

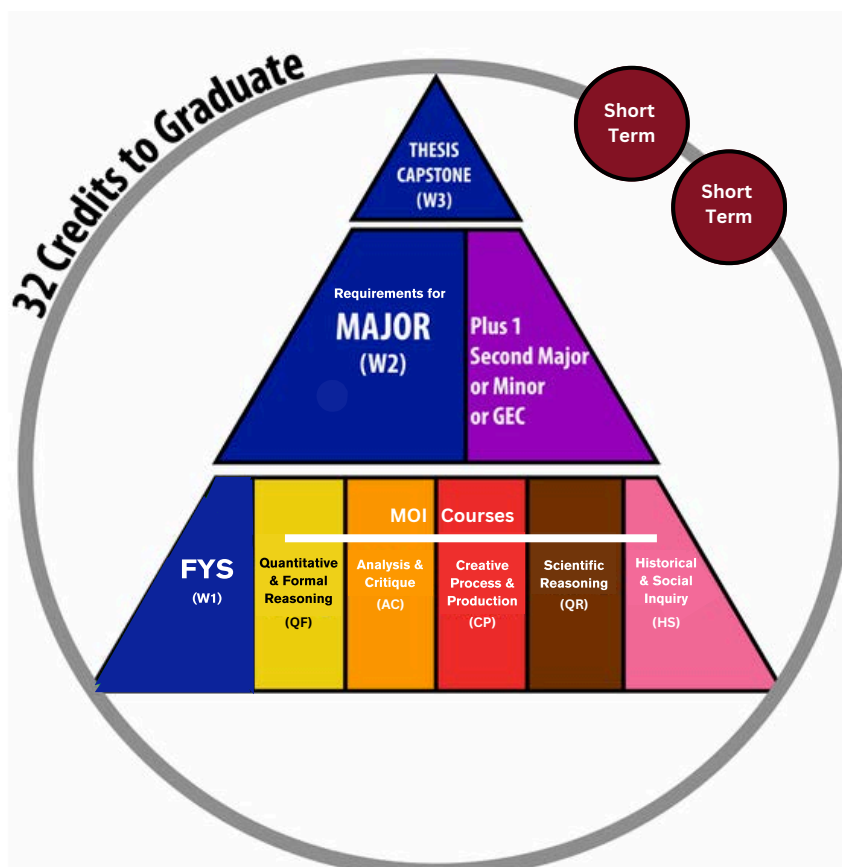
FIRST YEAR SEMINAR EXPLORER



THE BATES GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

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 and explore a wide range of topics. In an FYS, you'll work closely with your classmates and professor (who becomes your academic advisor until you declare a major) to develop your writing, research, and critical thinking skills.

FYS courses are not gateways to specific majors, so you don't need to pick one based on your intended field of study—just choose a topic that interests you! These courses count for credit toward graduation and also fulfill part of the General Education curriculum.



COURSE TAGS

All First-Year Seminars (FYS) are tagged W1. Many also have Modes of Inquiry (MOI) tags, which highlight different ways of thinking. These tags don't limit what you can study. They just show the course's approach.

Here are the five MOI tags:

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

These tags help you see the different perspectives each course offers, so you can pick a class that excites you!

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Your First-Year Seminar (FYS) 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 course that excites you, we've grouped the FYS courses into four broad themes. As you browse, consider: What **big questions** intrigue you? Which **perspectives** do you want to explore? What kind of **writing and thinking** do you want to practice?

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

IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, AND BELONGING

What shapes our sense of self and belonging?

How do communities form, evolve, and exclude?

How do language, location, and culture influence identity?

01.

- FYS 203 Family Stories
- FYS 404 On the Road to Spain
- FYS 509 The Sociology of Holidays
- FYS 551 Purpose, Work, and College
- FYS 566 What is Leadership?
- FYS 574 Creating Community in the Medieval World
- FYS 582 Skating Away From the Binaries
- FYS 583 Undocumented Migration

POWER, SOCIAL CHANGE, AND HISTORY

How do systems of power shape history and society?

What drives inequality, and how can it be addressed?

How do we construct historical narratives?

How does the past impact the present?

02.

- FYS 288 Moral Luck and Social Identity
- FYS 376 Inequality, Community, and Social Change
- FYS 447 Holocaust on Stage
- FYS 475 Theorizing the Ku Klux Klan
- FYS 400 The United States in the Middle East
- FYS 525 Wars, Plagues, and Revolutions
- FYS 578 The History Games: Danger & Dissent in Publishing History
- FYS 585 How Democracy Dies

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SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY

How do scientific discoveries shape human life?

What are the ethical & social implications of new technologies or discoveries?

How do different species, including humans, think and interact with the world?

03.

- FYS 454 The Natural History of Maine's Neighborhoods & Woods
- FYS 476 Coastal Hazards
- FYS 505A STEM Scholars*
- FYS 505B STEM Scholars*
- FYS 505C STEM Scholars*
- FYS 560 Economics of the Digital World and Human Society
- FYS 573 Sex in the Brain: The Neuroscience of Hormones, Gender, and Sex
- FYS 577 Geometry in Ancient Japan
- FYS 580 Animal Intelligence

*STEM Scholars requires an application by June 9th.

CREATIVITY, EXPRESSION, AND AESTHETICS

How do we tell stories across different media?

What makes something beautiful, meaningful, or funny?

How do art, literature, and performance shape culture?


04.


- FYS 345 Classical Myths and Contemporary Art
- FYS 423 Humor and Laughter in Literature and Visual Media
- FYS 442 Shaking It Out: Writing & Critiquing Personal Narratives
- FYS 489 Writing Ourselves, Writing With Others: Who Am I In the Age of AI?
- FYS 527 African American Religion in American Film
- FYS 576 Asian American and Pacific Islander Forms of Memory
- FYS 579 Beyond the Rainbow: Exploring the Language of Color
- FYS 581 Taste, Memory, Narrative: Digestible Memories of Food
- FYS 584 Speak Global: Understanding Languages in a Connected World
- FYS 586 Musical Europe and the Jew

How do we talk about culture and community?



FYS 509 - The Sociology of Holidays


 WF 9:30-10:50 AM


 HS, W1

Why do holidays matter so much? In this course, we'll dive into the social and cultural significance of holidays, from national celebrations to religious observances. We'll explore the history and rituals behind holidays, how they shape social connections, and why they hold such power in modern society. Through a sociological lens, we'll look at the traditions, meanings, and shared experiences that make holidays a central part of our lives.



FYS 203 - Family Stories

 MWF 2:40-4:00 PM


 AC, HS, W1


What is a family? What are the stories that are told about family and how do they betray experiences that are at once culturally specific and often universal in their telling? How are we comforted and sustained by constructs of family; how are we limited, for example, by assumptions that constrain the expression of household and kinship? In this course we explore family stories in various genres and cultures to deepen our understanding of this formative human experience.

How do groups make meaning in new communities?



FYS 404 - On the Road to Spain


 MWF 9:30-10:50 AM

 AC, W1

Ready to hit the road to Spain? Journey beyond tourist images to discover Spain as a global crossroads of cultures and histories. Examine literary texts, films, and culinary traditions to understand how travelers have transformed the country and how these visitors have themselves been changed by their Spanish experiences. You'll examine how Spain exists as a geographical reality and cultural imagination, challenging traditional notions about national character and artistic representation.



FYS 583 - Undocumented Migration

 MW 9:30-10:50 AM


 AC, HS, W1


What does migration to the United States entail? What is that journey? Focusing on people from Mexico and Central America, this course dives into how migration shapes culture, society, and individuals, while also examining the challenges faced by migrants and the responses from governments and non-profits. You'll analyze real-world issues and gain a deeper understanding of the human side of migration.

How can you make meaning in new communities?



FYS 551 - Purpose, Work, and College


 TR 1:10-2:30 PM


 AC, HS, W1

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 and how it connects to the broader purpose of education. Through reading and reflective writing, 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.



FYS 566 - What is Leadership? Theory, Practice, & Everyday Life

 TR 9:30-10:50 AM

 AC, HS, W1

What makes a leader? In this course, we'll dive into the philosophy, history, and contemporary issues of leadership. You'll explore diverse leadership theories, focusing on concepts like identity, power, ethics, and social responsibility. Through case studies, self-reflection, and shared experiences, we'll examine how race, privilege, and power shape leadership today—and what the future of leadership might look like. Join us as we work toward answering the question: What defines effective leadership in the 21st century?

How do our groups form, evolve, and exclude?



FYS 574 - Creating Community in the Medieval World

TR 9:30-10:50 AM

AC, HS, W1

In the Middle Ages, community played a key role in shaping identity, just as it does today. In this course, we'll explore how medieval people lived and formed communities, using texts like poetry, saints' lives, and legal documents. Focusing on diverse communities from Africa, Europe, and West Asia, we'll examine how inclusion and exclusion shaped their lives. Join us to discover how the past still informs our understanding of community today.



FYS 582 - Skating Away From the Binaries

MW 1:10-2:30 PM


AC, W1


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 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.

How do we talk about power and politics?



FYS 400 - The United States in the Middle East


 MW 1:10-2:30 PM

 AC, HS, W1

For over 200 years, Americans—diplomats, merchants, missionaries, and more—have shaped and been shaped by the Middle East. How have U.S. perceptions of the region evolved? What impact has American foreign policy had on governments and everyday lives? Through memoirs, documentaries, and historical documents, this course unpacks the successes, failures, and lasting consequences of U.S. involvement in the Middle East.



FYS 525 - Wars, Plagues, and Revolutions: How Economies Respond to Crisis

 MWF 1:10-2:30 PM


 W1


How do economies adapt during crises like wars, plagues, and revolutions, and what lasting impacts do they have? We'll explore whether crises lead to greater economic equality, how wars can drive growth, and how different writing styles—scholarly, journalistic, fictional, and propaganda—shape our understanding. Examine the intersection of economics and crisis through diverse perspectives and writing techniques.

How do we represent (past) powers and politics?



FYS 578 - The History Games: Danger & Dissent in Publishing History

 MW 1:10-2:30 PM


 AC, HS, W1

History is dynamic—it's shaped by new perspectives and voices. This seminar immerses students in history-making through role-playing games inspired by Reacting to the Past (RTTP). We'll dive into controversies of the past, playing historical figures and analyzing their decisions in real-time. Fall 2025 focuses on the Russian literary scene in 1877, exploring Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and censorship. The semester wraps up with students creating their own short RTTP-style game.



FYS 447 - Holocaust on Stage

 MWF 2:40-4:00 PM



 AC, HS, W1

What happens when a nation confronts its darkest past? In this seminar, we'll dive into the powerful Polish play *Our Class*, based on the true story of the 1941 massacre of Jews in Jedwabne, Poland. Through the lens of this controversial drama, we'll examine collective memory, the historical events it reflects, and how the play's structure and staging bring these painful moments to life. Prepare for deep discussions on history and the power of theater.

How do we trace past powers and politics to present?




FYS 475 - Theorizing the Ku Klux Klan

 T 7:30-10:30 PM
 AC, HS, W1

How has the Ku Klux Klan shaped American history and identity? In this course, we'll 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. Using frameworks from American cultural studies and Black studies, 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.

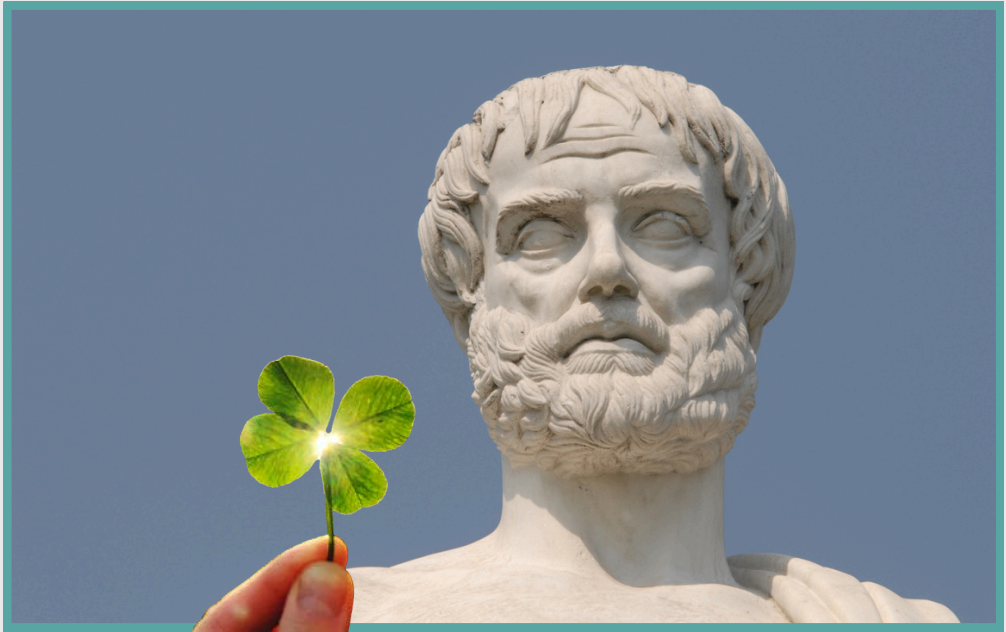


FYS 585 - How Democracy Dies

 TR 11:00-12:20 PM
 HS, W1

Over the past two decades, a third of the world's democracies have experienced a shocking decline in freedom and rights. We'll dive into this democratic backsliding, studying both historical and contemporary cases, from the rise of fascism in mid-20th-century Europe to modern-day shifts in countries like Turkey and Venezuela. We'll examine the causes of this shift and discuss how we can protect democracy moving forward.

How do we make meaning out of power and politics?



FYS 288 - Moral Luck and Social Identity

TR 8:00 - 9:20 AM
AC, HS, W1

How much of our lives is shaped by luck? This course dives into big philosophical questions about morality, identity, and justice, exploring thinkers like Aristotle and Kant. We'll examine how racism—past and present—connects to luck, from the Holocaust to slavery and ongoing white supremacy. Get ready for deep discussions on bias, responsibility, and what it means to live ethically.

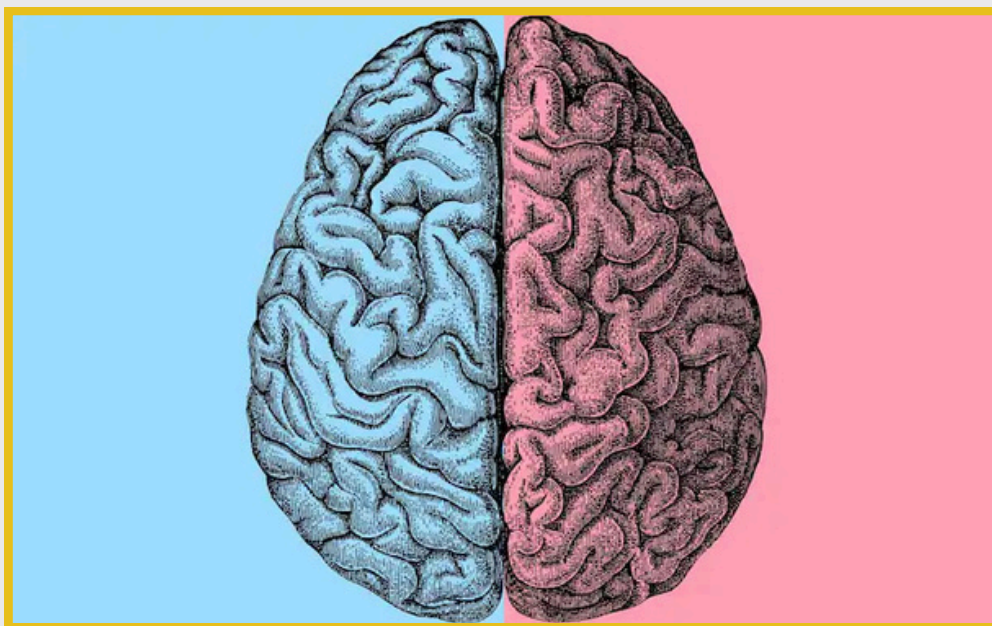


FYS 376 - Inequality, Community, and Social Change

TR 1:10-2:30 PM
HS, W1

Inequality is everywhere—in politics, news, and social media—but how can we create real change? In this course, you'll explore issues like race, class, gender, and global injustice while working directly with local organizations focused on social justice. From educational equity to housing and immigrant inclusion, you'll engage with the Lewiston community, connecting real-world action with big ideas about social change. Discover how colleges—and students like you—can make a difference!

What can science tell us about who we are?



FYS 573 - Sex in the Brain: The Neuroscience of Hormones & Sex

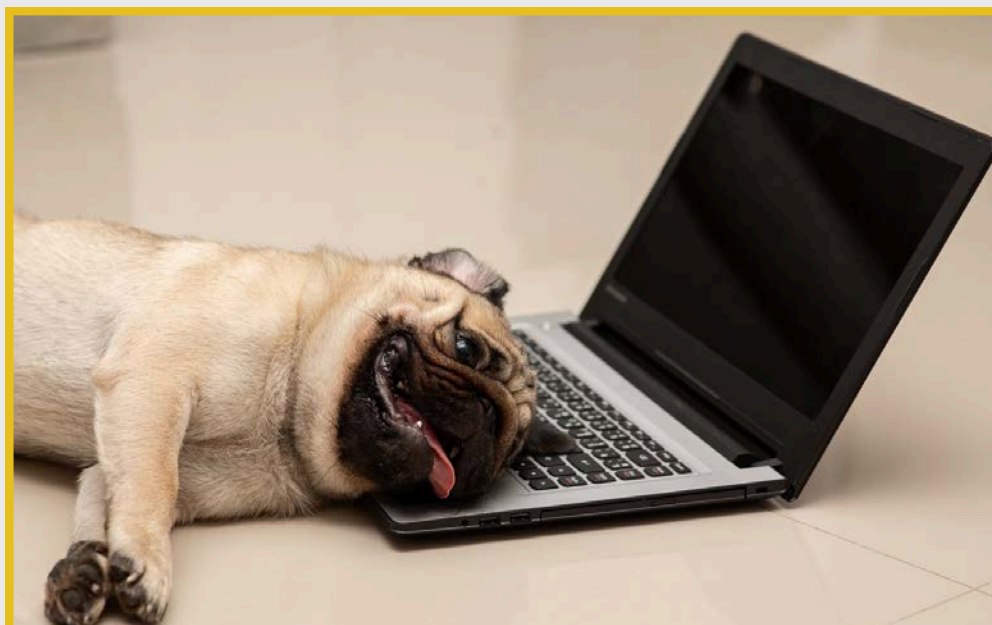


MWF 1:10 - 2:30 PM



AC, SR, W1

How do sex hormones shape our behavior, and can behavior influence hormones? This course explores 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!



FYS 580 - Exploring Animal Intelligence



TR 1:10-2:30 PM



W1

How do animals perceive the world? Can they solve problems, use tools, or even understand language? In this course, we'll explore the fascinating science of animal minds, diving into the intelligence of bees, birds, dogs, dolphins, elephants, and primates. From communication to creativity, discover how different species think—and what that reveals about cognition itself!

What can science tell us about where we are?



FYS 454 - The Natural History of Maine's Neighborhoods & Woods

TR 8-9:20 AM, F 1:05-4 PM

QF, SR, W1

Get ready to discover the unique wildlife and landscapes of Maine! In this course, we'll study native mammals, fish, plants, and insects, and explore how humans have impacted the environment. With field trips to the Bates-Morse Mountain Conservation Area and the Maine Wildlife Park, you'll observe and document Maine's natural wonders. Through literature, field guides, and hands-on experience, we'll assess the health of Maine's ecosystems and their future.



FYS 476 - Coastal Hazards

MWF 12:05-1:00 PM

QF, SR, W1

Coastlines are constantly changing, and climate change is making those shifts even more challenging. In this hands-on course, you'll explore coastal hazards like erosion, rising sea levels, and storm events by studying Maine's beaches, marshes, and waters. Weekend field trips may include visits to Acadia National Park, Bates Morse Mountain, and Saco Bay, and will give you real-world experience in coastal science, with opportunities to apply what you learn to coastal systems worldwide.

How do we make meaning out of science & technology?



FYS 560 - Economics of the Digital World and Human Society

T 7:30-10:30 PM

AC, HS, W1

Unlock the power of digital tech and its impact on society in this dynamic course! We'll dive into how industries are being shaken up, how companies adapt, and how consumers connect and share. Through hands-on case studies, discussions, and projects, you'll sharpen your data analysis and writing skills. Expect to create presentations, strategy memos, and research papers on the future of our digital world. Join us to gain the skills you need to thrive in the digital economy!



FYS 577 - Geometry in Ancient Japan: Shogun to the Last Samurai

TBD 8:00-9:20 AM

HS, QF, W1

Ever wondered about math outside of the Western world? This course explores Japanese mathematics (wasan) from the Edo period (1603-1867), a time when Japan was isolated. You'll dive into groundbreaking math achievements that predated Western discoveries and explore cool practices like hanging math plaques in temples. Learn about the samurai's role in math and how it was taught and shared during this unique period of history. Some basic knowledge of high school geometry is helpful!

What does it mean to be a scientist?



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.



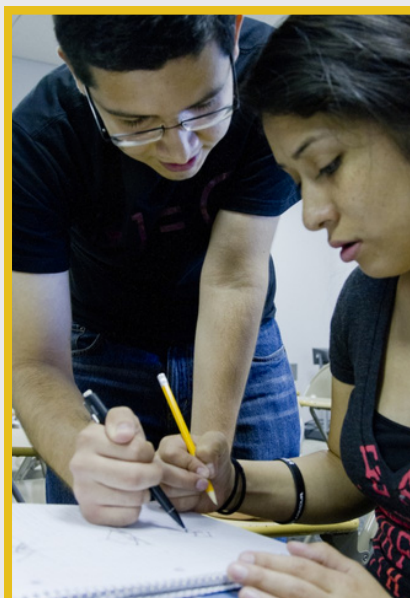
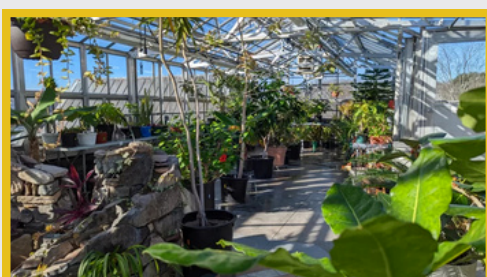
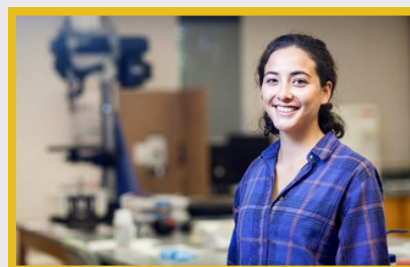
A: MW 1:10-2:30 PM



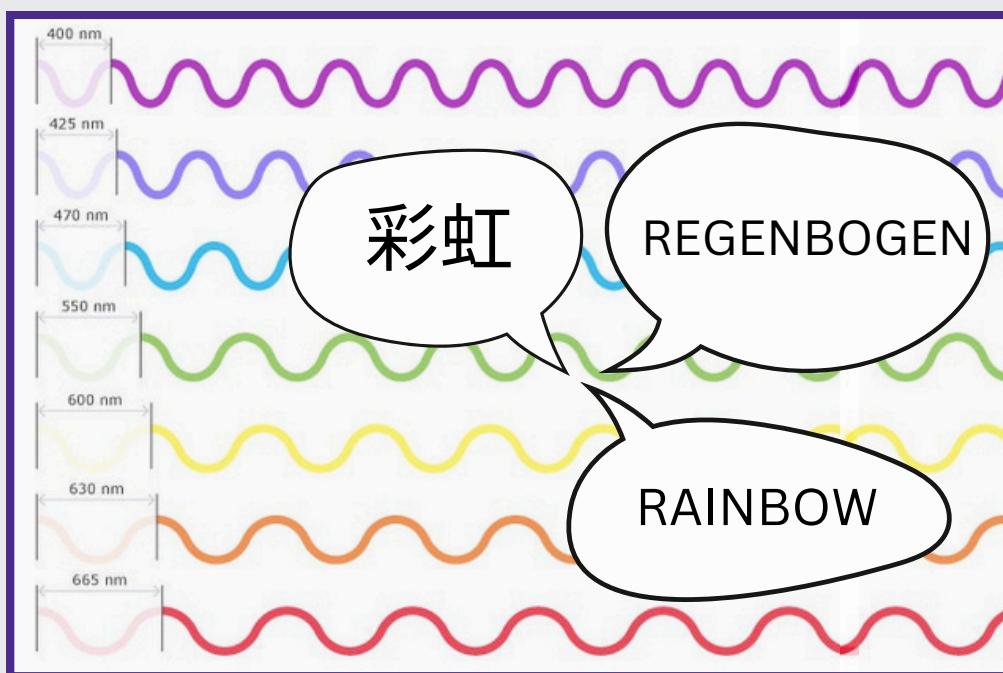
B: MWF 11:00-11:55 AM



C: MWF 11:00-11:55 AM



How do we make meaning from language?



FYS 579 - Beyond the Rainbow: Exploring the Language of Color



MWF 1:10 - 2:30 PM



AC, HS, W1

Discover the world of color in this vibrant course! From the history of pigments to the science of how we see color, we'll explore how color shapes art, culture, and communication. Learn how different societies interpret color, how language influences our perception, and the fascinating psychology behind color choices. We'll dive into everything from the physics of light to color's role in design, fashion, and technology. Join us for a colorful journey that will change the way you see the world!



FYS 584 - Speak Global: Understanding Languages in a Connected World



TR 1:10-2:30 PM




HS, W1


Why do we speak the languages we do? How does your language shape the way you see the world? From globalization & technology to colonization & the rise of lingua franca, we'll dive into how language has evolved and where it's headed. You'll connect with these ideas and understand your own relationship with language. No prior language study is required, though taking a world language course at Bates is encouraged.

How do we make meaning out of creative expression?

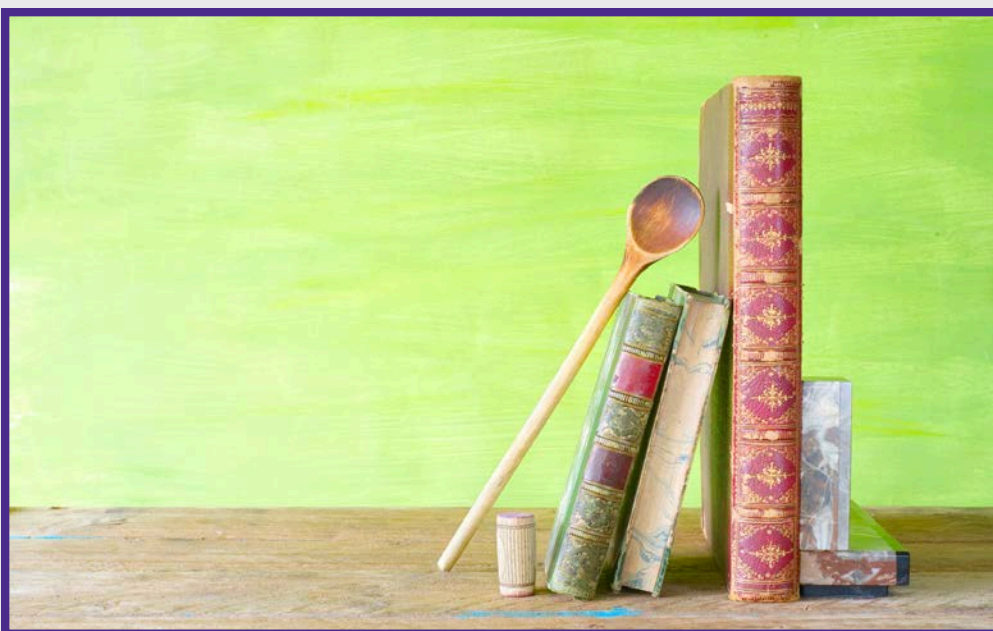


FYS 442 - Shaking It Out: Writing & Critiquing Personal Narratives


 TR 2:40-4 PM

 CP, W1

To “essay” means to attempt—to try. In this course, you’ll explore the craft of creative nonfiction, learning how writers blend storytelling with sharp analysis. Through classics by Baldwin, Angelou, Didion, and contemporary voices like Hilton Als and Leslie Jamison, you’ll see how great essays challenge, inspire, and redefine the way we think. Get ready to write, experiment, and push the boundaries of nonfiction!



FYS 581 - Taste, Memory, Narrative: Digestible Memories of Food

 TR 11:00-12:20 PM

 W1

Food isn't just something we eat—it's a lens through which we write our lives. In this unit, we'll explore food memoirs, cookbooks, and reviews as powerful narratives of self, history, and culture. These books do more than teach recipes; they reflect society's food habits, historical moments, and personal stories of identity, race, and cultural exchange. Join us as we examine how food writing captures both our personal and collective journeys.

What can art and language do?



FYS 423 - Humor and Laughter in Literature and Visual Media

TR 8:00-9:20 AM

AC, W1

What makes something funny? Is humor universal, or does it change across cultures and generations? In this course, we'll dive into comedy in literature and film, exploring different styles, strategies, and theories of humor. From clever wordplay to slapstick, we'll ask why we laugh—and what that says about us. Open to students with a sense of humor!



FYS 345 - Classical Myths and Contemporary Art

MWF 12:05-1:00 PM


AC, HS, W1


From blockbuster movies to street art, ancient myths still shape how we tell stories today. In this course, we'll explore legendary figures like Medea, Persephone, and Pygmalion—and uncover their modern twists in films, comics, and more. See how myths help societies tackle big ideas, then and now!

How is creative expression related to identity?



FYS 586 - Musical Europe and the Jew


 MWF 11:00-11:55 AM


 AC, HS, W1

In this course, you'll dive into the lives of legendary composers like Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Mahler, and Finzi, whose musical genius was overshadowed by the rise of antisemitism. Discover how European politics and social ideas turned these Jewish composers into targets, and explore how nationalism shaped their careers. Perfect for students curious about music, history, or the complexities of identity in society.



FYS 527 - African American Religion in American Film

 WF 1:10-2:30 PM

 AC, HS, W1

Ever wondered how movies shape the way we see religion and Black people? This seminar dives into the powerful connections between faith and film--examining films from early Hollywood classics to the hidden world of "race movies" made for Black audiences. We'll also unpack modern hits featuring gospel documentaries, slave insurrections, and Black family life. If you love movies and want to explore their deeper impact on society, identity, and belief, this course is for you!

How does storytelling shape our understanding of history and humanity?



FYS 489 - Writing Ourselves, Writing With Others: Who Am I In the Age of AI?

TR 9:30-10:50 AM

AC, CP, W1

Who are you and who do you wish to be as an academic and creative writer in college? Can a machine write your story? Explore what makes human writing unique in the age of AI. Through memoir, poetry, and essays, reflect on identity, creativity, and how AI-generated text compares to human expression. Writers of all levels are welcome!



FYS 576 - Asian American and Pacific Islander Forms of Memory

MW 1:10-2:30 PM

HS, W1

How do memories shape communities and fight for justice? This course explores how Asian American and Pacific Islander artists use literature, art, and performance to remember war, incarceration, empire, and migration. Through novels, plays, memorials, and museums, examine how storytelling challenges injustice, preserves history, and forges community.

A young woman with curly red hair and glasses is smiling broadly while sitting in a classroom. A red water bottle is visible on the desk in front of her.

You received instructions on how to register for your courses in your Bates email (mid-June). Instructions are also at this [registrar site](#), and they are on your Summer Resources Lyceum Page.

SELECT YOUR FIRST YEAR SEMINAR

↕ 8 Unranked Alternates:

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SELECT YOUR OTHER COURSES

↕ **12 Unranked Alternates:**

Question	Answer	Correct
1. Which of the following is a characteristic of a good research question?	It is clear, specific, and measurable.	✓
2. What is the primary purpose of a literature review?	To identify gaps in the existing research.	✓
3. Which of the following is a common method for data collection in qualitative research?	Interviews.	✓
4. What is the main advantage of using a survey method?	It allows for the collection of data from a large number of participants.	
5. Which of the following is a common method for data analysis in quantitative research?	Statistical analysis.	
6. What is the primary purpose of a hypothesis?	To make a testable prediction about the outcome of a study.	
7. Which of the following is a common method for data collection in quantitative research?	Surveys.	
8. What is the main advantage of using an experimental method?	It allows for the establishment of cause-and-effect relationships.	
9. Which of the following is a common method for data analysis in qualitative research?	Content analysis.	
10. What is the primary purpose of a research proposal?	To outline the research project and seek funding.	