 323
This course introduces students to lyric poetry written, for the most part, in the last century and in varied cultural settings from the “canonical” classics to the contemporary and transnational. Poets include a range from T. S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens to Rabindranath Tagore and W. B. Yeats, and from Meena Alexander and Audre Lorde to Joy Harjo and Cathy Song. The focus is on “close reading” with some attention to the poets’ varied historical and sociocultural contexts. Students also have opportunities to attend poetry writing workshops and experiment with writing their own poems.

Planetarium Production
Eric Wollman FYS 340
Since 1963, the College’s Ladd Planetarium has been a resource for school and civic groups in the Lewiston-Auburn area. In this seminar, students conceive, write, and produce planetarium shows for public presentation and educational outreach. Students might choose to develop shows on topics such as constellation myths of different cultures, an interesting astronomical object or class of objects (comets, the Orion Nebula, supergiant stars, or supernova explosions), important historical developments in astronomy (for example, ancient Greek cosmology, Galileo’s amazing first nights with the newly invented telescope, or Edwin Hubble’s discovery of the expansion of the universe), or the development of and scientific results from a major contemporary ground-based or space-based astronomical observatory. Previous experience with astronomy is helpful but not required.

King Arthur: Myth and Legend
Sylvia Federico FYS 341
The story of King Arthur of Britain and his Knights of the Round Table is one of Western civilization’s most enduring legends. This course explores those elements of the Arthur story that make it so universally compelling and the ways in which its details have been adapted according to the needs and desires of its changing audience. Topics considered include feudal loyalty and kinship, women and marriage, monsters and magic, the culture of violence and warfare, and the stylistic and narrative features of the legendary mode. While students read these legends critically, they also explore their popularity: How and why has the myth of Arthur proven so universally appealing?

Literature Through Cataclysm
William Hiss FYS 348
What happens to the literature of conservative societies which undergo cataclysmic change? Within thirty years in

the early to mid-twentieth century, three countries ruled by a czar or emperor were propelled by cataclysms—the Russian Revolution, WWII in Japan, and five serial wars in Vietnam—into radically new political and social orders, and also new literary and cinematic expression. This course studies literature, non-fiction and film on both sides of the cataclysms, with guest lecturers from each country. Students choose a fourth country or culture for individual exploration. The course also includes a Service Learning component with our Somali neighbors in Lewiston-Auburn, who have survived a parallel cataclysm.

Writing on the Wall
Ellen Anderson FYS 368

The Berlin Wall fell in 1989, signaling the end of the forty-year cold war. However, the Wall still retains a powerful hold over the American imagination as a prime historical artifact of political and personal division. What did it actually entail to slice an existing country in half? How did people living in both East and West come to rely on the Wall to define who they were? What physical or symbolic walls do we erect in modern identity politics, and how are our worldviews shaped by existing political and geographic boundaries? In order to probe these complex ramifications, students analyze political speeches, espionage thrillers, love stories, films, Wall graffiti, interviews, news reports, and monuments and memorials. They also use the Virtual Wall, an online expansion to the course.

Saving Capitalism from the Capitalists
George Perkins FYS 369

The sub-prime mortgage crisis, the Enron scandal: What hath capitalism wrought? Our everyday economic interactions are within the framework of capitalism. Undergraduate study in economics typically takes this social system as given while rarely shining critical light on it. Apologists tout capitalism's attendant political freedom and wealth accumulation; detractors complain about its resulting materialism and injustice in the distribution of wealth. Economists, social philosophers, and theologians have critically examined capitalism. Students in this course read and discuss works by some of these authors and prepare their own papers arising from their study of capitalism.

Revolutionary Russia
Dennis Browne FYS 371

The Russian Revolution is widely considered a pivotal event of the 20th century. Scholars have studied it from many perspectives: political, economic, social, and cultural. They have sought its terminal points decades before and decades after the events of 1917. Some speak of multiple Russian revolutions in the 20th century, and one school of thought holds that Russian culture is inherently fertile ground for dynamic sociopolitical changes. We examine several theories of revolution, and apply them to three periods of 20th century Russian history: the 1917 Revolution, Collectivization under Stalin, and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Sensory Curiosities: The Biology of Non-Human Sensory Systems

Nancy Kleckner FYS 372
Humans are aware of the handful of senses we utilize to evaluate our world, but are less familiar with some of the more “exotic” senses found in non-human animals. This seminar explores these sensory curiosities which allow animals to navigate, sometimes at night, during migration and food gathering and to select mates and identify other members of their own species. Through readings and videos, students examine the senses of bats, dolphins, insects, birds and fish to better understand the wealth of sensory information around us, whether or not we are capable of utilizing these stimuli ourselves. Writing assignments

explore topics more deeply and integrate information across sensory systems.

Mathematics and Social Justice
Bonnie Shulman FYS 373

Mathematics teachers are often asked “what’s this stuff good for?” Studying the mathematics underlying social justice issues can be a powerful motivation for the learning of mathematics. Similarly, students adept in mathematics can apply their learning to understand social justice issues such as racial profiling, poverty, immigration, militarization, unemployment, and incarceration. We critically examine the growing movement to link mathematics education with social justice issues, reading works by both proponents and critics. We also directly experience the rewards and challenges of integrating issues of social and economic justice into the mathematics curriculum, by collaboratively designing our own lesson plans. No mathematics beyond high school algebra required.

Before 1776: Thinking Backward
John Cole FYS 374

Historians look backward in their efforts to understand any given event, even the most celebrated “beginnings.” In this seminar, students look backward from July 4, 1776 and Thomas Jefferson’s Declaration to understand how his “truths” could have seemed “self-evident,” his “facts,” demonstrative. The search begins in the previous month with Jefferson’s own draft constitution and George Mason’s draft Declaration of Rights for Virginia. The year 1776 had begun with Thomas Paine’s Common Sense, and that pamphlet, in turn, had a past, in the polemics that went back to the Stamp Act crisis and before, all of which challenges us to look backward and think backward.

Several Sides of the Cold War
James Richter FYS 375

This course examines the diplomatic history of the Cold War with sources from the United States, the former Soviet Bloc and East Asia. Particular topics may include: the origins of the Cold War in Europe and Asia; the Korean and Vietnam Wars; the crises in Berlin, the Taiwan Straits and Cuba; and the reasons for the Cold War’s end in 1989. Students are expected to write short pieces analyzing primary resources and write a research paper on a topic of their own choosing.

Toxicology in Public Health
Rebecca Sommer FYS 377

Who determines the acceptable amount of a pollutant in our drinking water? Are we certain that the acceptable amount is a safe amount? How do certain pharmaceutical drugs or pollutants cause harm? How much public funds should be spent trying to answer these questions? Finally, what pieces of data or evidence are used to make policy or decide court cases? This seminar strives to answer these and similar questions as it introduces the field of toxicology in public health. Learning to write well and give an effective oral presentation are integral parts of the course as health professionals must be able to communicate with the public, political leaders, and each other.

The Hoax: Seeking Truth in Disruptive Imagination
Robert Strong FYS 378

Writers and artists create certain fictions to attract an audience; is a well-made hoax the consummate fiction, or is it vile deceit? This class explores controversial intersections of creativity, deception, and intellectual scholarship. In analyzing a variety of “successful” hoaxes and performances; literary, cinematic, and artistic; students judge what productive work, and what damage, these fictions create. Our investigations consider how shifting uses of identity, authorship, and credibility challenge

our own skills as writers and researchers. In addition to discussion and writing, students in this class create their own “false documents” with text, images, and objects.

Photographic Narratives
Terri Nickel FYS 379

The invention of photographic technology in the middle of the 19th-century transformed modes of perception and social life in significant ways. The photograph became an object both magical and mundane, unprecedented and absorbed into daily life. In order to trace the impact of this emergent technology, this course explores various intersections between photography and written literature of the time. At times, the approach to the subject will be thematic, exploring the representation of photographs and photographers in novels and short fiction. In other instances, we will analyze early photographs as objects of textual and technical study. The course will pay close attention to the social and cultural functions of photography and assess its impact on literary realism.

Clinical Ethics
Frank Chessa FYS 380

This course examines the ethical issues clinicians face in the care of patients and the decision-making processes they use to arrive at answers. Decision making in clinical contexts can be complex and difficult. People from different cultural and professional subgroups must quickly assimilate complicated information to arrive at decisions with serious and typically irreversible consequences. Clinicians must communicate with patients and families on intensely personal topics such as death, God and family relationships. The course focuses on clinical decision-making (in contrast, for example, to issues of public policy) and uses case analysis as its primary mode of instruction.

Visualizing Identities
Aimee Bessire FYS 381

This course examines definitions of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and culture in diverse visual materials. During the semester the class thinks critically about the ways that we articulate and interpret self and other. Each week the seminar encourages students to analyze examples of visual culture as a means to evaluate constructions, experiences and interpretations of identities. Themes explored during the semester include: gender; feminisms; masculinities; race and ethnicity; globalism; and cultural identity.

The Power of Art.
William Seeley. FYS 382

Artworks capture our attention, engage our emotions, cause us to empathize with characters, and challenge us to reflect on provocative ideas. The power of art to affect us in these ways is pervasive. However, it is also puzzling. Why are we moved by the plights of fictional characters, frightened by fictional events, or engaged in controversial debates by dabs of paint, series of tones, and choreographed movements? This seminar explores philosophical theories of the nature of art and related issues in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science with an eye to understanding the power of art to express ideas and emotions.

For a complete list of First-Year Seminars, please check the on-line college catalog the week before registration begins in July. The link is on the Hot List Menu on the Bates College Home page.

BATES COLLEGE

First-Year Seminars

2009 - 2010



First-Year Seminars combine a class size of fifteen or fewer, a focus on writing and critical thinking, and academic advising. All first-year seminars in 2009-2010 fulfill the first-year writing requirement [W1]. Your instructor, who you will get to know well through the seminar, is also your academic advisor. You will also meet a small group of other first-year students with interests similar to your own. Seminars cover a wide range of topics, but all teach the skills students need to be successful at Bates. The faculty recommends that all first-year students take a seminar.

