

MONTSERRAT SEMINAR DESCRIPTIONS

FALL 2015 – SPRING 2016

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES CLUSTER

Contemporary 1: Anthropology of the Contemporary

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science

Global Assemblages (fall)

In the not so distant past, cultural anthropology's main focus was the systematic study of representations, beliefs, and practices of particular, and especially non-Western, cultures and societies. Today, anthropologists speak instead of "problems" — complex assemblages of people, technologies, rationalities, and processes, as well as anthropology's relationship to these things — in which humans come to figure in different, important, and often not-so-obvious ways. Our course this semester will take such an approach to examining issues — such as climate change, genocide, pharmaceutical capitalism, and organs trafficking — to see what difference anthropology makes for engaging with the contemporary world.

Globalization & Its Discontents (spring)

This semester explores another dimension of globalization, starting not from the perspective of the circulation of people and things or the plasticity of cultural forms, but in terms of the logic and experience of the human subject. We will see how globalization introduces an instability into the heart of civilization which puts into question the subject's relation to others. Where problems are new and where existing knowledge provides no clear answers, students will be called upon through their writing to articulate, and assume responsibility for an ethical position with respect to these problems. Topics include: the veil, masculinity and femininity, same sex desire, and the future of kinship, democracy, and terrorism.

Contemporary 2: Development: Winners & Losers

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science

Agents, Processes & Crises (fall)

The most recent global crises have at least one common denominator: some of their roots lie in efforts to promote development and economic growth. In this course we will study key global actors pursuing development, such as nation-states, corporations, multilateral organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The pursuit of development has generated "encounters" between different beliefs and parameters of progress and well-being that have often had unintended results. Among such results are global humanitarian crises such as those deriving from the India/Pakistan partition and the Rwanda genocide, environmental crises in Brazil's Amazonia and Indonesia, and global financial instability in the European Union. This seminar will also address measures that have been implemented to deal with crises of development and modernization and to mitigate negative consequences of complex social, cultural, economic, and political "encounters."

Poverty, Inequality, Welfare (spring)

In order to understand more deeply the issues related to growth and development, we need to agree on what, exactly, is meant by those terms and how they differ. From an economic perspective, we will explore which dimensions can be identified, why we consider specific dimensions to be important, and how we can measure changes along each relevant dimension. For example, how does access to health care and education impact development, and vice versa? In what ways do these transformations affect individuals, and what are the broader implications for society? Is there a conflict between individual and societal needs? If so, how do we resolve that conflict? We will compare the costs and the benefits of developing — and of the alternative, not developing — in regions such as Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the transitional economies of eastern Europe.

Contemporary 3: Human and Hi-Tech Encounters

Common Area Designation(s): Literature

Travel, Migration, Fitting In (fall)

You are part of the most diverse generation in U.S. history. How will your generation define what it means to be American? Or to be global? Looking through a literary lens, we will examine the experiences of world travelers and immigrants who develop ever-changing connections to an American identity. How do the protagonists define themselves? What pressures to assimilate do immigrants face? What defines successful assimilation — and what fears are embedded in the idea of "going native"? As the world simultaneously seems to grow smaller and yet more fraught, and as personal identity becomes both more specific and increasingly hybridized, this seminar will ask you to reflect on how we define our national and cultural identities.

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Technology and the Posthuman (spring)

In addition to being the nation's most diverse generation, you are also part of the "digital native" generation. Technology is now embedded into nearly every aspect of your lives. Think about the multiple functions of your phone and how they function beyond simply communication: as an alarm clock, a navigation system, a music library, a camera, your reference computer, and as a pocket gaming device. This seminar examines our relationship to our technologically-driven society. How is technology changing how we think and act? Where do we draw the line between the human and the technological posthuman? How will we greet our robot overlords? Studying fiction and film, we will examine the fears and hopes for our technological world and its future.

Contemporary 4: Violent Encounters: War

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science
CIS Concentration(s): Peace and Conflict Studies

Why Do We Fight One Another? (fall)

Throughout history, encounters between different peoples – tribes, races, cultures, faiths, and nations — have often been defined by violence. This is not simply a relic of the past as even the 21st century has seen brutal conflicts driven by ethnicity and religion. In this seminar we will consider explanations for the persistence of war, examining such questions as: Is there something intrinsic in the nature of human difference — or in human nature itself — that predisposes us to conflict? Is war a manifestation of flaws in human societies, or a rational goal-oriented activity? Is the world as prone to war as it has always been, or are there trends that provide some reason for optimism? This course counts toward the **Peace and Conflict Studies** concentration.

Transformations in Warfare (spring)

In this seminar we will study transformations in warfare. Sometimes these are driven by technological innovation, such as gunpowder, machine guns, airplanes, and nuclear weapons, to name a few. Also important, however, are shifts in ideas and institutions: nationalism and the levee en masse (mass uprising or mobilization), the decline (and reemergence) of religious warfare, the post-World War II Nuremberg Principles governing war crimes, changing gender roles in Western societies, etc. Such developments can produce changes in not only how people fight, but also why they fight and what they fight over. These transformations often come with very high stakes, that can have important implications far beyond the battlefield. This course counts toward the **Peace and Conflict Studies** concentration.

CORE HUMAN QUESTIONS CLUSTER

Core1: Journeying into War

Common Area Designation(s): Historical Studies
CIS Concentration(s): Peace and Conflict Studies

Heading into Battle (fall)

The experience of a soldier's journey in wartime transcends the achievement of military objectives of his or her unit. How has the experience of war changed the men and women who fought in wars? This course focuses upon the remembrances of soldiers before and after war about their journeys at the front. We will examine such themes as camaraderie, heroism, dehumanization, and survival. We will read memoirs, novels, and poetry from European, American, and Vietnamese writers who took part in either World War I, World War II, or the Vietnam War. Over the course of the semester, we will consider the degree to which soldiers' responses to battle were distinctive. This course counts toward the **Peace and Conflict Studies** concentration.

Coming Home (spring)

While it is convenient to locate a war's end in an armistice or a treaty, a war's final end often comes in the families of those who served. This semester considers not only how World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War ended, but also what happened to soldiers and families when soldiers returned (or didn't return) home. In addition, we will consider how state and society remembered the war and how they treated returning soldiers and mourning families. Special attention will be paid to themes of mourning, trauma, commemoration, and protest. In addition to reading novels and memoirs, we will learn how to use primary sources from newspapers, archives, and film. This course counts toward the **Peace and Conflict Studies** concentration.

Core 2: Journeys Far and Near

Common Area Designation(s): Natural Science or Philosophical Studies

Light: From Star to Earth (fall)

For millennia the majesty of the night sky has inspired and humbled humans. In this course we will examine several things about the light we receive from stars, including how it is produced, how it can travel through space, what can happen to it as it courses

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through space, and the various means by which it can be detected on earth. In order to do this, we'll consider the physics of stars, the wave/particle nature of light, and the kinds of interactions light can have with various forms of matter. Students will not be expected to know any physics before starting this class and no serious math demands will be made on students enrolled in this class.

Living Technologically (spring)

In this course we will consider just what is meant by modern technology. Our concerns will not be with learning how various technical devices operate. Instead, we will consider the ways by which modern technology might be influencing how we as individuals and as members of a culture are living as we journey through life. By reading several works of fiction and non-fiction, we will consider how modern technology might be changing the meaning of individuality, community, friendships, and how technology has radically altered our relationship with nature. In this course, we will consider how modern technology affects and limits how we interpret reality.

Core 3: Mathematical Journeys

Common Area Designation(s): Mathematical Science

From the Known to the Unknown (fall)

Does it surprise you to learn that people are constantly adding to what we know about mathematics? How does that happen, and how do new ideas come to be accepted? Proofs play a key role. Mathematicians would say these journeys into the unknown are often as important as the destinations. But how are proofs found, and how does this relate to practical mathematics? We will study a number of sources, including Euclid's Elements, to begin to understand how mathematical insights are justified and communicated through proofs. No mathematical background beyond high school geometry and algebra is required, but students must be open to new points of view and willing to think deeply.

From the Unknown to the Known (spring)

Is Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak likely to be surpassed in our lifetimes? Does a high-fat diet increase the risk of cancer? Finding patterns and answering such questions can be seen as journeys from the unknown to the known. But does this relate to the mathematical journeys recorded in proofs when there is such a large element of chance and randomness involved? We will take a detailed and occasionally critical look at the ways reasoning about probabilities is used to identify patterns via statistics. In the process, you will develop an appreciation for the power and the limitations of statistical thinking and learn to analyze claims backed by statistics.

Core 4: Movie Journeys

Common Area Designation(s): Arts

Movies: Taking the Journey (fall)

Coming-of-age films are premised on the idea of a journey taken by the hero toward adulthood. In swashbucklers, superhero epics, biographical movies, and triumph-of-the-spirit pictures, that journey generally ends in some kind of physical or artistic achievement. This course will look at a cross-section of movies in which the journey provides the dramatic arc. As an introductory film studies class, Movies: Taking the Journey will also teach the skills necessary for reading movies and writing about them, including basic cinematic concepts.

Movies: The Whole Story (spring)

Over the years, ambitious moviemakers have tried to put on the screen long, complex, and often extravagant stories that require more than the running time of a single feature to unspool. Sometimes these narratives are conceived as taking place over the course of several pictures (Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings trilogy). Sometimes the director completes the initial movie and then is surprised to find that the story isn't over after all, so he or she revisits it (Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather, Parts I and II). In the spring semester Movie Journeys will focus on several of these epics, including the two mentioned above.

Core 5: Questions of Travel

Common Area Designation(s): Literature

Literature and the Journey (fall)

What inspires us to embark on quests? What complicates our best-laid plans, and causes us to depart from our mapped-out routes for journeying from one place to the next? Why do occasions of aimlessness, meandering, and wandering frequently "interfere" with our determination to keep to a straightforward, direct path? To develop approaches to answering these questions, and to developing a literary genealogy of the concept of the journey, we will be working on 1-2 representative texts in each of the following categories of genre: children's literature, fairy tale, epic (selections), memoir, poetry, short fiction, detective novel, science fiction,

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novel, drama, film, prose non-fiction, graphic novel. Some specific authors we will consider: Homer, Joseph Conrad, Elizabeth Bishop, Dashiell Hammett, Philip K. Dick, Jon Krakauer, Patricia Highsmith, Tony Judt.

Literature and the Destination (spring)

How do we imagine the ends of our chosen journeys? Where do we hope to arrive to — a sense of home, old or new, or some other, alternative way to settle down? When do we know we have “arrived” at the places where we had meant to travel? To approach these difficult questions of travel, and to develop a literary genealogy of the concept of “destination,” we will be working on 1-2 representative texts in each of the following categories of genre: children's literature, fairy tale, epic (selections), memoir, poetry, short fiction, detective novel, science fiction, novel, drama, film, prose non-fiction, graphic novel. Some specific authors we will consider: Homer, William Shakespeare, Chinua Achebe, Robert Lowell, Raymond Chandler.

Core 6: Stages of the Journey

Common Area Designation(s): Arts

First Stage: Off into the World (fall)

An enduring theme in Western drama and literature is the separation of a person from his or her family and the ensuing success or failure to achieve autonomy and an integrated sense of self. Whether by design or happenstance, individuals are often cast adrift into a hostile, seemingly indifferent world where they struggle to survive. This seminar will survey plays and novels from the classical to modern periods that explore the process of leave taking, comparing how different dramatic and fictional characters confront the challenge.

Second Stage: The Journey Home (spring)

Although some get lost along the way, the return of the son (or daughter) — whether prodigal or not — is as equally an enduring theme as leave taking. Invariably a process of transformation has occurred during the time of absence — either upon the person setting out or on the folks left at home. People and things are not as we either remembered or hoped. Oftentimes the process of repatriation and attempted reconciliation is awkward and painful. The spring seminar will examine dramatic and literary representations that explore the daunting nature of homecoming.

DIVINE CLUSTER

Divine 1: Beyond the Obvious

Common Area Designation(s): Philosophical Studies

Symbolism (fall)

Symbols (such as a cross or a ring) speak to us in ways that take us beyond the obvious and the tangible. They provide the bridges that link us to some aspects of reality that we often intuitively grasp but usually do not fully cognitively comprehend. Where do such symbols come from? Who invents them? How is it that symbols animate people from different ages and of diverse cultures? Do the symbols always mean the same thing, or do their meanings change through time? In our search for answers to these questions, we will read the works of the twentieth century philosophers, psychologists, and mythologists, including Ernst Cassirer, Erich Fromm, Carl Gustav Jung, Mircea Eliade, Joseph Campbell, and Jean Shinoda Bolen.

Mysticism (spring)

Science attempts to reveal to us the truth about reality, but even some of the most brilliant scientists admit that there are layers of reality that forever remain out of the reach of science. Einstein, for example, thought that science was compatible with mysticism. In the course of this semester, we will first look at two examples of the twentieth-century mysticism (as presented by philosophers Albert Schweitzer and Martin Buber), then two Christian mystics and theologians (Master Eckhart and Giordano Bruno). We will compare Western mysticism with the mysticism of the far-East as presented in the Upanishads and Dao de Jing . Studying these works will enable us to make a bridge between the most obvious and easily measurable aspects of reality and those aspects that are the deepest and the most concealed.

Divine 2: Fantastic Voyages

Common Area Designation(s): Studies in Religion

Journeys of the Imagination (fall)

Fantasy literature has both entertained and inspired generations of readers. Heroic journeys into strange lands, battles against demonic forces and the delight of discovery continue to attract avid readers even in the modern age of technology and skepticism. In this semester we shall read some masterworks of the imagination that offer profound meditations upon the spiritual and moral

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struggles of humanity. Authors include: Dante Alighieri, George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, J.R.R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. In addition, students will read and evaluate selected critical essays on the main texts.

Personal Pilgrimages (spring)

The pilgrim traditionally makes both a physical and spiritual journey to a chosen destination, or, perhaps, to a destination that has chosen the pilgrim. In this class we will focus upon three authors who made remarkable journeys that continue to resonate with contemporary pilgrims: The Confessions of Augustine of Hippo, Fyodor Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment, and the stories, letters and journal of Flannery O'Connor. Together, these journeys demonstrate that personal pilgrimages can take many different forms. In addition, students will read and evaluate selected critical essays on the main texts.

Divine 3: God and the City

Common Area Designation(s): Studies in Religion

Community and Conviction (fall)

This is a two-semester **Community-Based Learning** course, with "hands on" experience (three hours weekly) of a Catholic parish near campus with many services for the inner-city population. During the fall semester, we will get to know the people, activities, and service programs, and find your "niche." In this parish, we will develop an understanding of the community's faith response to the needs of its people, and learn about the larger context from readings in history, social analysis, ethics, and theology. How did the parish form? What institutions and convictions have shaped it? What can it teach us about interrelationships and boundaries between community, faith, and the city? Observation reports, blogs, and discussions will help construct a "big picture" understanding. This course entails a commitment to a **Community-Based Learning** component.

Faith and Response (spring)

During the second semester, the three-hour weekly on-site commitment will continue. Knowing the community a bit better, we focus on "why they do what they do." What's the relationship between members' beliefs and the activities they organize and support? How relevant is the church here? What is it trying to do and is it succeeding? What are its special challenges and gifts? We will engage in more focused research into specific questions that our collective experiences have raised, and work toward producing a report of what we learn that can be shared with members and staff of the parish. Continued reading, discussing, and writing will keep our particular parish experiences within a larger context. This course entails a commitment to a **Community-Based Learning** component.

Divine 4: Identity, Diversity and Community

Common Area Designation(s): Studies in Religion

Exploring Difference (fall)

One of the most important tasks for the human person as a moral being is to come to "know thyself," as the ancient philosophers recommend. But how do we do this? The African ethic of Ubuntu suggests that persons come to know themselves through other persons, that is, through relationship within diverse communities. Our willingness to place ourselves outside the boundary of our "comfort zone" and compassionately encounter difference, disability, and "otherness" may paradoxically lead us to a more honest and merciful knowledge of the self. Through film, readings in theology and literature, and **Community-Based Learning** project in the Worcester community, we will consider difference and disability and how such encounters with others in their "otherness" bring us to a more challenging and deeper knowledge of ourselves. This course entails a commitment to a **Community-Based Learning** component.

Modifying Technologies (spring)

The second half of the year will focus on the ways in which advances in modern western reproductive and genetic medicine and technologies challenge our notions of "normal" and "disabled" and how we understand the boundary between them. As these advances bring us the hope of cure as well as more choice and control over our bodies and minds, what might be lost with the diminishment of difference and diversity? With the help of readings in bioethics and social ethics as well as continued involvement in **Community-Based Learning** (CBL), we will consider the following question: Can the human community thrive while those who are outside the "norm" are increasingly stigmatized, isolated and perhaps eliminated? Students will become knowledgeable about medical and genetic technologies that may be used to diminish diversity and reinforce boundaries between "normal" and "disabled." Methods of assessing student progress will include formal papers, journals that integrate CBL and seminar readings and discussions, and a final presentation. This course entails a commitment to a **Community-Based Learning** component.

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Divine 5: Sciences & Religions

Common Area Designation(s): Natural Science or Studies in Religion

Nuts and Bolts (fall)

Most Holy Cross students recognize “science” and “religion” as two of humanity’s most powerful institutions. However, most of us have not examined these institutions in detail or asked why they hold, or do not hold, our allegiance. This semester we will try to understand these two institutions in and on their own terms. What are they, how did they come to be, what do they say, and what do they ask of us? We will discuss the trials of Galileo and re-enact some of the debates about Aristotelianism, as well as examine the “new cosmology,” and the Catholic Church. We will compare and contrast the main ideas of several great world religions, and examine the character of physical law. Neither prior knowledge of physics or the use of advanced mathematics is required in this course.

Slings and Arrows (spring)

This semester we will examine the many and varied interactions between “sciences” and “religions.” Are they in conflict, independent, in dialogue, or two facets an integrated whole? As members of a Catholic, Jesuit liberal arts college, what do we need to know and do we have any responsibilities to act based on that knowledge? To aid us in our discussions, we will consider and evaluate the arguments from both atheistic and theistic scientists (most famously Richard Dawkins and Francis Collins), as well as less well known academic philosophers of science and religion. No advanced knowledge of advanced mathematics is required.

Divine 6: The Body and Early Christianity

Common Area Designation(s): Studies in Religion

Are Christians a New People? (fall)

In the ancient world, not unlike today, the body stood at the center of discourses about identity; it marked the boundaries between groups. The first Christians participated in these same discussions as they figured out what they believed and who they were in the Roman world. This course examines the ways Christians and others used the body to talk about race, ethnicity, gender and status. We will pose the question of whether Christians thought of themselves as a new racial or ethnic group as we examine different strategies of defining human difference. In addition, students will have the chance to explore similar issues in different historical contexts, including their own environment.

Embodied Christianity (spring)

At the core of Christian belief and practice is the startling proposition that the divine became flesh, died, and was resurrected in bodily form. The divine and human are inextricably tied together. This course will investigate how this connection shaped early Christian experience and belief. How did the first Christians explain the incarnation and resurrection? How did they experience their own transformations in their bodies? We will explore the variety of ways Christians imagined and practiced this divine/human relationship by studying theology, ritual, martyrdom and asceticism. Students will also pursue similar questions in their own contexts.

GLOBAL SOCIETY CLUSTER

Global 1: Early America and the World

Common Area Designation(s): Historical Studies

Pirates to Patriots (fall)

We talk a great deal about “globalization” and “global economies” in the 21st century. However, people living in America were “globetrotters” touched by international webs of trade as early as the time of Columbus. This course will explore North America’s first global age beginning in the 1400s and extending through the American Revolution. We will examine this history thematically by focusing on various kinds of trades and the people who pursued them. We will begin with the gold and silver of the Manila treasure galleons and the pirates who plundered them. We will end with the Patriots who eschewed tea for coffee as they boycotted English goods on the eve of revolution.

Canton to King Cotton (spring)

This course begins by looking at the formation of the Early Republic through a Pacific lens. We will explore the ways in which the fledgling nation’s involvement in the China trade, linked together with the trade networks of the Atlantic World, enabled the florescence of American democracy. We will examine the social, cultural, economic, and political implications of these global trade connections as we question their effects on individual lives among people of African, European, and Native American descent. We will explore how such connections contributed to distinct regional identities in areas ranging from the South, New England, and the Far West, to Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean. These distinct identities often led to conflicts, the most notorious of which was the

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American Civil War.

Global 2: Global Voyages

Common Area Designation(s): Historical Studies or Cross-Cultural Studies

Into the Unknown (fall)

Improvements in transportation technology have allowed us to travel to distant parts of the globe and to encounter peoples and places far removed from our own homes. Why is a person driven to venture into new and foreign places? What do they discover along their journey? How does the experience of the voyage challenge how they think about their world and their place within it? We will address these sorts of questions as we examine, through literature, historical travelogues, and film, stories of journeys taken by a variety of people to unfamiliar regions of their world. This includes the journeys of Americans to far off locations in Asia and Africa, as well as a look at the closer to home case of the American road trip experience.

Exotic Encounters (spring)

Objects, ideas, and traditions travel across the globe much like, and often accompanied by, people. What happens when the unfamiliar appears close to home? Why do some individuals embrace the new while others shun what is alien? How does the arrival of the exotic shape the people among whom it is found, and how might these people, in turn, re-imagine the unfamiliar? In this course, we will examine the movement of unfamiliar objects, traditions, and people to the United States. We will focus our investigation on the influence of Asia on American writers and artists. We will also study the trials and successes of Asian immigrant communities in the United States.

Global 3: Hollywood Meets Latin America

Common Area Designation(s): Arts or Cross-Cultural Studies

CIS Concentration(s): Latin American and Latinos Studies

Imagining Latinos in U.S. Film (fall)

Given Hollywood's proximity to Mexico, the development of the U.S. film industry is closely tied to the popularizing of stereotypes about Mexicans and Spanish speakers generally. As the paradigmatic "other," they have been portrayed as exotic "Latin lovers" and "hot tamales," classy "señoritas," Mexican "bandidos," peasants, maids/nannies, inner-city "greasers" and drug lords. Rather than focus on film exclusively as entertainment, this course looks at both the aesthetic and sociopolitical dimensions of U. S. films featuring Latinos from the '20s to the present. How have these images shaped the generic conventions of blockbusters and smaller independent productions alike? What have been some of the effects of the entrance of filmmakers of Hispanic heritage into the industry? Expect to spend an average of 3-4 hours per week at film screenings outside of class. This course counts toward the [Latin American and Latinos Studies](#) concentration.

Latin American Cinema (spring)

The history of filmmaking in Latin America, as in other parts of the world, has largely taken place in Hollywood's shadow. Whether seeking to adapt U.S. cinematic conventions to different cultural contexts or experimenting with radically new paradigms that turn conventional filmmaking on its head, Hollywood has been an indispensable reference point. We will focus on the "Golden Age" of Mexican cinema in the '40s and '50s, the revolutionary "New Cinema" movement of the '60s and '70s, the exploration of gender and sexuality through film in the '80s and '90s, and the increasing globalization of the industry in the new millennium, to the point that the concept of "national" cinema has lost much of its resonance. Expect to spend an average of 3-4 hours per week at film screenings outside of class. This course counts toward the [Latin American and Latinos Studies](#) concentration.

Global 4: Journey to Center of the Earth

Common Area Designation(s): Historical Studies or Cross-Cultural Studies

CIS Concentration(s): Africana Studies

Heart of the Continent (fall)

We all know the outline of the African continent that fills the center of most world maps. But many people are never exposed to the histories that made that map. Sometimes African culture today even seems "unknowable." In this course, we take a journey that dives deep into the continent to examine its history from the ancient past to more recent events, from the "ground (and water) up." Using the formidable African landscape as a guide, we follow rivers and cross deserts, visiting several countries in the news today, including Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa. The heart of Africa need not be shrouded in mystery; learning about it is an expedition of the mind. This course counts toward the [Africana Studies](#) concentration.

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Leaving the World Behind (spring)

The millions of African women and men and their descendants who traveled the globe by force and by choice for centuries transformed the world. What does the history of the world look like through their eyes? Using world historical events including the eighteenth-century Revolutions, the World Wars, and recent globalization, we move between the African continent and a wider world and back again. Most importantly, our main sources are the essays, letters, poetry, and film of African women and men who re-imagined ideas about freedom, citizenship, gender, and modernity through their travels around the world. This course counts toward the [Africana Studies](#) concentration.

Global 5: Literary Worlds & World Lit

Common Area Designation(s): Literature or Cross-Cultural Studies

Global Issues in World Lit (fall)

This course explores both timely and timeless global issues as represented in fiction from across the 20th century and from a variety of literary traditions. Among others, we will address political and economic systems, imperialism, globalization, mass production, consumerism, reproductive technology, psychological manipulation, behavioral conditioning, fear of pandemic diseases, and censorship. By focusing on major novels from England, the United States, Portugal, South Africa, and India, we will discuss the relevance of these topics in our contemporary world and engage with contemporary debates in world literature and comparative literary studies.

Magical Realism in the World (spring)

What do we mean by realism when discussing works of literature and art? How is it different from magical realism? These are some of the driving questions that will help us read and discuss well-known novels from Latin America, Italy, India, and the United States. Such works of literature engage with specific reinterpretations of world historical events, (such as the Haitian Revolution, slavery in the United States, and India's transition from British colonialism to independence), while presenting elements that might be considered magical, unreal, fantastic, or speculative in otherwise realistic or everyday contexts. Throughout the semester we will explore some of the literary and aesthetic techniques used in this genre and ask why they resonate with both local and global readers.

NATURAL WORLD CLUSTER

Natural 1: Human Environments

Common Area Designation(s): Arts

Our Bodies (fall)

Across the globe, from prehistory to the present, humans have depicted themselves. This image has changed with the aspirations of the society and the materials available, such as wood, bronze, marble or paint. Societies frequently imagined their gods as enhanced people and the works that they have left us often seem superhuman, or even distorted. We explore representation of the body in art from the past, from global sites such as Ancient Greece and Mesopotamia, India, and medieval and Renaissance Europe. With scientific advancements, including human dissection, artists acquired an understanding of the physical body. We then turn to art of the 20th and 21st centuries that show the representation of the male and female, as well as attempts, exemplified by movements in Nazi Germany, to censor artists. The class will include, as much as possible, viewing original works of art, on campus, at the Worcester Art Museum, in Boston, and other sites during both semesters.

Our World (spring)

Nature is, indeed, all around us, but we see it selectively. In this class, we will explore how a society's values influences the kinds of art it produces, especially its renderings of the natural world. Landscape, for example, was a rare subject in medieval society. As a way of seeing nature, landscape developed only as the age of discovery brought exploration of new worlds. The growth of science in the 15th century made possible the technique of mathematical perspective that dominated painting until the 20th century, influencing depictions of the natural world. And a little more than a century ago, the United States' political ideology of Manifest Destiny and the emergence of photography shaped paintings of huge panoramas of the American West. Today, contemporary artists create installations that become a part of the natural environment sometimes for periods as brief as a day, or they may permanently alter the environment. As part of the culmination of our exploration of art and seeing the natural work, students in this seminar will create collectively a work of art.

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Natural 2: I Am, Therefore I Eat

Common Area Designation(s): Philosophical Studies

I Mean, Therefore I Eat (fall)

We've all heard the saying "We are what we eat" — but what does this really mean? In what ways does eating contribute to the making of a self or a group? This course will explore how specific dietetic decisions reflect a detailed and comprehensive image of a person or a community. We will start by considering the different ways in which foods can mean something to us: how particular foods can be associated with an occasion, a person, a place. Next on the menu will be the ethical, environmental, and political values that our diets reflect. This class will draw upon a wide range of resources, including classical and contemporary philosophical texts, food essays, magazine and newspaper articles, videos and images. Students will schedule two visits to Brigham Hill Community Farm during the gardening season to participate in the Community Harvest Project. This course entails a commitment to a **Community-Based Learning** component.

I Esteem, Therefore I Eat (spring)

The recipe for creating pleasure through food is complex. Start with the palate. Americans hold food experts in high esteem; Italians do not. Are some experts more right than others? Is the quality of a food objective or is it simply a matter of personal taste? Add a dash of art. Some chefs aspire to impress their table guests. But can food be art? Could a cook ever compare to Michelangelo or Leonardo? Stir food's effect on the body into the mix. Most food labels display nutritional "facts." We use them to seek the "mental pleasure" of a healthy diet. But how should we interpret these facts? Is nutrition a science like — say — cell biology?

Natural 3: Tales for Re-Creation

Common Area Designation(s): Literature

Nature, Fortune, and Ingenuity (fal)

What is "Nature," and what are its laws? Are they set up to confirm or contradict the existing social order? Over the course of the year, students will consider these questions in relation to diverse text from across the globe, including Boccaccio's Decameron, a selection of tales from the Sanskrit Pancatantra, The Thousand and One Nights, and Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. These stories explore several themes from different points of view, and represent how various forces affect human life. How might fortune and human ingenuity interact with "Nature" in the shaping of one's life? Students will examine representations of these interactions in selected stories, as well as their adaptations in cinema and the figurative arts.

Nature, Love, and Reason (spring)

Humans share the activity of storytelling across time and space. We use stories to frame our lives. But does storytelling have the power to transform our minds? If so, how? In this seminar, students will consider these questions, analyze narratives, and examine visual reproductions of selected stories. We will pay particular attention to the representation of interactions among "Nature," love, and reason.

Natural 4: Unlocking Nature's Secret

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science and Philosophical Studies

Science and Art in Antiquity (fall)

What is nature and how do we come to understand it? In this course we will examine the great rivals that claim to give the truest insight into nature and the human condition: science and philosophy, art and religion. For example, we will examine works by some of the foremost thinkers of Classical Greece and Rome to explore what it is that reason and art teach us about human nature and whether their lessons about the world around us are compatible. Moreover, we will consider moreover how our reflections on these questions influence how ought to live, especially with respect to our political communities.

Science and Art in Modernity (spring)

In the spring, we extend our examination of the rival ways that we might gain knowledge of nature to the works of pre-modern and modern philosophy and literature. We will ask, for example, what it means to be a scientist or an artist, and we will consider the ways that modern philosophy and science differ from that of the ancient world. As we continue to reflect on the meaning of nature, we will explore the foundations of our modern conceptions of the roles of science, art, and religion in politics.

Natural 5: Wilderness & Environmentalism

Common Area Designation(s): Historical Studies

The Idea of Wilderness (fall)

Wilderness, whether understood as a concept in the American imagination or as the reality of a resource-rich hinterland, is central to the American experience. This semester we will trace the incorporation of wild, ostensibly unsettled, lands into the expanding

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American republic from the first European settlements to 1940. Originally viewed with ambivalence by the early colonists for the dangers and challenges it held, wilderness was reconsidered over the course of the 19th century. It came to be embraced as the ultimate manifestation of God's handiwork. Integral to the narrative of the European settlement of North America was the progressive displacement of the original inhabitants and the destruction of the Indian way of life.

Environmentalism, 1940-2010 (spring)

In this seminar we will examine how an expansive environmental movement emerged in the United States in the years after World War II. This movement addressed issues related to quality of life, species preservation, and the effects of human activity on the natural world. The growing appreciation for the remaining wild lands culminated in the 1964 "Wilderness Act" which ensured that significant tracts of land would be preserved in their natural condition. This seminar will also explore the contemporary lives of Native Americans in North America, and as a powerful counterpoint to the first semester's reading of *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, we will read an account of a 2001 expedition in search of the Amazon's last uncontacted tribes.

SELF CLUSTER

Self 1: Biology of Aging

Common Area Designation(s): Natural Sciences

Understanding Aging (fall)

We all age, but why? And how? In this course, we will explore the different evolutionary, physiological, and molecular theories of aging and how they apply to modern human societies. We will also consider the diseases of age, including Alzheimer's disease, cancer, and type 2 diabetes. Aging and diseases of age are influenced by both genetic and environmental factors, and we will consider how to evaluate risk. We will discuss how scientists conduct studies on aging and analyze how citizens make health care choices based on media reports of scientific discoveries.

Combating Aging (spring)

We all age, but why? And what can we do about it? In this course, we will evaluate the therapies that are being developed to combat aging, and the research that led to those discoveries. Scientists study aging using people that age slowly (centenarians), people that age rapidly (progeric diseases), or non-human model organisms. Each of these systems has led to fundamental changes in the way we understand aging and the diseases of age. We will also consider the business of science, and how research funding and pharmaceutical profit margins drive discovery. Each student will choose a topic in the Biology of Aging for a research paper and presentation.

Self 2: Culture in Mind

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science or Cross-Cultural Studies

Learning and Growing (fall)

How do young children and adults acquire and reason with complex concepts and systems of knowledge? What is common to all humans, and what is the influence of the environment or learning context? In this course, we will seek a better understanding of how humans think, learn, and develop. We will read and discuss research at the intersections of developmental psychology, cognitive science, and education. The major themes of our discussions will include the contributions of nature and nurture, the continuity/discontinuity of the developing mind, and the mechanisms of change.

Thinking and Speaking (spring)

What language do you think in? Is there thought without language? To what extent are we the same and to what extent are we different thinkers from one another? Drawing on approaches in cognitive psychology, linguistics, and anthropology, we will continue our exploration of human cognition by examining its architecture and processes in the context of language and culture. We will explore these influences both in terms of general mechanisms and in specific domains of thought, including how we perceive color, how we use space-time metaphors, and how we reason about the natural world.

Self 3: Health, Decision-Making & Self

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science

Risk-Taking During Adolescence (fall)

Adolescence is a time period of many developmental changes and often the testing ground for risky health behaviors. Adolescents ask, "Who am I?" and "How I can become who I want to be?" This seminar will examine how struggles with identity, perceptions of peers, and the media contribute to decisions regarding health behaviors such as substance use and sexual activity. Students will

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examine psychological theory and research associated with development during adolescence and will consider how different decision-making models help us to understand how young people make health choices. The seminar will include a **Community-Based Learning** component where students are placed in youth development settings either in school or in extracurricular programs. These experiences will enable students to see the connections between psychological research and theory and adolescents' everyday experiences. This course entails a commitment to a **Community-Based Learning** component.

Promoting Positive Development (spring)

What are the most effective ways to prevent adolescents from taking health risks and to promote positive youth development? This course will examine how strengths-based strategies promote the resilience of adolescents and support them in avoiding health risks. Students will continue their **Community-Based Learning** experiences from the fall and reflect upon how communities can be effective agents in promoting mental health, connections to school and family, and adaptive decision-making among adolescents. Special topics will include strengths-based models of resiliency, problem-solving and creativity, resiliency across cultures, mentoring, and school- and community-based prevention and intervention. This course entails a commitment to a **Community-Based Learning** component.

Self 4: Hope in the Age of HIV & AIDS

Common Area Designation(s): Studies in Religion or Natural Sciences

HIV/AIDS and Christian Ethics (fall)

Christianity believes in the intrinsic dignity of all people and maintains that human interdependence is a profound good — it is good that we need one another. In light of these commitments, we must wrestle with conditions that cause suffering, such as illness and disease. This seminar will consider one particular virus, HIV, and its attending illnesses, AIDS, from the perspective of Christian moral traditions. We will explore issues including stigma, gender inequality, and poverty through the lens of themes in Catholic social teaching, feminist theological ethics, and virtue theory. We will ask, "What are our moral responsibilities to one another in an age of HIV and AIDS?" This course entails a commitment to a **Community-Based Learning** component.

Epic Battles: Immunity v. HIV (spring)

The HIV pandemic has been compared to the darkest days of the bubonic plague. The virus has caused 70 million infections and 35 million people have succumbed. We will investigate this devastating virus from a scientifically literate standpoint, benefitting from the 30 years of research that has gone into understanding HIV. Our starting point will be establishing an understanding of the molecular biology of the cell and we will progress to probing both the awesome power and vulnerability of the human immune system. Ultimately we will investigate the continuing need for chemotherapeutics, how a functional cure for HIV may be close, and why the development of an effective vaccine continues to elude us.

Self 5: Superheroes, The Self & Society

Common Area Designation(s): Literature

Superheroes and the Self (fall)

This course will examine classic Marvel and DC superheroes and villains as allegories for self-discovery, difference, and coming of age. We will examine such characters as Spiderman, the X-Men, Batman, and many others, always with an eye for what these characters teach us about the human condition. However, these characters will not be studied in a vacuum, as we will also keep a keen eye for how cultural and political forces in which these characters operate necessarily shape their stories. Each student will be responsible for one informal presentation and one formal research proposal presentation on a classic superhero (and/or corresponding villain) of their choice, culminating in a historically situated essay on that character.

Superheroes and U.S. Society (spring)

Superhero stories are often read as morality tales, yet these morals often (if not always) correspond with sociopolitical imperatives directly tied to U.S. politics. Whether battling slumlords or punching Nazis, superhero stories are often shaped by the politics of the times and offer complex commentaries on those forces. Focusing on characters such as Superman, Captain America, Iron Man, and Wonder Woman, this course will examine how the characters themselves morph over time to achieve these political ends. Each student will be responsible for one formal research presentation on a classic superhero/villain of their choice, culminating in a historically situated essay that highlights a specific storyline or graphic novel as exemplary in that character's archive.

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Self 6: The Science of Happiness

Self Discovery (fall)

Common Area Designation(s): Social Science

Influenced by Aristotle, John Locke coined the term “pursuit of happiness.” Thomas Jefferson never explained his use of this phrase as stated in the Declaration of Independence. The Social Sciences, however, have plenty to say about it. Positive Psychology in particular makes a large contribution to this area of inquiry. Positive Psychology concerns itself with the use of psychological theory, research, and clinical techniques toward understanding resilient, adaptive, creative, positive, and emotionally fulfilling aspects of human behavior. As you pursue your own independence at the beginning of your college career, in this class you will explore what the science of happiness has to say about your own pursuit of happiness in the context of increasing autonomy.

Flourishing (spring)

So, what is the good life anyway? Who is capable of achieving it? What are the factors that sustain it? How can you achieve it for yourself? How do you know if you’re living it? We all have opinions about these matters, but psychologists approach these questions scientifically, based on objectively verifiable evidence. Through the lens of Positive Psychology, you will tackle these compelling and life-enriching questions as you reflect on your own adjustment to college life, [Community-Based Learning](#) (a weekly service commitment in the Worcester community totaling 15-25 hours/semester. CBL connects classroom learning objectives with civic engagement.), and exposure to those with serious life issues, to address. This course entails a commitment to a [Community-Based Learning](#) component.

Self 7: Twice Told Tales

Coming of Age, Now and Then (fall)

Common Area Designation(s): Literature

CIS Concentration(s): [Women’s and Gender Studies](#)

What makes some stories endure, evolve, and take on new forms for new generations of readers? Over the year we will focus on two archetypal stories that have been central to the novel tradition for two hundred years and follow them through recent iterations in contemporary literature and film. In the fall we will pair the classic coming-of-age novels *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations* with film adaptations, graphic fiction, and modern coming-of-age memoirs in order to explore the flexibility — and continued relevance — of the abiding narrative of education and development. By learning to read closely and write analytically about literature, students will hone their overall critical reading, writing, and speaking skills. This course counts toward the [Women’s and Gender Studies](#) concentration.

Family Sagas, Then and Now (spring)

In the spring, we will shift our attention from the positive formation of a single self to the frictions, deceptions, and treasons that characterize multi-generational family sagas. We will again read a classic novel that chronicles a family over generations, *Wuthering Heights*, along with contemporary retellings in multiple genres and cultures, from *One Hundred Years of Solitude* to *Downton Abbey*. We will also examine the prominent role repeated plots and retold secrets play within these intricate chronicles. Students will undertake a culminating research project to hone their independent learning skills. This course counts toward the [Women’s and Gender Studies](#) concentration.