

# MONTSERRAT SEMINARS FALL 2022-SPRING 2023

## CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

### BEYOND CONGRESS & PRESIDENCY

Common Area Designation: Social Science

#### **Parties, Movements, and Media** (fall):

How do Americans engage in politics? This course looks beyond Congress and the Presidency to the institutions in which Americans themselves participate. From the Reconstruction Era to today, our studies center on different groups of Americans and the ways they mold our government and society. We examine how Americans view their interests, learn about issues, communicate with each other, organize into coalitions, and affect our government. Our goal is to understand the political climate today and its role in American life; to better inform this analysis, we take a historical perspective, tracing the continuum of American political life since the Civil War. Political parties have navigated ever-shifting public priorities, building and maintaining coalitions, or failing to and fading into history. Social movements have fought for change, using novel tactics to gain support and wield influence. Media has framed debates, fulfilling their essential democratic role with constant deference to their own agendas and biases. By understanding where we have come from, we are better able to interpret the events of today.

#### **Agencies, Courts, and Policy** (spring):

It is often assumed that public policy in the United States emerges mainly from Congress and the president. Though these two actors are certainly important players in the policymaking process, many public policies actually come about through decisions made by bureaucrats and judges. In this course, we will use specific policy-area case studies to examine the roles of administrative agencies and courts in the policymaking process. Our in-depth case studies will include units on environmental policy and civil rights. We will explore questions like: How did the Supreme Court and the Environmental Protection Agency wind up leading the development of climate policy instead of Congress? How have new interpretations of the 1964 Civil Rights Act changed the way we think about civil rights in contemporary America?

### EMOTION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Common Area Designation: Social Science

#### **The Social Life of Feelings** (fall):

What are emotions, where do they come from, and what do they do? When we feel cheerful or embarrassed or angry, we often attribute these emotions to the interior workings of our own minds. But what if we thought of our emotions not just as internal moods or sensations, but rather as socially constructed feelings that have real social effects? How do we learn which feelings to feel and how to express, suppress, or even commodify them? In this seminar, we will examine the way emotions are socially constructed in the personal and commercial realms of daily life, paying careful attention to the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

#### **The Politics of Emotion** (spring):

Critics argue that we now live in a "post-truth" era where feelings, not facts, are the basis for political action. We will interrogate this claim by exploring the role emotion plays in the political sphere and the kinds of emotional investments people make in their local, national, and global communities. Our aim will be to understand how our individual experiences of love, happiness, fear, pride, or shame are intertwined with broader structures of feeling at the national and global levels. Through the concept of "affective citizenship," we will explore how emotion circulates in the political contexts of national identity, global citizenship, and social activism.

### LIVING IN A MUSLIM WORLD

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies

C.I.S. Concentration: Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

#### **Social Lives of Muslim Youth** (fall):

How does religious identity shape the political activism and social life of Muslim youth under the age of 25 in Egypt, Indonesia, Morocco, and the U.S.? We will use ethnographies, social science analyses, graffiti, and music videos to answer questions including: how do community expectations affect Muslims as they date, write hip-hop songs, and play football in the U.S.? How did Egyptian

youth mobilize for change during the "Arab Spring"? How did Moroccan youth build online communities for political reform? Why are so many Muslim women successfully running for political office in the U.S.?

#### **U.S. Policy at Home and Abroad** (spring):

This seminar examines key policy decisions by the U.S. government which affect Arabs and Muslims here and in the Middle East. Why do many Arab-Americans want an "Arab" designation on the U.S. census? How have the "War on Terror" and the creation of an enormous security apparatus after 9/11 affected the civil rights of American Muslims? Why does the U.S. give more aid to Egypt than to almost any other country, and should we continue to do so in light of the government's human rights abuses? How did the Israeli-Palestinian conflict emerge and develop? Why did the U.S. invade Iraq in 2003, and how do we define the full cost of that war for Iraqis and Americans, including the subsequent rise of ISIS, injuries caused by burn pits on American bases, and the decision to fund the war with credit rather than raising taxes on Americans or cutting government services?

### **PANDEMICS AND POP CULTURE**

Common Area Designation: Natural Science

#### **Knowledge from the Macabre** (fall):

Fear within a viral "hot zone" will influence decision-making. Under these circumstances how does the essential scientific endeavor instill a calm and measured approach? What can we learn about the science of infection? How is an emerging virus identified and then countered during these conditions? What are the ethical concerns of trying to save lives under these extreme public health emergencies? We will explore how data are collected and these questions are answered in the midst of pandemics. Specifically, we will use literature and film to examine the science behind some of the pathogens that have threatened humanity throughout its history.

#### **Epidemics as Social Commentary** (spring):

Pandemics and epidemics have shaped history and have invariably led to social, political and cultural changes. These unique historical moments can also highlight inequities, prejudices and inequalities as peoples and governments struggle to adequately and effectively respond. The varied responses to a pandemic or epidemic crisis may also foster malignant conspiracy theories and create opportunities for the spread of damaging misinformation. We will examine the impact of several epidemics on the evolution of society and the long-lasting consequences of events and decisions made in the backdrop of these public health crises. Our focus will be on the impact on science, both as a discipline and its relationship to society.

### **REMEMBERING REVOLUTION IN ASIA**

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies or Literature

#### **You Say You Want a Revolution** (fall):

Revolution was the buzzword of the day across Asia in the 20th century. Beset by colonialist aggression and dynastic governments struggling to adapt to changing circumstances, concerned politicians, intellectuals, agitators, students, community leaders, and individuals turned to revolution as an answer. Social revolution, political revolution, national revolution, cultural revolution, gender revolution, family revolution, language revolution, and more all became the hot topics discussed in India, China, French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos), the Philippine Islands, Japan, Korea, the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), and beyond. But what were these revolutions and how were they to be achieved? In this seminar, we will explore revolution as a concept, what it meant, how it was to be achieved, and for who and what it was to be carried out. Reading revolutionary writers and thinkers like Mao Zedong, Har Dayal, Jose Rizal, Tan Malaka, Ōsugi Sakae, and others, we will ask what was revolution and what did revolution mean from diverse peoples of Asia.

#### **Farewell Revolution, or Hello?** (spring):

A vast number of the countries that dot contemporary maps of Asia are the inheritors of the twentieth-century's revolutions. So, how do these revolutionary states and their peoples remember their revolutions? Interrogating film, TV, fiction, memoirs, poetry, architecture, holidays, tourist packages, monuments, and even bodies (not just limited to the embalmed bodies of dead revolutionary leaders), we will probe the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual legacies of Asia's revolutions. How are these revolutions remembered? How are they forgotten? Together, we will ask what revolution means across Asia today.

## SEEING CIVIL RIGHTS IN VIETNAM

Common Area Designation: Literature

C.I.S. Concentrations: Africana Studies; Peace & Conflict Studies

### **Civil Rights Consensus Memory** (fall):

The Civil Rights Movement has become a familiar narrative grounded in iconic photographs and visuals, which has formed a consensus memory about the movement's goals, timeline, and principal actors. This course will examine contemporary visual narratives -- from photo-books, to comics, to film -- to analyze how these stories challenge consensus memory by choosing to remember differently. In doing so, we will investigate this history for insights into modern extensions of the Civil Rights movement, from LGBT Pride to Black Lives Matter and beyond. We will begin the course with narratives by canonical authors and civil rights personas such as Toni Morrison and John Lewis, celebrated films such as *Selma* and *Hairspray*, as well work by lesser known but equally powerful authors such as Howard Cruse and Lila Quintero Weaver.

### **The Vietnam War: Film & Comics** (spring):

The Vietnam War was experienced by the average American on their TV set. Despite this shared experience, there is no shared narrative as to what the meaning of the Vietnam War and its cascading traumas actually is. In the absence of a consensus narrative, visual narratives have become the repository of our cultural memories of the war. Hence, we will examine film and comics from then and today to come to terms with the turmoil of the 60s and 70s and what it reveals to us about contemporary challenges facing U.S. society today. We will begin with the work of such visual auteurs as Francis Ford Coppola, Stanley Kubrick, and Aaron Sorkin as well as newer texts offering new perspectives on the war, such Trung Le Nguyen's *Magic Fish*, Derf Backderf's *Kent State*, and the modern classic *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui.

## THE GOOD EDUCATION

Common Area Designation: Social Science

### **The Good Student** (fall):

Who is "a good student?" In this seminar, we will examine conceptualizations of the "good student" that include not only academic achievement, but also self-reflection, empathy, perspective taking, open-mindedness, ethical and moral decision making, participation in civic life, and contribution to the common good. We will also attend to the social construction of "the bad student." What is meant -- and what is missed -- when students are labeled as troublemakers, unmotivated, and struggling? This seminar will encourage participants to reflect upon the students they aim to be as they begin their college journey, as well as their hopes for student development in the kindergarten through twelfth grade public school system.

### **The Good School** (spring):

What is a "good school?" In this seminar, we will examine conceptualizations of the "good school" that include policy, curriculum, physical plant, culture, and relationships. We will explore what is meant by, and the implications of, labeling and attending schools that are perceived as "good" or "bad" on both students and society as a whole. We will also discern how schools are forms of community life that help us reproduce or reimagine the world around us. This course will encourage students to reflect on their own perception of schools, how attendance at their own K-12 schools impacted their sense of self and what they know, and what types of schools they hope society will provide for future generations.

## CORE HUMAN QUESTIONS

### **AGE, AGENCY, IDENTITY**

Common Area Designation: Literature

### **Developing the Self** (fall):

What does it mean to come of age? Our chronological age dictates when we gain access to certain institutions, practices, and privileges, from when we start school to when we drive a car to when we claim retirement benefits. But our ideas about age are shaped by a broad range of murkier social, cultural, political, and economic factors. This course will look at age and aging, thinking in particular about the conflict between generations. In the first semester, we will explore how literary forms including short story, memoir, drama, and film structure as well as challenge our most fundamental beliefs about what it means to become an adult. We'll

examine works including Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Marjane Satrapi's graphic memoir, *Persepolis*, and Greta Gerwig's *Lady Bird* to hone your close reading and critical writing skills, but we'll also explore your own adolescent development through creative exercises.

### **Generating Conflict** (spring):

How do you spot a millennial or an alpha, a Gen X or Z'er? This course looks to how we understand and represent different generations, in part to consider what they owe each other. When economic forces encourage us to define people by their jobs or bank accounts, what is our duty of care to those who are retired? In a time of devastating climate change and decreasing resources, what do Boomers owe younger generations? To explore these questions, we will focus on literary depictions of generational identity and conflict, from Shakespeare's *King Lear* to HBO's series *Succession*, and in such films as *The Godfather* and *Nomadland*. During this second semester, we'll also study narratives of youth-led activism. You will continue to develop your critical writing and research skills, but you'll also learn how to pitch your ideas to broad audiences by creating a Moth story hour or TED talk related to our course themes.

## **LITERATURE & ETHICAL THINKING**

Common Area Designation: Literature

### **Finding One's Place** (fall):

In this course, we will study works of literature that engage with central ethical questions, including: How should we live fulfilling lives? What ethical responsibilities do we have to our family, community, country, and planet? Our literary readings will be complemented by works of philosophy that take up similar concerns. We will begin with the personal and the local, discussing how the individual might find a satisfying path through life. The fall semester will kick off with one of Western literature's most famous stories of "finding one's place": Homer's *Odyssey*. We will then turn to modern literature, reading fiction by Albert Camus and Virginia Woolf alongside works of existentialist philosophy by Soren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre. We will conclude the semester by moving to the national level, considering one's responsibilities in confronting racial injustice and discrimination. Here, we will read texts by Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin, and we will watch and discuss Spike Lee's film *Do the Right Thing*.

### **Engaging with the Unfamiliar** (spring):

In the spring, we will shift our focus to the global. Here, we will begin with a unit on how we might engage ethically with people who come from cultures very different from our own and hold very different values from us. We will read fiction by Jhumpa Lahiri and Teju Cole, alongside the philosophy of Kwame Anthony Appiah. Finally, we will broaden our ethical focus to include non-human animals and consider what responsibilities we might have to them. Writers and thinkers studied in this final unit will include David Foster Wallace, Peter Singer, Franz Kafka, and J.M. Coetzee.

## **MATHEMATICS AND CRISIS**

Common Area Designation: Mathematical Science

### **Historical Crises Through Math** (fall):

Social crises emerge in many different forms: war, economic collapse, natural disasters, etc. As an example of armed conflict, we'll begin with a game-theoretic analysis of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which brought the U.S. and U.S.S.R to the brink of nuclear war in October 1962, which has echoes to the present-day. Our second example will be the economic collapse of 2008, which in part was fueled by over-optimistic mathematical predictions of investment opportunities in the housing market. Our third example will focus on a mathematical approach to the evolving story of climate change. Each topic will be accompanied by relevant reading assignments. In addition, we will engage with our cluster's common reading, the *Odyssey*, still a compelling and exciting story after thousands of years, and an early window into the clash of personal and collective responses to crisis.

### **Information and Cooperation** (spring):

In the fall we studied three crises through the lens of mathematics. This semester our approach will shift to the possibility of anticipating and averting crises through cooperation. We don't have to confine ourselves to humans to see examples of mutually beneficial cooperation; we'll first try to shed some light on the evolutionary advantages of cooperation in the face of competition, both within a species and across species, using recent ideas of mathematical biologists. But it's not clear how we can apply the lessons of evolution to our approach to cooperation in the age of social media. How has the presence of social media affected the possibility of productive cooperation? What are the implications of the instant availability of information (valid or not) through the internet? We'll look at the mathematical basis of search engines such as Google and how they can be manipulated.

## MEMORY AND ANTICIPATION

Common Area Designation: Literature

### Looking Back (fall):

We will begin this year-long course by thinking about memory: how memory shapes us in the present, how we make memorializing a part of our lives and landscapes, and the limitations and even dangers of remembering. We'll investigate personal memory, looking at scientific studies, works of literature, and autobiographical writing. We'll also produce writing about our own long- and short-term memories. We'll go on to think and write about cultural memory, exploring the purpose and effectiveness of sites of remembrance (memorials, buildings, landscapes, ruins). We will read literary works, personal essays, historical, and sociological writing. Finally, we'll think about digital memory and the ripple effects, good and bad, of its hypothetically perfect recall and permanent archive. We'll explore the Internet Archive: Wayback Machine, including its own blog and writing about the archive. Over the course of the semester, we will build a fund of knowledge and writing about memory.

### Looking Forward (spring);

In the Spring, we will shift our focus to the future: how can we use our predictions, hopes, and fears about the future to influence our decision-making in the present? How can we embrace uncertainty, evaluate risk, and prepare for the most probable outcomes? We will begin by looking at how historical attempts to predict the future have worked out, including the 1939 New York World's Fair's "World of Tomorrow," which predicted a technological utopian future on the eve of the Second World War. We will think about how predictions about the future are shaping our current moment in fields like epidemiological modeling and Predictive Policing, as well as what we are learning about their consequences. We'll go on to look at how speculative fiction can help us to think through what our individual and collective futures might look like, and we'll read novels that imagine a future shaped by artificial intelligence, climate change, and space travel.

## TELLING AND RETELLING

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies or Literature

### Foundation and Crisis (fall):

This year-long course will examine how we inherit stories, retell them, and make new meaning from them. In the first semester we will read ancient or "classical" literature in a global context – from India to the Mediterranean, from the Middle East to the Americas – and consider how storytelling helps us to constitute ourselves and our communities. The literature and ideas we encounter will also explore how we connect to each other beyond the borders of community and will offer an understanding of those connective concepts that make us human. Texts will include *Gilgamesh*, the *Ramayana*, Homer's *Odyssey*, selections from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Eduardo Galeano's *Memory of Fire: Genesis*.

### Crisis and Continuity (spring):

In the spring, we will turn to works of reception and retelling in order to think about how stories gain new meaning over space and time. We will begin with selections from the European Middle Ages and Renaissance, with writers such as Dante Alighieri, Giovanni Boccaccio, Geoffrey Chaucer, Christine de Pizan, and Shakespeare, and consider how retellings of ancient stories drew from global sources. We will continue with modern works of reception in fiction and film, as we learn how adaptation combines new forms with familiar narratives. Media in this section will include works by Octavia Butler, Margaret Atwood, and Nina Paley.

## VISUALIZING DILEMMA AND HOPE

Common Area Designation: Arts or Literature

### Decisions, Decisions, and Art (fall):

Throughout human history, artists with diverse perspectives have created imagery to explore the most challenging choices individuals must make in their lives. Some stories are ancient and timeless. Others are contemporary and focus on new circumstances confronting our society and globe. Based on visual and literary sources (picture/text), we will discuss ways to make consequential life choices in a changing world, especially in light of major, recent uncharted events. In the Fall, we practice methods of objective visual analysis and subjective personal reflection to consider episodes from Homer's *Odyssey* and other provocative narratives from history and fiction. Like artists tackling the big questions of human experience, we will aim to integrate circumstances beyond our control with the self-understanding that helps individuals chart a path. Activities include short written assignments, prepared dialogues, role playing, visual exercises, and visiting the Worcester Art Museum. In terms of art, this is a "looking" rather than a "making" course.

### **Vision, Decision, and Hope** (spring):

Expanding on the conversation of the fall, we will investigate how and why narratives are so crucial to the success of individuals and communities. As we define “vision”, “decision”, and most crucially, “hope”, we will look to traditional printed texts, but also examine how visual and oral stories are told and meant to be received, how they motivate us beyond the crisis of the moment toward something more, something better. Songs, movies, and digital texts will be included as we explore the role of the poet, the storyteller, and the creative imagination in societal action and progress. We will write, research, reflect, and ultimately create a digital archive of our favorite stories – of all varieties - that share vision and hope with our classroom community and beyond.

## **WAR AND SUFFERING**

Common Area Designation: Literature

C.I.S. Concentration: Peace and Conflict Studies

### **War, Glory, Death** (fall):

In the fall we will read the Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and Aeschylus’ tragedy, the *Agamemnon*. We will examine the crises that provoke war and arise after war. We will think about questions such as why heroes are willing to die young to achieve everlasting glory and memory. What is the price of ambition? Homer’s emphasis on fragility of the mortal body in war, the importance of the treatment of the dead body, the gods’ fascination with mortality and women’s perceptions of war will be just some of our concerns. When we read the *Odyssey*, we will focus on rites of passage, storytelling and shaping of memory about the past. Readings by Jonathan Shay, M.D., Ph.D., based on his work on PTSD with Vietnam veterans, and other work on PTSD will provide another perspective on memory and the Homeric epics.

### **Homecoming, Exile, Memory** (spring):

In the spring semester, we will read Virgil’s *Aeneid* and focus on the destruction of Troy and the diaspora of the Trojans that ultimately lead to Aeneas’ arrival in Italy and the founding of Rome. Using Shay’s work on PTSD we will consider how Aeneas’ memories of Troy, encounter with Dido in Carthage, and suffering as a refugee shape his decisions. We will also read Sophocles’ *Ajax* and *Antigone*, as well as selections from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and discuss how some individuals resolve their suffering by choosing suicide, and how others undergo metamorphoses (shape changing).

## **DIVINE**

### **ACTIVISM & POP CULTURE**

Common Area Designation: Literature

### **Embodied Activism** (fall):

This course asks what it means to work toward justice, from radical acts of protest to community organizing. Over the fall, we will learn about theories of justice and community-building as they develop out of human rights, Disability Justice, and women of color feminisms. Together we will engage with literary and visual arts that draw attention to violence & call for multiple means of justice, particularly by and for disabled people, people of color, and women. This course entails a commitment to a *Community-Based Learning* component as a way of engaging with the theories of activism & advocacy that we’ll discuss.

### **Inclusion in Pop Culture** (spring):

In the spring, we will use our fall research into activism in the arts as a framework for analyzing how producers of popular culture bridge entertainment and advocacy. We will examine popular books, television, and films that draw from activist efforts & theories in their narratives, and question what is gained or changed when adapting complex ideas about community & justice to new media. Our focus will explicitly be on the discourse of inclusion in television and young adult literature, as we think about what makes a particular story or show popular, which stories are excluded from mainstream popular culture, and who is asked to tell or feature in these portrayals. This course entails a commitment to a *Community-Based Learning* component.

## FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Common Area Designation: Philosophical Studies

C.I.S. Concentration: Africana Studies; Peace & Conflict Studies

### Perception (fall):

This class will start with Socrates, who was executed by the state of Athens, because he refused to apologize for speaking freely in the pursuit of truth. For Socrates, our freedom to speak does not depend on whether there are laws in place that protect speech: it depends on whether we are blinded by ignorance, or able to perceive the truth. Being free to say something we don't really mean is no freedom, but being able to "listen" or "see" in such a way that we learn about ourselves, or those around us, is no simple task. In this seminar we will read texts from the philosophical tradition, which engage the questions of perception, blindness, and faith in the pursuit of truth. Students will simultaneously be exploring the question of how we perceive freely and faithfully, via a *Community-Based Learning* placement and an interview project.

### Protest (spring):

In this class we will look at freedom of speech as a form of resistance to an established order, often of outright political or social "disobedience." We will study the idea of performative speech: is it possible to do something with words? And if so, how do we think about the ethical/political implications? Do we have a duty to speak, and speak politically? Or can "speech" itself be violent and harmful? Taking racial injustice as a central theme, the class will look at different strategies of protest, from the civil rights movement in America and Black Consciousness in South Africa, to contemporary examples of resistance from our own community in Worcester. While studying these texts, and engaging in their *Community-Based Learning* placement, students will be required to write their own "response" or "resistance" project.

## GOD, THE SENSES, & US

Common Area Designation: Studies in Religion

### Theology of Making (fall):

This seminar takes its name from artist Makoto Fujimura, who proposes that "making" (through art and more) gives human persons access to God's being and grace as it permeates our lives. Using Fujimura's insight as a guide, we shall examine selected works from the Bible, theologians, philosophers, and visual artists to grow in understanding of (1) how human lives and communities are made and, in the face of brokenness and trauma, remade, and (2) how "making" relates to the question of truth, as this relates to "sense" in that word's many meanings. The seminar will involve preparation for a *Community-Based Learning* project for the spring, so that students may see how community is (re)made "on the ground."

### World(s) of Sense (spring):

Is there such a thing as "the world," a singular basket in which all things we experience, know, and do neatly fit? This seminar will begin with a carefully reasoned "no" to this question, preparing us to examine the word (and reality) "global," as it pertains to art, global Christianity (with emphasis on Catholicism), and, given time, selected matters of social ethics. We will continue to consider the question of truth, as it is complicated by the plurality and ambiguity that comes when truth-seekers are creatures of "sense." This course entails a commitment to a *Community-Based Learning* component so students may deepen their understanding of the interconnectedness of the "local" and the "global."

## IDENTITY, DIVERSITY, COMMUNITY

Common Area Designation: 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 films and readings in theology, disability studies, and education, and through *Community-Based Learning* placements in the Worcester community, we will consider identity, 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.

### **Exploring Leadership** (spring):

The second half of our seminar will build on discussions of identity, diversity, disability, and community and focus on diverse ways of leadership. How do different social groups approach leadership? What ways of leading are privileged? What ways of leading are marginalized? How do we come to know ourselves through difference and leadership? How and in what ways does Holy Cross' Jesuit mission call us into leadership? With the help of film and readings in theology, leadership, and education, as well as continued involvement in Community-Based Learning and a case study in leadership at students' CBL placements, students will become knowledgeable about diverse ways of leading, including women's ways of knowing, servant leadership, and critical leadership, leadership styles that an increasingly diverse, global, and divisive world may require. This course entails a commitment to a *Community-Based Learning* component.

## **LOOKING FOR GOD IN ALL THINGS**

Common Area Designation: Studies in Religion

### **The Divine In History** (fall):

"Seeking God in all things" – a Jesuit motto – sums up one of a multitude of ways in which human beings have approached "the Divine" or "the transcendent." Such terms may refer to one God, or a multitude of spiritual beings beyond ordinary sense experience, or an overall sense of "the spiritual" in the world. During this fall semester of the seminar, we will focus on ways in which ideas of this kind have shaped culture and politics throughout history, and continue to do so. We will use tools from several disciplines, including social sciences, history, arts and literature, and theology. As conditions allow, we will incorporate direct experience and *Community-Based Learning* into this inquiry.

### **The Divine In Daily Life** (spring):

In this second semester of the seminar, we will focus on ways in which people have recognized, described, and pursued a personal and practical sense of the divine, and continue to do so. We will try to understand how the practice of religion and spirituality has been shaped by the long human development we considered in the first semester. Continuing to make use of a variety of disciplines and practices, including *Community-Based Learning*, we will also look at our own attitudes and experiences regarding "the transcendent," to deepen our understanding of where they might fit into the overall human story.

## **SCIENCE AND RELIGION**

Common Area Designation: Natural Science or Studies in Religion

### **Humankind Discovers Science** (fall):

The greatest discovery of all science is perhaps the discovery of science itself. The process of imagining the mechanisms of how the world and cosmos works, and then observing, testing, considering, revising, discovering and communicating how nature works is not easy, natural or self-evident. In the first semester we will trace the discovery of science from the first non-mythological models to and through the Newtonian revolution, with brief pauses to reflect on the interactions between science and religion.

### **Scientists Look for Gods** (spring):

Most Holy Cross students recognize "science" and "religion" as two of humanity's most powerful institutions. However, most of us have not thought deeply about how we or others interact with these two institutions, or how these two institutions interact with each other. Physicist Ian Barbour has categorized four modes in which science and religion commonly interact, or how they have interacted throughout history: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. In the second semester we will examine what scientists, both atheists and theists, have said about how science & religion should interact and have interacted.

## **THE CONTEMPLATIVE IN ACTION**

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies

### **American Contemplatives** (fall):

The value of becoming "contemplatives in action" is at the heart of a Jesuit liberal arts education. But what does it mean to be a contemplative? What questions have historically driven individuals' desire to know the world and find meaning within it? How have ways of discerning and articulating one's self--including one's obligations to and needs from society--changed over time? In exploring such questions, we will encounter a range of voices from the past. Some were loud and well-known; many were not. Others were deliberately silenced in their pursuit of the many truths of human experience, the natural world, and the forces that shape our lives.



This history seminar will introduce students to methods of critical reading and research that conceptualize and contextualize questions at the core of modern society. It will also hone essential writing, oral, and visual presentation skills that make these concepts and experiences accessible to multiple audiences.

#### **American Activists** (spring):

If one question emerges above all others for the “contemplative in action,” it is this: “how, then, are we to live?” This course will revisit the contemplatives explored in the fall semester—and many others—to explore how answers to this question have shaped the course of history. How did they, and those that they inspired, enact various forms of political action, protest, and policy that reflected their vision of a more just world? How have evolving communication strategies and technologies shaped how individuals engage these struggles? In grappling with these questions in this second semester, students will not only continue to refine essential research and writing strategies. They will also work with Worcester community partners to discern and enact solutions to prominent social problems as “persons for and with others.” This course entails a commitment to a *Community-Based Learning* learning component.

## GLOBAL SOCIETY

### A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

Common Area Designation: Arts

#### **Drawing from Within** (Fall):

Unlock the power of expression through drawing! In this seminar/studio course, students will learn how to see and explore 3-dimensional space and objects and experiment with different media and processes to create 2 and 3 dimensional art work. Together, through the connected practices of reading, drawing, and writing, we explore and discuss identity, environment, and both social and political issues. Group critiques and discussions will help solidify students’ understanding of visual imagery. Students will also conduct research to compose concepts and themes supporting their projects. During the semester, we will work with an array of media, including charcoal, ink, graphite, watercolor, and other drawing materials. Students will use a sketchbook to practice drawing and to document their work. This course requires no prior drawing experience. This studio art course carries a standard \$50 fee for course supplies.

#### **Stories in Visual Language** (spring):

Do images tell stories or do stories inspire the creation of images? The spring semester starts with the introduction of the creation of narratives. We access the Nevins graphic novel collection for an in-depth study into the connection between visual imagery and text. We explore multiple perspectives to develop content for the creative process. Building on the artistic skill set of the previous semester we practice different styles of drawing and create a balance between writing and drawing. Students explore their imagination through creative writing, build the inner voice and create and tell stories through drawing. This studio art course carries a \$50 fee for course supplies.

### ENCOUNTERING DIFFERENCE

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies or Historical Studies

C.I.S. Concentration: Africana Studies

#### **Africa & the Other** (fall):

Contemporary western constructions of Africa often portray the continent as the “other,” signifying Africa's difference, mostly in negative connotations. This idea of the “other” has an important history with origins in the Victorian era. In this seminar, we will propose that anyone who wants to understand contemporary Africa must understand the African past and how that past has been (re)framed and (re)constructed over time. To do this, we will begin with a survey of Africa’s complex history of the modern period (1800s-1960s). Our examinations will include important historical debates about Africa’s colonial past, Africans’ experiences during European colonialism, and the legacy of colonialism. Together, we will explore resistance and response to the imposition and entrenchment of colonialism, and the nature of colonial rule as revealed in economic (under)development, ethnicity and conflict, and the environment in the twentieth century.

**Living with Africa** (spring):

Building on our historical work of the fall semester, in the spring we will evaluate the twentieth- and twenty-first- century postcolonial outcomes in Africa within the context of a globalizing world. Indeed, most postcolonial realities in Africa are steeped in history, but new and emerging issues also have complex and contemporary dynamics that are marked by hyper-globalization, climate change, social & cultural change, and the politics of democratization in Africa. In particular, we will focus our discussions on the challenges (and promises) facing present-day sub-Saharan African nations as they grapple with neo-colonialism marked by dependency, political instability, ethnic/resource conflicts, and the challenges (and promises) of global capitalism. Together, we will explore these issues using specific country- and thematic-studies.

**IMAGES FROM LATIN AMERICA**

Common Area Designation: Arts or Cross-Cultural Studies

C.I.S. Concentration: Latin American, Latinx, and Caribbean Studies

**Latin America through Cinema** (fall):

What do you think of when you hear "Latin America"? In this seminar, we will explore cinema from and about Latin America to expand our understanding of this culturally diverse region comprising more than twenty countries and territories. Together, we will examine topics such as gender, race, family, migration, politics, and religion through the lens of films by Latin American screenwriters and directors. Students will gain experience in film analysis, learning how to articulate the relationship between content and artistic form. Through this cinematographic encounter, we will begin to see and understand Latin America in new ways.

**Diverse Art of Latin America** (spring):

We will begin the spring semester with a role-immersion game, The Prado Museum Expansion: The Diverse Art of Latin America, that introduces a wide range of movements and styles present in 20th through 21st century Latin American art. In what ways do Latin American artists dialogue with European, African, and indigenous aesthetic traditions? What are the implications of framing paintings as "art for art's sake" versus creating art for political purposes? How do gender, ideology, and race interface with artistic production? Students will perform close readings of art works with a focus on the formal elements of painting and will hone their public speaking and argumentative writing skills. We will also explore public art in 20th and 21st century Latin America. Together, we will document and share different examples of public art in our communities and participate in the creation of a public art project.

**LOVE AND DESIRE**

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies or Literature

**Love in World Literature** (fall):

Throughout history, love has been a leading source of artistic inspiration, affecting great works of art and literature around the world. How has the representation of love changed over the ages across various literary genres and cultures? What do literary texts reveal about the impact of cultural and societal expectations on gender roles in various narratives of love? Should one transgress societal norms in the pursuit of love? What are the distinctions between romantic love and passionate desire? Our literary journey will start in Ancient Greece with the Phaedra and Hippolytus myth, and we will then explore the legend of the Spanish seducer Don Juan on page and screen. We will then continue our literary travels across continents and centuries, reading and discussing plays, short stories and novellas, and watching cinematic adaptations of literary works.

**Desire in a Global Context** (spring):

Desire - a sense of longing for a person, object or outcome - is a critical motivating force shaping how we interact with the world around us. This seminar will explore the representation of desire in a global context as it is reflected in modern fiction, non-fiction, film and media. How is longing for a person, object or outcome affected by reading fiction, watching films, using the internet or playing video games? How do contemporary fiction, art and media affect our desires, dreams and personal development during the era of globalization? What contributes to the global appeal of contemporary artists? To answer these questions, we will read and discuss the works of such best-selling authors as Milan Kundera, Haruki Murakami, Paulo Coelho, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Liudmila Ulitskaya, addressing a variety of global perspectives on the contemporary human condition.

## LOVE AND WAR

Common Area Designation: Arts or Literature

### **Love, Text and Performance** (fall):

Our intellectual inquiry in this seminar will center on the universal theme of love, through the lens of its myriad forms of artistic expression, including poetry, theater, film, visual art, narrative, and dance. While our primary focus will be on the literature of Spain and the Hispanic world, our explorations of different types of love (romantic, erotic, maternal, unrequited, and spiritual, to name but a few), will incorporate a variety of literary and artistic traditions. Texts will draw from the Early Modern to the Contemporary periods and will include works by Lorca, the Generation of '27 in Spain, Neruda, Paz, Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Petrarch, and others. Students will have the opportunity to explore self-expression through public speaking, performance and improvisation though no previous acting experience is necessary.

### **War and The Quest for Identity** (spring):

The experience of war has always provided fertile ground for artists and writers. What does it mean to come of age in times of conflict? In this seminar, we will explore war and its repercussions through various modes of artistic expression. Together, we will read texts that address different periods of historical turmoil in numerous genres, and delve into the themes of exile, conflict, and alienation, among others. A sampling of texts will include: post-Civil War novels in Spain by Laforet and Rodoreda, as well as early modern works such as the picaresque novel and texts by Cervantes, including *Don Quixote*. Students will have the opportunity to explore self-expression through public speaking, performance and improvisation though no previous acting experience is necessary.

## UNITY AND SOLITUDE

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies or Literature

### **The Search for Unity** (fall):

The drive to form intimate and group ties in the form of sexual and romantic bonds, friendships, families, and communities has been the driving force in the development of global civilization and has always been one of the central themes in the stories that human beings tell. In this course, we will explore how narratives across thousands of years have grappled with human needs and desires for protection, support, companionship, love, meaning, and communion with the divine, as well as the central role of storytelling and the reproduction of narrative tropes in reinforcing pair and group identity. We will also investigate the dark side of the search for unity and connection, including the formation of cults and repressive communities. Texts include folklore, myth, epic poetry, novels, short stories, memoir, visual art, music, and film.

### **The Quest for Solitude** (spring):

With the development of civilization came its discontents, ranging from the growth of elaborate hierarchies to the availability of temptations to weaken the body and soul. The quest for solitude in order to achieve personal freedom, mastery over desires, mental clarity, creative inspiration, or a greater connection with the divine, or else to heal heartbreak or atone for crimes and sins, has been a major element in the development of philosophy, religion, art, and literature in cultures around the world for millennia. In this course, we will explore a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts that grapple with the motivations and rewards of rejecting social and personal bonds and the desire for connection that inevitably challenges the commitment to solitude. Materials include Christian, Buddhist, and Jain scriptures; philosophical essays; poetry; short stories; novellas; memoirs; visual art; music; and film.

## NATURAL WORLD

### **(UN)NATURAL FOOD IN AMERICA**

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies

### **The Rise of Modern Food** (fall):

In this seminar, we will explore the dramatic transformation of the American food system. We will start from when diet was deeply shaped by where one lived and what time of year it was to our supermarket present, where one can walk into a grocery store and pick from tens of thousands of products no matter the day or where they live. This semester will examine the advances, events, and individuals that made this extraordinary abundance our expected normal, as well as the environmental and social costs of so much "cheap" food.

### **A More Natural Food System** (spring):

The American system makes a lot of inexpensive food. But there are high hidden costs to this abundance, such as the plight of immigrant laborers or manure run-off from farms in Iowa slowly suffocating sea life in the Gulf of Mexico. In the spirit of a Jesuit commitment to forming “women and men for others,” our seminar discussions will explore alternative visions for what a more “natural” or harmonious food system might look like. We will make special use of contacts in greater Worcester and meet with representatives from local businesses and nonprofits who are leading the way towards a more just, sustainable, and equitable food system for all involved from field to fork.

## **CONCEPTUALIZING NATURE**

Common Area Designation: Social Science

### **Developing Concepts & Theories** (fall):

How do we go from crying, babbling infants to cognitively complex adults? How do we make sense of our surroundings—including objects, places, and people—and use our knowledge to reason about the world? In this course we will seek a better understanding of the developing mind. We will discuss central questions, key theories, and research findings in cognitive and conceptual development, with topics that include infants’ early capabilities and how children develop theories in different domains of knowledge. At the intersections of developmental psychology, cognitive science, and education, the major themes of this course include the contributions of nature and nurture, mechanisms of change, and contextual factors in development.

### **Learning & Conceptual Change** (spring):

What makes humans smart (and not so smart)? In this course we will consider the cognitive representations and processes that serve as resources for and barriers to our understanding about the world. A major theme is that our default assumptions/intuitions about the world are limited and often inconsistent with scientific beliefs, and that these intuitions are influenced by the linguistic and cultural communities in which we reside. We will also examine the cognitive mechanisms that augment human cognition and support our learning about the world, with a focus on belief revision and conceptual change in scientific domains.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES**

Common Area Designation: Literature

### **Environmental Narratives** (fall):

The emerging field of environmental humanities challenges the ways we tend to think about our relationship to the natural world. This seminar looks at new “environmental narratives”—stories being told by black environmentalists, climate change comedians, Native American activists, and “clifi”—climate change fiction—that are blurring the boundaries between nature and cities, humans and animals, rich and poor. We’ll explore the power of stories to shake up our fixed assumptions, change the way we think and talk about climate change, and discover new ways we might live with the earth. Throughout the year we will focus on writing, your own and that of the works we study.

### **Worcester Stories** (spring):

One common assumption is that cities and nature are in binary opposition, occupying either end of a spectrum that separates human manufacture from the spontaneous creations of an ideal natural world. Built in the 19th-20th centuries as an industrial factory town, Worcester, Massachusetts offers an excellent case study of how closely intertwined are the human (artificial) and natural worlds. Worcester’s river, The Blackstone, first shaped it as a town. We will explore historic Worcester, and how Worcester is reimagining and rebuilding itself today as a greener, walking city. Trendy development like the new WooSox BallPark built on top of an old factory site provides a perfect site to test our course ideas. This semester features a *Community-Based Learning* component. You might participate in one of the city’s environmental justice groups, or its robust community gardening network, an animal shelter...the options are many. The semester ends with you writing your own Worcester environmental narrative based in part on your community work experience.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL MATHEMATICS**

Common Area Designation: Mathematical Science

### **Modeling the Environment** (fall):

In the third decade of the 21st century, humans are grappling with a number of tough decisions concerning our place in the natural world and the consequences of how we have used various resources and impacted our environment. Human activity is more and more

clearly causing long-term changes in the Earth's climate. If we continue to use fossil fuels to generate energy for our industry and transportation, what effects can we expect to see from the waste products they generate? Are there realistic alternatives that would sustainably provide for society's energy needs and have fewer harmful effects? How can we understand the progress of evolving diseases such as COVID-19 and design interventions to lessen their effects? One strategy for understanding potential consequences of the choices we make and the political, economic and social issues involved uses mathematical models (that is, equations of various sorts capturing relationships between the variables involved in a complex situation). The mathematical component of this course will introduce basic techniques for constructing models and study how they can be applied to study environmental issues.

#### **Analyzing Environmental Data** (spring):

It might be hard to remember at this point, but during December, 2019 and January, 2020, virtually the whole continent of Australia was in the grip of a terrible heat wave that led to essentially uncontrollable wildfires. People lost homes and had their lives severely disrupted in many ways. How unusual was that situation and when might we see something like it again? Some estimates placed the number of associated animal deaths over one billion. Where do figures like that come from and how confident are we about their accuracy? Our ability to develop plans to address crises and to understand the political, economic and social issues involved depends on dealing with quantitative information to infer patterns from measurements of the state of the world – that is, from data. This semester, the mathematics we study will focus on some basics of data analysis and statistics. We will also see ways that these topics can be applied to study environmental issues.

### **HABITAT**

Common Area Designation: Arts

#### **Germany's Greening** (fall):

Germans' engagement with nature blossomed around 1800 during Romanticism and bore fruit almost two centuries later in the founding and subsequent parliamentary election of the Green Party. When Germany became the last European Nation to coalesce into a nation in 1871, industrialization brought not only the shift from steam energy to electricity but also the transformation of impoverished rural laborers into urban factory workers as well as democratic-minded activists. Escaping urbanization, pollution, modernization to the country in order to recover from physical and psychological problems fueled all countercultural movements in Germany. One natural resource became a cultural, political, and economic symbol: the Rhine River, a natural border between Germany and France, a natural trade route between the Alps and the Atlantic--eventually drawing international attention from Greenpeace providing the world with an exceptional environmental case study.

#### **Bauhaus: Design for Democracy** (spring):

In 1919, Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus in Weimar. Gropius' students with their diverse background shared not only a multicultural experience, but also lived like Holy Cross students with ecological concerns--then students had to garden in order to feed themselves and to recycle war uniforms for warm clothing. Inspired by the medieval "Bauhütte", teachers strove for a holistic approach in their design ideas for a new Germany and a new century. In addition to introducing their students to working in different media, Gropius and his colleagues taught their students mindfulness and most importantly encouraged their creativity by challenging them to make the most out of a piece of paper and by staging theatrical happenings and celebrations. Circle, triangle, rectangle, cylinder ... the list of geometric figurations as design elements for costumes, furnishings, buildings may be limited, but the combinations are endlessly pleasing, surprising, and visually challenging.

### **MUSIC, SOUND, AND ENVIRONMENT**

Common Area Designation: Arts

#### **Sounding the Environment** (fall):

The American composer, John Cage, said, "I love sounds just as they are." The way we experience sounds involves a relationship between our bodies as receivers of sound and the producers of the sound--a relationship built not only on hearing but also on listening. Hearing is the way our bodies experience sound; listening is what we do with those sounds and how we make meaning from them. Listening is a kind of empathy, allowing us to know our environment through its sounds. This course will explore how the relationship between humans and sounds is shaped by our surroundings, emphasizing how we come to learn about and to listen to our environment and to each other.

### **Performing the Environment** (spring):

“Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do,” says Christopher Small, who coined the verb “musicking.” How do people express, conserve, experience, and perform the environment through music? Building on our study of sound, we will consider how people communicate their relationship to their sonic environment through their musical creations, and we will explore the role music plays as a resource in shaping our understanding of and our relationship with the environment. Just by listening we participate in the ecology of the performer-listener-composer relationship. At a time of environmental crisis, music offers us an artistic way through which we can approach sustainability and activism.

## **SELF**

### **BEGINNINGS & ENDINGS**

Common Area Designation: Social Science

#### **Laboring Under an Illusion** (fall):

In this seminar, we will explore the American way of birth. How does the way we “do birth” shape birth practices, outcomes and experiences? What role do mass media and biomedicine play in birth and what are the personal, social and ethical implications of hospital births? Why is birth the only condition where “well” people are admitted to hospitals? What role do alternative birth narratives play? What does it mean to mourn in the face of birth? Together, we will examine these questions and consider the influence of birth, infertility, and choosing to be child-free on our sense of social and personal selves. We will explore the polarizing tendencies of larger cultural debates over issues like abortion, designer babies and stem-cell research factor into the equation. Throughout, we will attend to the question of who gets to be the cultural authority on birth and why that matters. Drawing from popular media, history, psychology, anthropology, and especially sociology, students will learn to view birth as a social process, consider the politics of postmodern births and birthing, and give thought to their own assumptions about and encounters with birth.

#### **The Art of Dying Well** (spring):

This semester, the central tenet is to frame death as the opposite of birth, not life. We will explore what death and dying mean, how they are experienced, and the role of rituals and/or cultural scripts in helping us make sense of them. By tracing our socialization about death and dying, we will examine how the Hippocratic oath and assumptions of personal responsibility for health shape dying in America, whether we in the contemporary West live in denial of death, and what “dying well” means for each of us. By again interrogating who serves as the cultural authority on defining a “life worth living,” we learn how close encounters with death or dying change people’s experiences of life. Tackling the polarizing tendencies of cultural debates over medical aid in dying, transplantation medicine, burial rituals, and quality of life, we reflect on what makes “a good life.” Using community-based learning in local hospices and nursing homes, we will bear witness to how people experience and give meaning to death. Drawing from popular media, history, psychology, anthropology, and especially sociology, students will learn to view death as a social process, to consider the politics of death and dying in our postmodern world, to interrogate past and present encounters with death, and to envision their own death and dying. This course entails a commitment to a *Community-Based Learning* component.

### **FROM SELF TO OTHER**

Common Area Designation: Social Science

#### **Selfhood and Its Stories** (fall)

What is the self? How is our sense of self related to the stories we tell about ourselves? Can one tell a true life story? Or are the stories of our lives better regarded as “fictions,” spun out of the narrative imagination? Drawing on readings from psychology, literature, and philosophy as well as selected autobiographies and memoirs, this course will examine the process by which people create and tell the stories of their lives. Topics include the nature of memory, the place of language and culture in shaping the self, the difference between life as lived and life as told, and the role of life stories in the creation of personal identity. Alongside our exploration of these topics, we will also explore, and create, our own life stories and will therefore need to ask: *Who am I?* How did I become who I am? How should I live my life?

#### **Selfhood in the World** (spring):

This semester, we will turn our attention outward, focusing on the challenge of navigating the troubled world in which we often find ourselves. As the Holy Cross Mission Statement asks, “How do we find meaning in life and history? What are our obligations to one another? What is our special responsibility to the world’s poor and powerless?” And how do our answers to these questions bear

upon how we actually live in the world? Readings will likely include Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*, Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, and other important works. During the course of reading and discussing these works as well as attending to what is going on in the wider world, we will also ask: What might be done, in American society and beyond, to make our lives—and *others'* lives—better, and what role might we ourselves play in the process?

**HIP-HOP & IDENTITY** has been canceled for 2022-2023, sorry for any inconvenience.

### **IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, & TRAUMA**

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies or Literature

#### **Self and Conflict** (fall):

Over the past century-and-a-half societies have changed rapidly and in often traumatic ways, leaving the individual as well as collective identities contested and confused. In this seminar, we will read a variety of literary texts to examine the political, social, and psychological construction, destruction, and reconstruction of identity within the context of major international conflicts. Likely texts include: Chinua Achebe's, *Things Fall Apart*; Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*; Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*; Solmaz Sharif, *Look*; and excerpts from Jonathan Shay's *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*. These texts will lead us to larger investigations of how to locate personal agency in the face of structural and institutional oppression.

#### **Memories, Stories, Histories** (spring):

How do we create individual and communal narratives in relation to ideas of home, place, and the consequences of contemporary dislocation and migration? Specifically, we will explore the relationship between memory and story-telling to history and community-making through literary works by authors such as Jamaica Kincaid, Chang-Rae Lee, Toni Morrison, and Dorothy Allison. By examining together the experiences of dislocation and trauma from diverse perspectives, we will consider how race, ethnic identity, gender, class and sexuality are constructed and interrelated. In the process, we will raise complex moral questions that challenge us to investigate the relationship between identity, community and justice and our own responsibilities as individuals and members of identity groups.

### **MAPPING STORIES OF THE SELF**

Common Area Designation: Cross-Cultural Studies or Literature

#### **Mapping the Self Inward** (fall):

Who are you? How does your unique personal geography "map" tell the story of who you are, where you came from and who you will become? What part of your story gets mapped and what is unmappable? How do gender, race, sexuality, geography and trauma play into concepts of identity? We will study "maps" as a metaphor for life's journey, and then we will apply these ideas to works of literature, film and popular culture (in translation) from the Spanish-speaking world. You will curate your own parallel introspective odyssey as you reflect on these ideas and document them on an ArcGIS story map.

#### **Mapping the Self Outward** (spring):

This semester we will consider how the sense of self curated and examined in the first semester shifts and changes as your story turns outward. How does social media (Instagram, Rinsta versus Finsta, TikTok and Snapchat) influence how you construct your story and reveal your identity? How do these same media impact issues of gender, race and culture? Focusing primarily on artists from the Spanish-speaking world, we move from the selfie to the self portrait and explore how individuals have been expressing and presenting their constructed identities to the world over the centuries. Finally, we use Marie Arana's memoir, *American Chica*, as a means to explore how cultural and historical stories contribute to ideas of self. You will continue your ArcGIS story maps as you bring your story out to the world.

### **MATERIALIZING MEMORIES**

Common Area Designation: Historical Studies or Social Science

#### **Preserving the Self** (fall):

Our first semester explores what personal heritages exist in cemeteries. cemetery heritages. We ask what narrative makers intended, and what exists now? We explore global examples: Aokigahara; Ground Zero; Pompeii; celebrity gravesites; places like Greyfriar's Kirkyard, where a man named Tom Riddle lies, forgotten for his fictional counterpoint. We examine transformation: graves into tourist

sites, sacred places, national symbols, cultural touchstones. We consider how various actors – mourners, tourists, worshipers, academics, governing officials – can alter meaning. We look towards future “green burials.” When forests replace cemeteries and oceans become repositories for ashes, will the landscape of memory change?

### **Remembering Society** (spring):

Our next semester explores public approaches to memorialization. We focus on places and markers where we celebrate, mourn, educate, and reconstruct significant events of the past. We cover broad spans of time and space: constructed memorials like Chernobyl, Troy, Rapa Nui, and natural memorials like New Hampshire's decaying Old Man of the Mountain. We explore memorials like the Aids Quilt, meant to be temporary yet still preserved in the media. We explore the motives for creating public memorials: agents who commission and design them and the viewers impacted by them. We examine memorials of different kinds: natural features fused with human memory, planned buildings and sculptures, and organized performances. We engage with digitized memories and consider how society's shift towards virtual experiences will impact the development of future collective memories. The goal is awareness of how individual and collective narratives about the past can differ, and how they all come together to produce the entity we call “landscape.”

## **PURSUING HEALTH**

Common Area Designation: Studies in Religion

### **Health as a Personal Project** (fall):

What does it mean to be healthy and what is the place of illness and disability in a good life? How does stigma influence notions of illness and moral responsibility? What does ethics have to say about dignity (persons created in the image and likeness of God), autonomy, and interdependence in medical contexts that place a high value on independence and control? How is the view of persons as consumers of health care shaping approaches to health and well-being? In this seminar, we will draw on sources from Christian ethics, literature, film, and memoir to analyze particular issues including end of life care, reproductive technologies, responses to disabling conditions, and vocations in medicine.

### **Health as a Common Good** (spring):

What are the implications of claiming access to health care as a human right and a common good? What are some of the social determinants of health and illness? How do racism, sexism, and economic inequality impact health? What might solidarity, stewardship, the option for the poor and vulnerable, and other themes in Catholic social teaching contribute to medical ethics today? Together, we will explore issues in public health (including controversies around vaccines, communicable and infectious diseases, and other epidemics); the roles of markets, governments, and other institutions in providing access to care; the participation of human subjects in research; and environmental justice.

## **THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS**

Common Area Designation: Social Science

### **Self Discovery** (fall):

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, and exposure to those with serious life issues to address. This course entails a commitment to a *Community-Based Learning* (CBL) component (a weekly service commitment in the Worcester community totaling 15-25 hours/semester). CBL connects classroom learning objectives with civic engagement.