

# FIRST YEAR SEMINAR

# EXPLORER



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Your First-Year Seminar (FYS) course is more than just a class—it’s an opportunity to dive into big ideas, sharpen your writing skills, and connect with a community of curious thinkers. Each seminar is unique, but they all challenge you to ask deep questions and engage with the world in new ways.

To help you find a FYS that excites you, we’ve assembled this booklet. This booklet contains the following information on the following pages:

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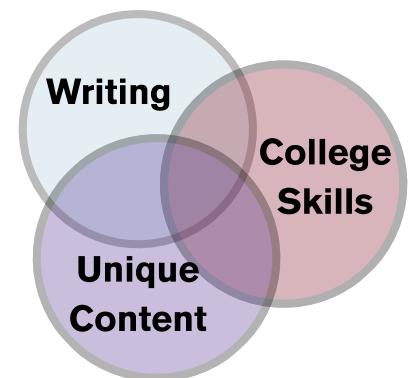
\*Note: These courses are reserved for Bates Students in the STEM Scholars program

# THE FIRST YEAR SEMINAR

## What is the First Year Seminar at Bates?

Every first year student takes a First Year Seminar (FYS), which also fulfills the W1 writing requirement. These small, discussion-based courses are designed just for first year students. Although each FYS course is a little different (they explore varied topics and themes), all FYS courses develop your writing, research, critical thinking, and “doing college” skills. An FYS course counts for credit toward graduation and also fulfills part of the General Education curriculum.

***FYS courses are not gateways to specific majors, so you don't need to take a FYS course based on your intended field of study —just choose topics and themes that interest you!***



## What is this “First Year Seminar Explorer” Booklet?

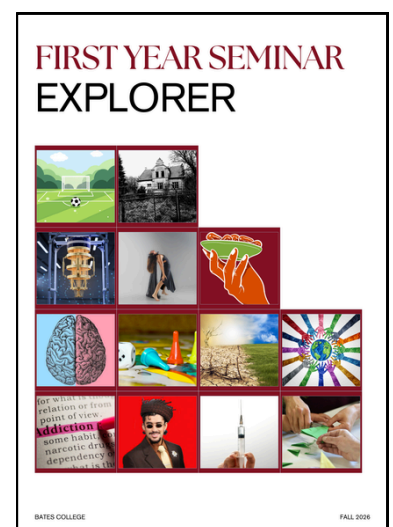
This booklet orients you to both the First Year Seminar and the Bates General Education Requirement (p. 4). It also includes short descriptions of each FYS course offered this fall and available for you to enroll in. Note: Descriptions are paraphrased. If you want full course descriptions, you can find them in the [Bates Course Catalog](#).

Choosing your FYS is about more than just selecting a course title; it's about identifying a community of inquiry. We have grouped FYS courses into thematic clusters to help you find a peer group that shares your curiosities. Whether you are passionate about storytelling, the environment, or technology, these clusters allow you to explore a specific lens alongside engaged classmates.

Each cluster has a given a full page in this booklet. This page describes the cluster's theme and contains information about each course, including its title, an abbreviated description, meeting days and times, and course tags. Course tags are described on the next page. There is a table of contents (p. 2) to help you navigate to the clusters and the courses that interest you most.

How selecting a FYS cluster works: During course registration, you will rank your top four clusters. You will then be placed into one FYS course within one of those four clusters.

***Remember: When you enroll in Fall 2026 courses, you will be asked to select four clusters of FYS courses. You will then be placed into one of the courses within one of those clusters.***



# THE BATES GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

## What does “Bates General Education Requirements” mean?

To graduate from Bates College, you must complete all “General Education” requirements. These requirements (depicted below) are designed to ensure both depth and breadth in your liberal arts experience. For example, in addition to completing your major, you will pursue a “Plus One” by finishing either a second major, a minor, or a concentration, which will appear on your transcript as a permanent part of your academic record. You will also strengthen your communication skills by completing three writing-attentive courses—one in your first year (the FYS/W1), one at the intermediate level, and one in your senior year—and you will engage with course content in five of six distinct Modes of Inquiry. Finally, you will enrich your academic journey through Short Term, completing at least two May semesters that encourage focused, hands-on learning.

## What does “Bates General Education” entail?

32 credits (most courses are 1 credit), inclusive of:

- Major Plus One
- 3 Writing-Attentive Courses (W1, W2, W3)
- 5 of 6 Modes of Inquiry (AC, CP, GL, HS, QF, SR)
- 2 Short Terms

## How do I know if a course meets a General Education Requirement? What is a course tag?

You can identify specific requirements in the registration portal by checking the course tags, which highlight whether a course applies to a major, counts as writing-attentive, or meets a mode of inquiry. Additionally, there are other tags on courses that are not part of the Gen. Ed (e.g., CEL tags; see below).

**W1 Tags:** First-Year Seminars (FYS) are tagged W1. This means that by taking an FYS, you will get your “W1” requirement! Many FYS courses are also tagged with one or two Modes of Inquiry (MOI). MOIs highlight the nuanced approach to thinking and reasoning that will be utilized in that course.

**MOI Tags:** There are the six MOI tags. You’ll need to take courses tagged with five different ones:

- *Analysis & Critique (AC):* Examines how meaning is created in culture, art, and arguments.
- *Creative Process & Production (CP):* Focuses on making and expressing ideas.
- *Global Language (GL):* Develops awareness of and proficiency in languages other than English
- *Historical & Social Inquiry (HS):* Explores history, societies, and human interactions
- *Quantitative & Formal Reasoning (QF):* Applies math and logic to analyze data and solve problems.
- *Scientific Reasoning (SR):* Uses observation and experiments to study the natural world.

**CEL Tags:** Some FYS courses are also tagged with “CEL,” which stands for Community-Engaged Learning. These courses integrate collaboration with community partners to advance community-identified goals and initiatives into academic courses, advancing student learning, personal growth, and civic identity.

# Cluster Exploring Culture, Identity, and Social Systems

What shapes one's sense of identity? Is it history, culture, spirituality, societal systems, purpose?

In these courses, you'll explore the connections between culture, personal purpose, and larger social forces, from global industries to everyday practices and institutions.



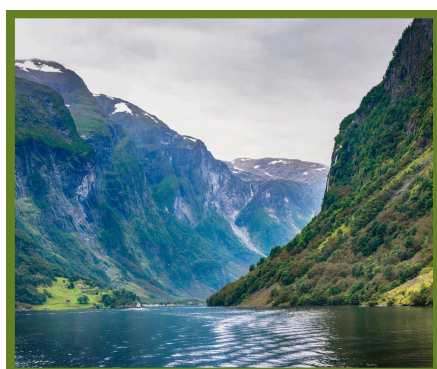
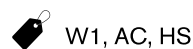
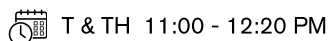
## FYS 326 - Choices and Constraints

Are humans free to chart their own destiny, or are fates predetermined by the world around us? This seminar explores the tension between personal agency and the social forces structuring our lives. We will examine how individual experiences are shaped by structures of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Acknowledging individuals as agents of social change, students grapple with their responsibilities in transforming institutions like family, healthcare, and the workplace.



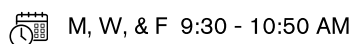
## FYS 419 - Tobacco in History and Culture

How has something as commonplace as tobacco shaped power, culture, and inequality? Examine tobacco's role in global economies, culture, and public health. From enslaved labor in early America to modern advertising and regulation, you'll explore how tobacco intersects with race, gender, class, and nationalism. The course also considers corporate power, visual culture, stigma, and the global impact of tobacco-related illness.



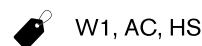
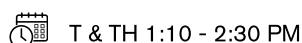
## FYS 445 - The Nature of Spirituality

What does it mean to be "spiritual but not religious"? Why do we so often find spiritual power and connection in the natural world, from rushing rivers to mountain peaks? This course invites you to explore these phenomena by engaging with a diverse range of scriptures, mystical texts, and naturalist writers. You will develop your critical voice through formal essays and creative reflections, while connecting theory to practice through experiential learning in the "more-than-human" world.



## FYS 551 - Purpose, Work, and College: A Holistic Introduction to Purposeful Work at Bates

What drives you? What's your why? In this course, we'll explore how a sense of purpose shapes our work, studies, and overall wellbeing. You'll reflect on your own purpose as a student connected to the broader purpose of education. You'll examine key ideas in liberal arts education, grading practices, and Purposeful Work at Bates, while considering how your values, strengths, and skills align with your future path.



# Cluster Exploring Environment, Place, and Crisis


How do environmental changes shape the way people and communities live, adapt, and respond?

In these courses, you'll explore how humans and other living beings experience and respond to their (changing) environment(s) and how humans make meaning from change and crisis.



## FYS 521 - Physiology of Climate Change

How do living organisms respond to rapid environmental change—and can they keep up? Examine how animals respond to climate change through short-term reactions, acclimatization, and evolution. You'll evaluate evidence of how species are already changing and consider which may survive future conditions. The course also explores uncertainty in prediction and connects environmental change to human health.


 T & TH 8:00 - 9:20AM


 W1



## FYS 588 - Medieval Disasters

How did people in the past make sense of and respond to disasters? Explore natural disasters in the medieval world, from local events to widespread pandemics. Through written and visual sources, you'll analyze how individuals and communities understood and reacted to crisis—through religion, blame, creativity, or policy. The course emphasizes close reading and writing across historical and modern forms.


 T & TH 11:00 AM - 12:20 PM

 W1, AC, HS



## FYS 600 - Food Justice

How does what's on your plate connect to the fight for climate and social justice? Explore the global struggles defining food justice through film, case studies, and direct action. As a community-engaged learning course, you'll gain college-level research skills while working hands-on with local advocates in Lewiston/Auburn gardens, food pantries, and/or food markets. You won't just study the food system; you'll help reshape it.

 T & TH 11:00 AM - 12:20 PM

 W1

# Cluster Exploring Interconnection and Interaction


How are global forces of business, technology, and prosocial behavior shaping the the everyday choices we make—from what to buy to who to help out?

In these interdisciplinary courses, you'll explore how nations, technologies, or people interact in an increasingly interconnected world.



## FYS 249 - Global Economy and Nation-State

What is the global economy, and how does it shape the power and role of nation-states today? Examine how nation-states formed and how they have changed in an increasingly interconnected world. You'll explore globalization, neoliberalism, and trade agreements, alongside the impact of events such as the end of the Cold War and COVID-19. The course also considers key issues like sovereignty, democracy, and the role of international organizations in shaping how nations function now—and in the future.


 T & TH 8:00 - 9:20 AM


 W1, HS



## FYS 544 - The Study and Practice of Human Cooperation

Why do people help others—and how can we encourage cooperation? Explore the causes and consequences of prosocial behavior through multiple disciplines, including economics, psychology, and biology. Alongside studying research and theory, you'll engage in activities and service that put cooperation into practice. The course develops your ability to analyze human behavior and communicate ideas across different ways of knowing.


 T & TH 11:00 AM - 12:20 PM

 W1, CEL



## FYS 560 - Economics of Digital World and Human Society

How are digital technologies changing the way businesses, consumers, and societies operate? Examine how digital technologies transform industries and reshape interactions between firms and consumers. Through case studies, discussions, and data analysis, you'll explore how businesses adapt and how information is shared in a digital world. You'll develop skills in research and evidence-based writing through projects like policy papers, strategy memos, and research reports focused on the impacts of digitization.

 W 1:05 - 4:00 PM

 W1, AC, HS

# Cluster Exploring Knowledge, Evidence, and Truth


How do you know what's true—and what should you believe?

In these courses, you'll explore how knowledge is created and questioned, as well as how you might use knowledge to navigate the world.



## FYS 429 - Thinking and Feeling

How do your emotions shape the way you think and reason? Investigate the relationship between reasoning and emotion. You'll examine what counts as good reasoning while exploring how feelings influence beliefs—sometimes without our awareness. The course challenges you to reflect on your own thinking and consider how emotion and logic should interact in forming judgments.


 M & W 2:40 - 4:00 PM


 W1, AC



## FYS 473 - How do you know that?

Can you ever really “know” anything for sure? When is skepticism smart, and when is it not? Do some people's claims to know something count more than others'? How are ethical principles related to knowledge? And when do knowledge claims turn into a loyalty test? You'll explore important questions about how knowledge gets created and improved, used and abused, by individuals and groups of people.


 T & TH. 9:30 - 10:50 AM


 W1, AC, HS



## FYS 598 - The Double in Literature and Philosophy

What happens when the idea of a single, stable self begins to break down? Explore the theme of the “double” in literature, film, and philosophy, from Gothic fiction to modern thought. Through works by authors like Poe and Dostoevsky and films like Vertigo and The Matrix, you'll examine how identity can split, blur, or be reshaped. The course connects these ideas to scientific and philosophical theories about the mind, meaning, and the self.

 T & TH 2:40 - 4:00 PM

 W1, AC, HS

# Cluster Exploring Media, Performance, and Popular Culture


How do media and performance shape the way we express ideas, tell stories, and connect with others?


In these courses, you'll explore how we use cultural artifacts to understand the world and ourselves.



## FYS 587 - Dance on Film: Hollywood and Beyond

How has film changed the way we create, see, and understand dance? Explore the long relationship between dance and film, from early motion pictures to social media. You'll examine how dance is recorded, edited, and created specifically for the screen, as well as how film shapes representations of the body. The course also considers the cultural and historical contexts that influence how dance is performed and viewed.


 T & TH 9:30 - 10:50 AM


 W1, AC, HS



## FYS 590 - Choreographing Coalition: Collaboration and World-Making in Art and Performance

How can creative collaboration bring people together and spark change? Investigate how art and performance can model collaboration, resistance, and care. Through readings, discussion, and movement-based practices, you'll explore how collective creation connects to social movements and political action. The course includes hands-on work in studios and media spaces, culminating in a collaborative performance project.


 M & W 1:10 - 2:30 PM


 W1, AC, CP



## FYS 594 - Science Fiction from China: From the Rabbit in the Moon to The Three-Body Problem

How does science fiction reflect a culture—and speak to a global audience? Examine Chinese science fiction across history, with a focus on contemporary works. Through stories and films, you'll explore how popular fiction engages with national history, politics, and global audiences. The course also considers questions of translation, cultural identity, and what makes literature feel “universal.”

 T & TH 1:10 - 2:30 PM

 W1, AC, HS

Note: The blurbs associated with these courses are paraphrased. If you want full course description, you can find them in the [Bates Course Catalog](#).

# Cluster Exploring Memory, Narrative, and Storytelling


How do stories shape who we are, what we learn, and what we share with others?


In these courses, you'll explore how personal and shared narratives help us make sense of learning, life experiences, and self-expression.



## FYS 300 - Exploring Education Through Narratives

What can stories reveal about how education works—and who it serves? You'll use fiction, biography, and other narratives to explore key questions about schooling and educational experiences. And examine topics like teaching, student life, and how identity shapes opportunity. The course also includes fieldwork, giving you a chance to connect these stories to real-world educational settings.


 T & TH 1:10 - 2:30 PM


 W1, HS, CEL



## FYS 550 - Tell Us Your Story: Personal Exploration via Narrative Nonfiction

How can your own story help you become a stronger writer and thinker? Develop your writing by exploring the personal experiences and questions that shape your life. Through reading and analyzing narrative nonfiction, you will learn how authors craft stories with purpose and audience in mind. This course helps you build clarity, style, and critical thinking as you refine your ability to tell meaningful stories.


 T & TH 8:00 - 9:20 AM


 W1, AC, CP



## FYS 593 - Haunted Houses: Telling Stories About the Past

Who lives in that creepy house on the hill? What is the story behind that abandoned mansion? What happened to the people who used to live here? All houses have stories – of major political and social movements, of quiet and meaningful lives, and of everything in between. Collaboratively use historical methods, data analytics, and interviews with Lewiston neighbors to explore these stories. Along the way, learn to empathize with the past in order to better understand your own experiences in the present.

 T & TH 8:00 - 9:20 AM

 W1, HS, CEL

# Cluster Exploring Race, Power, and Inequality


How do ideas about race and power shape the world you move through every day?


In these courses, you'll critically explore how racial identities are constructed, challenged, and represented and you'll examine inequality, resistance, and the forces that continue to shape society today.



## **FYS 475 - Theorizing the Klan: The White Power Movement and the Making of "America"**

How has the Ku Klux Klan shaped American history and identity? Explore the KKK's origins and evolution from 1866 to today, examining its role in the white power movement and its impact on U.S. culture. You'll analyze shifting ideologies, resistance movements, and the ongoing influence of the Klan on race, patriarchy, and citizenship in America. Prepare for deep discussions on power, race, and history.


 T & TH 9:30 - 10:50 AM


 W1, AC, HS



## **FYS 592 - Criminalizing Latinidad: Bad Bunny & "Bad Hombres" in Historical Perspectives**

How have Latinx communities been stereotyped, surveilled, and criminalized in U.S. history? Using music, media, and historical sources, you'll explore how ideas about Latinidad are formed and challenged. The course highlights how popular culture—especially music—can serve as a space for resistance, identity, and redefinition.


 T & TH 8:00 - 9:20 AM


 W1, AC, HS



## **FYS 601 - Harlem to Berlin: Black Global Influence**

How have iconic Black Americans transformed the world? In this course, you will explore how legendary figures like Muhammad Ali and Josephine Baker used their talents to drive global social change. By analyzing historic letters, films, and performances, you will examine the impact of the Black diaspora. Develop your own leadership, critical thinking, and communication skills as you study those who pushed boundaries across cultures.

 T & TH 9:30 - 10:50 AM

 W1, AC, HS

# Cluster Exploring Queerness, Gender, and Bodies

How have certain narratives of gender and sex impacted our society?

In these courses, you'll explore how social norms, science, and culture influence how we understand bodies and their inclusion, difference, and belonging.

## Rethinking assumptions about sport

### FYS 582 - Skating Away from the Binaries

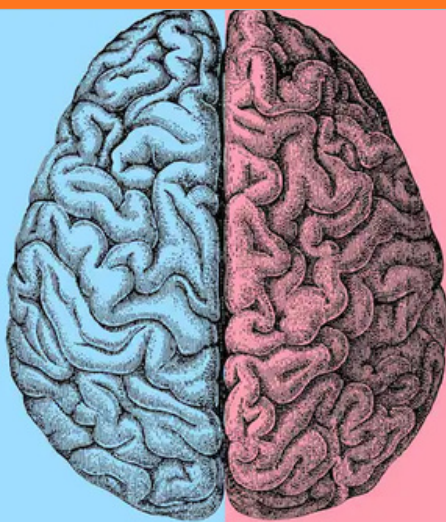
Why are binaries so involved in gate-keeping seemingly everything about sports, ranging from who can participate to which sports get the most attention? How are issues like race, sexuality, and ability involved in upholding binaries like female vs. male, mind vs. muscle, and athletic vs. artistic? Using insights from queer and trans sports studies, we'll examine everything from figure skating to basketball, and from recreational sports to international competition.



M & W 1:10 - 2:30 PM



W1, AC



### FYS 573 - Sex in the Brain: The Neuroscience of Hormones, Sex, and Gender

How do sex hormones shape our behavior, and can behavior influence hormones? Explore the powerful connection between hormones and who we are. Topics include sexual development, reproductive behavior, stress, memory, and more. You'll dive into human and animal research, tackle real-world implications, and analyze everything from neuroscience research to queer and trans theory. Join us to discover a fresh, multidisciplinary view of behavior!



M, W, & F 1:10 - 2:30 PM

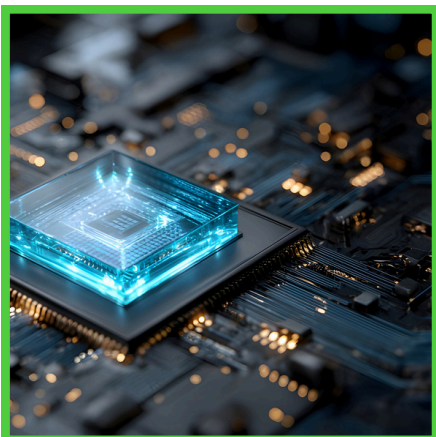


W1, AC, SR

# Cluster Exploring Technology, Math, and Systems Thinking


How do technology, math, and systems shape the way we understand—and design—the world around us?

In these courses, you'll explore how abstract ideas and practical tools come together to explain everyday life and complex systems (and drive innovation).



## **FYS 511 - Information Is Physical: From Classical to Quantum Computers**

How is computing connected to the physical world—and where is it headed next? Explore the deep connections between physics and computing, from early machines to modern networks and emerging quantum computers. You'll examine how computation is a physical process and how scientific progress depends on it. Engage with the history and future of computing while reflecting on your own relationship to technology.


 T & TH 11:00 AM - 12:20 PM

 W1



## **FYS 533 - Know When to Fold 'Em: Origami Solutions in Art, Math & Engineering**

What do paper cranes and space telescopes have in common? Origami! Explore how origami moved from simple designs to complex creations with real world impact. You'll learn that this ancient art has inspired revolutionary ideas across a wide variety of surprising fields, and will be challenged to reassess perceptions of mathematics and engineering and see the beauty and creativity that exist within them.


 M, W, & F 11:00 - 11:55 AM


 W1, CP



## **FYS 595 - Game/System: Exploring Systems Thinking through Board Games**

How can games help you understand the complex systems that shape society? Explore systems thinking by analyzing and playing board games. You'll study concepts like feedback loops, networks, and emergence, using games to understand how systems form and function. The course then applies these ideas to real-world systems, asking how they develop, who they benefit, and how they can be changed.

 T & TH 9:30 - 10:50 AM

 W1, AC, CP

# Cluster Exploring Transnational and Global Cultures


How do culture, politics, and history shape people's identities and voices around the world?

In these courses, you'll explore how we navigate systems of power and community to express ourselves.



## FYS 468 - Beyond Nelson Mandela: The Real Story of the Anti-Apartheid Movement

What stories about South Africa are often left out—and why do they matter? Go beyond familiar narratives to explore other figures and events in South African history. You'll study early encounters between Europeans and Africans, the rise of apartheid, and the movements that led to its fall. The course emphasizes lesser-known perspectives to deepen your understanding of how history is shaped and remembered.


 M & W 2:40 - 4:00 PM

 W1, HS



## FYS 526 - Revolutionary Writing in Latin America

How does writing shape revolution, and how does revolution influence writers? This course introduces students to writings about revolution, a defining characteristic of Latin American politics and history. By interpreting novels, poetry, essays, music, and film, this course builds your ability to synthesize ideas between texts and their sociohistorical contexts.


 M & W 9:30 - 10:50 AM


 W1, AC



## FYS 597 - Pioneers, Punks, and Protestors: East European Youth Culture

How have young people used culture and expression to respond to political change? Examine youth culture in Eastern Europe from the early twentieth century to today, focusing on life under and after communism. Through primary sources, you'll explore how young people expressed hopes, fears, and resistance during periods of upheaval. The course develops your skills in analyzing diverse sources and using your own voice to engage critically with political and social issues.

 T & TH 1:10 - 2:30 PM

 W1, AC, HS

# Cluster Exploring Justice, Identity, and the Human Experience

How do stories and social systems shape how we see ourselves—and judge others?


In these courses, you'll explore how identity and justice are shaped through culture, psychology, and public narratives, helping you better understand human behavior and the forces that influence it.

**Important Note:** Each of these three first-year seminars are designed to include one or two non-traditional students from the Reentry Sisters Scholars Program. Reentry Sisters is a Maine-based program that supports women returning to college after incarceration as they pursue higher education, personal growth, and career goals (more information: [Reentry Sisters Website](#)). Because some Reentry Sisters scholars do not live locally, some seminar meetings will be offered in a hybrid format (i.e., Zoom), while other meetings will involve the Reentry Sisters scholars attending class on campus.



## FYS 589 - Killer Thrillers: The Politics of Suspense in Global Cinema

What can suspense reveal about social orders and cultural norms across the world? Explore thrillers from Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia as mirrors of class inequality, gendered power, political corruption, colonial legacies, and historical trauma. From haunted domestic spaces to postcolonial crossings, from state surveillance to class consciousness, we examine how filmmakers use tension and mystery to expose systems of power and moral complicity. This course may include enrolled Reentry Sisters students (see above for more information).


 M, W, & F 9:30 - 10:50 AM

 W1, AC

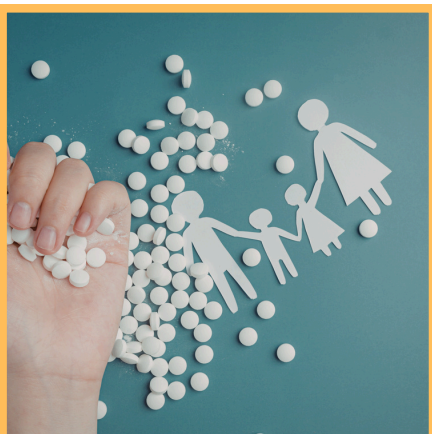


## FYS 596 - The Psychology of Context: How Situations Affect Human Behavior

How do hidden factors shape the choices people make? Explore how context influences behavior and mental processes, often without our awareness. You'll study examples like camera angles in interrogations, timing of requests, and the power of reciprocity, learning psychological tools to understand decision-making. The course also examines how this knowledge can help reduce unfair or unjust outcomes in real-world situations. This course may include enrolled Reentry Sisters students (see above for more information).


 M, W, & F 1:10 - 2:30 PM


 W1, CEL



## FYS 599 - Public Narratives: Addiction, Recovery, and Redemption

How do public stories shape what we believe about addiction and recovery? You'll analyze how addiction and recovery are represented in media and public discourse. Using an intersectional approach, you'll explore who is blamed, how recovery is defined, and how narratives vary across contexts. The course culminates in a project that engages with or challenges contemporary conversations about substance use and recovery. This course may include enrolled Reentry Sisters students (see above for more information).

 M, W, & F 1:10 - 2:30 PM

 W1, CP, HS, CEL

**Note:** The blurbs associated with these courses are paraphrased. If you want full course description, you can find them in the [Bates Course Catalog](#).

# STEM Scholars Program: FYS Course Options

What does it mean to be a scientist?

In these courses, you'll explore your own STEM identity and explore the habits, practices, and mindsets of scientists.





## FYS 505 A, B, and C - STEM Scholars


How do humans shape science and technology? Explore current and enduring questions and quandries in the sciences. In this seminar, we'll explore the habits, practices, and mindsets that help build expertise in STEM fields, focusing on how a supportive community and reflective learning can foster success. Through collaborative activities and reflective writing, you'll develop strategies for growing your own STEM identity while learning alongside peers. This FYS is a little different: A student must apply and be accepted into STEM Scholars.

Application Process: More information at the following link: [STEM SCHOLARS](#) but applications are due June 9th.

Prerequisite: Must also enroll in a 100-level biology, chemistry, digital and computational studies, earth and climate sciences, math, neuroscience, or physics course. Must be planning to major in a STEM field.

 M, W, & F 9:30 - 10:50 AM

 M, W, & F 9:30 - 10:50 AM

 M, W, & F 1:10 - 2:30 PM

 W1



Note: The blurbs associated with these courses are paraphrased. If you want full course description, you can find them in the [Bates Course Catalog](#).