# Table of Contents

First-Year Seminars at Muhlenberg................................................................. p. 3

## 2015-2016 First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions................................. p. 4-15

(see below for individual course listings)

Registration Worksheet................................................................................. p. 16

(bring to June advising)

## 2015-2016 First-Year Seminars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mad Men, Geniuses, &amp; Nerds</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All You Can Eat?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quentin Tarantino, Film Geek</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representing the Body in Art</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewable Energy: “What’s Taking So Long?”</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning with Sabermetrics: Answering Baseball’s Tough Questions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ideology of Love from Plato to Brain Science</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating Curiosity</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Utopias</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Fairy Tales</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Controls Your Digital World?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Revolutions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Interwoven Lives: Linked Stories</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of Maps</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Song Left Behind</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now I Am Become Death: Brains, the Bomb, and the Bellicose</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema/Cyberspace/Cronenberg</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art, Experience, and the Irrational</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagining Michael Jackson</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Horror of Race on Film</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Adulthood: Coming of Age in the 21st Century</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Trip: American Literature &amp; Film</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who’s Eating What? Food, People and Earth</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microbial Chefs: Bacteria and Fungi in the Kitchen</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a Global Identity</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm Regards: Letter Writing</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuisine as Culture: Exploring Allentown's Hispanic Immigrant</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power of the Pen and Rachel Carson</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think Like Leonardo da Vinci</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endangered Writers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murder Ink</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding Your Muse</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why We Work</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wire: Representations of Inner City Life</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring Meaning</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee: The Great Soberer</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Earth Stories</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism, Faith and Violence: Martin Scorsese</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2015-2016 Scholar Seminars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917—The Year that Changed the World</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Open only to Dana Scholars)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Orwell: Art of Political Writing</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Open only to Dana Scholars)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring Anarchy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Open only to RF Fellows)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions Under Uncertainty</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Open only to Muhlenberg Scholars)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First-Year Seminars at Muhlenberg

What are First-Year Seminars?
First-Year Seminars are small, discussion-oriented courses that introduce students to what it means to think deeply, to talk, read and write critically about ideas. Required of all first-year students, First-Year Seminars provide the opportunity to work closely with a faculty member and to read and write about a topic in depth.

Taught by faculty from departments throughout the College, seminars vary in subject. Some examine a topic from an interdisciplinary perspective; others focus on particular issues within a discipline. What all First-Year Seminars share is an emphasis on writing and thinking critically about the values and assumptions underlying various approaches to knowledge.

All First-Year Seminars are designated writing-intensive, and therefore, they require frequent writing and reading. Seminars teach students how to formulate a thesis and develop an argument or an interpretation. In addition, students learn how to collect, evaluate and cite evidence that supports and qualifies a thesis. With the help of professor’s comments on preliminary drafts, students also learn how to revise their work.

What distinguishes First-Year Seminars from other courses at Muhlenberg?
First-Year Seminars are limited in size to fifteen. This small size creates a community of inquiry where participants share ideas. Often the professor serves as the academic advisor to the seminar participants. This arrangement enhances the effectiveness of the advising process and helps ease the transition to college life.

In addition, First-Year Seminars are assigned a Writing Assistant, a trained writing tutor who assists first-year students with their writing, reading and critical thinking skills. Writing Assistants (WAs) are highly motivated Muhlenberg students; all are skilled writers. They attend seminar classes and arrange one-on-one and small group conferences with students. Because WAs and professors work together closely, these peers provide first-year students with a writing specialist who understands the course material and the expectations of the seminar.
First-Year Seminars — 2015-2016

FYS 103: Mad Men, Geniuses and Nerds
Dr. Mary Bryne
Gabrielle McCullough, Writing Assistant
Science is a human activity and as such can be impacted by societal pressures. We see scientists portrayed by society’s evaluation of their work. They are admired, lofted to celebrity status, cursed as heretics, portrayed as madmen and considered “nerds” out of touch with the mainstream. In this seminar we will explore some of the ways that society influences scientific inquiry. Should politicians decide what research is “hot” and what is taboo? Should religious doctrine dictate scientific theory? Do scientists have an obligation to adhere to the wishes of society? How do personal experiences affect the choices that scientists make? This seminar will explore these questions through readings that include biographical and fictional portrayals of the lives of scientists and essays on medical ethics and the philosophy of science.

FYS 108: All You Can Eat?: Media, Marketing and the Food Industry
Dr. Susan Kahlenberg
Lauren Kenney, Writing Assistant
This first-year seminar is interested in why and how food companies market, brand, and advertise their products. How should food marketing be regulated, if at all? How does food marketing affect food choices and preferences? We will examine how media have assumed a socializing role in shaping what we eat and, therefore, our health. We will investigate how food companies use political processes, economic pressures, and marketing imperatives to produce, manufacture, label, and sell food and beverages. In exploring the history, regulation, dietary and nutritional information of food, in addition to media representations of food/food culture, students will develop a critical understanding of the U.S. food industry. Course work will include analysis of popular and scholarly texts, governmental hearing proceedings and policies, television programs, web sites, print and digital marketing campaigns, and user-generated content, to name a few. This course is writing intensive with students completing in-class writings and activities, short analytical essays, and a longer research paper developing from peer and faculty review.

FYS 113: Quentin Tarantino, Film Geek
Dr. Franz A. Birgel
Natasha Vargas, Writing Assistant
This course will examine the films directed by Quentin Tarantino as a basis for practicing oral and written communication. Tarantino, whose fast talking, allegedly super violent films helped to reinvigorate American cinema, was largely an autodidact who learned his craft watching films while working in a video store. Like Tarantino, we will watch films closely and analyze their themes, structures, and influences. This seminar will examine Reservoir Dogs, Pulp Fiction, Jackie Brown, the two-part Kill Bill, Inglourious Basterds, and Django Unchained, as well as some of the many disparate films that inspired him. Excerpts from selected French New Wave and Asian films, The Killing, Coffy, The White Hell of Piz Palu, and The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, as well as others will also be screened. Time should permit us to watch some of these films in their entirety. From other films we will only have time to watch excerpts, and you will probably be required to watch two or three films outside of class—more details regarding out-of-class screenings will follow. Course readings will consist of secondary literature on Tarantino and postmodern popular culture. Since this is a writing-intensive course, students will write short weekly essays as well as some longer essays during the semester. The seminar will meet for four hours on Monday evenings and two hours on Wednesday evenings. The major films will be screened during the Monday evening meetings.

Disclaimer: As stated in the FYS course description, these films contain scenes of very graphic violence and vulgar language. If you feel uncomfortable watching and discussing these films, then you should choose another seminar.
FYS 119: Representing the Body in Art
Dr. Pearl Rosenberg
Talia Seidenfeld, Writing Assistant
How do creative representations of the human body invite us to imagine our idealized selves, as well as reflect back to us information about ourselves within social, political, and historical contexts? In this seminar we explore how the notion of the human body as a site of continuing fascination, as well as critical inquiry, has been conceptualized across time by the language of the arts. Through a variety of encounters with works of art by iconic figurative artists (Michelangelo, Frida Kahlo, Egon Schiele to start), as well as more contemporary visions of the body (in performance, photography, film, literary fiction, essays and memoir), we will explore themes of idealism, vanity, power, and various forms of distortions, projections, and scapegoating. This seminar is considered to be a writing-intensive class where students will be asked to participate in critical reading, writing, and research activities in addition to having encounters with a variety of art forms.

Prof. Jean Simmonet
Michelle Blazewicz, Writing Assistant
“The search for useful energy by human population of the world may be regarded as one of the constants of recorded history. Another historical constant is the desire for national populations to live together in a clean and safe environment until they are threatened by other national populations when even more energy is needed. A third constant is the irreversible path of development of better ways to generate the supply of energy needed to make societal life safer and more comfortable.”
-Paul Kruger, Professor Emeritus at Stanford University.
The above introduction by Paul Kruger to his book Alternative Energy Resources, captures the essence of this seminar: there is nothing new in the search for useful and clean energy. With all the available new technology, and the development in this domain, it seems that the time has come for a new renewable energy era. But is it so certain, and why is it taking so long? And are we, as individuals, able to influence the choices ahead of us? Are we sufficiently aware of the challenges, opportunities and risks? At the end of this seminar, we should be able to have a better understanding of the complexity of a “spaceship earth” powered by renewable energy; we should have identified opportunities for entrepreneurial ventures in a global world. We will be better informed about the need for our decisions and actions. We will be able to play our role in a growing educated community facing the future energy need as it will develop for their children and grandchildren. Topics will include a review of the known available renewable energy of today. Departure points will be our own perception of our need and our knowledge of the possible path ahead of us. We will then progress with our review of the positives and the negatives of each available renewable energy solution. We will research why the entrepreneurial world is, or should be, playing an important role, and we will end the seminar with our own “to do” check list as a perfectly energy conscious citizen of the world.

FYS 125: Reasoning with Sabermetrics: Answering Baseball’s Tough Questions
Dr. Mike Huber
Jonathan Walker, Writing Assistant
Sabermetrics is the search for objective truth in baseball. This seminar will explore and discuss the hard questions in America’s Pastime. How will history treat players who have used performance-enhancing drugs? What caused a shift in Hall of Fame election criteria? How do general managers determine the worth of a player, and is anyone worth a quarter of a billion dollars? How do we compare players from different eras? Who will pitch the next no-hitter, and when? There will be some numerical computations as a part of this course, but a good grasp of algebra and some exposure to Excel are all you need. We will focus on writing about the analysis of such computations. Can you name without the internet at least seven ways in which a batter can reach first base? Then this is the seminar for you!
FYS 128: The Ideology of Love from Plato to Brain Science  
Dr. Alec Marsh  
Christopher Baumgartel, Writing Assistant  
We passionately need to believe that love is the most natural thing in the world. We believe that true love can save us, redeem us, make us happy and solve our problems. In fact, as we shall see, love and desire are shaped, directed, and largely controlled by social conventions. When we remark that ‘true love conquers all,’ we are tacitly acknowledging the pressure that social custom brings to bear on love and its unruly passions. By social custom, I mean property and financial relations; when Mdm. de Nucingen tells young Rastignac: ‘Mixing money and feelings, isn’t it awful. You won’t be able to love me’ (Balzac 114) in *Pere Goriot* she puts her finger on a social question that continues to perplex and wound. Aside from social considerations, the ‘normal’ forms of love and even the aim of love seem to change depending on social practices, psychological theories and even science. Hence the importance of the key term, ‘ideology,’ for this course. A tough term to define, ‘ideology’ refers to social practices, ‘habits,’ and beliefs that one accepts unquestioningly as being ‘natural,’ or ‘just common-sense’ including scientific materialism. Evidently, even something as ‘natural’ and special as love is not independent of unexamined beliefs. Read, write, explore.

FYS 133: Cultivating Curiosity  
Dr. Jim Bloom  
Erin Gistaro, Writing Assistant  
In 2009, NASA launched *Curiosity*, its new and now spectacularly productive Mars exploration “rover,” an achievement that coincided with the adoption by Muhlenberg faculty of “cultivating curiosity” as a college learning goal. In this seminar students will try out and reflect on various ways of cultivating curiosity by studying work from a wide range of academic fields, including literature, science, and social theory. Screenings of such inquiry-centered movies as *Spellbound*, *Erin Brockovich*, *A Beautiful Mind* will complement these reading assignments.

FYS 134: American Utopias  
Dr. Lynda Yankaskas  
Brooke Dobossy, Writing Assistant  
What would a perfect society look like? How could we create a perfect community? How have Americans’ answers to these questions changed over time? What have been the results of attempts to put utopian ideas into practice in American life? How have dreamers and dissenters been received by the wider public? This writing-intensive seminar will examine how Americans in a variety of times and places have imagined a “more perfect union,” and how some of them acted on their ideas. We will investigate the ways that the pursuit of perfection has been shaped by historical and social context, and ask what utopianism can tell us about broader currents of American life. Our focus on visions of American community—and efforts to create the perfect society—will also allow us to think carefully about citizenship and social change. Examinations of utopian visions across the broad span of American history will help us think about the evolution of American values and desires (what constitutes the “good life?”), and about cultural, social, and political pathways as alternative means of making change. In a related vein, we will think together about the intersections of private values and public life, including questions about who gets to set the national agenda, the mutual obligations of communities and their constituents, and what happens to dissenters and outsiders.

FYS 139: Reading Fairy Tales  
Dr. Grant Scott  
Sarah Mercanti, Writing Assistant  
This course focuses on the origins, cultural and social history, psychology, gender dynamics and literary genre of Fairy Tales. We will examine some of the most influential works by Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm in a variety of interdisciplinary contexts. The second half of the course will consider selected adaptations of these tales in different media, including illustrated books, paintings, poems, novels, short stories and films from different historical eras. The course will analyze how the meaning of these original tales has changed over time and how they have been transformed by contemporary culture.
FYS 142: Who Controls Your Digital World?
Prof. Tina Hertel
Holden Walter-Warner, Writing Assistant
Digital technologies are closely integrated in how we learn, work, socialize and collaborate in an ever-connected digital culture. Alongside these opportunities are challenges and realities in how these digital technologies intersect with our everyday lives. This course examines the cultural impact of digital technologies, how an individual can actively and effectively participate in these digital cultures, and what external forces, policies, and institutions may influence control over these digital environments. This seminar will explore contemporary online behaviors and the challenges associated with them and will give students exercises to mindfully observe, understand, reflect, and take control of these information technology practices.

FYS 143: Musical Revolutions
Dr. Ted Conner
Nicole (Coco) Rich, Writing Assistant
What makes Nietzsche think that “God is Dead”? How is Mozart’s Marriage of Figaro related to the French revolution? What’s so earthshaking about Darwin’s Origin of the Species, and why did Marx write the Communist Manifesto? Revolutions in music, politics, science and literature are often intertwined. We will read books and listen to music that shook the very foundations of Western culture. Through class discussions and writing explorations, we will see what kinds of connections can be made between these works and how they affect us today. Other possible texts for the seminar may include Freud’s On Dreams, Berlioz’s The Damnation of Faust, Nietzsche’s The Gay Science and Stravinsky’s The Rite of Spring.

FYS 146: On Interwoven Lives: Linked Stories
Dr. Dawn Lonsinger
Kate O’Donoghue, Writing Assistant
Being neither novels nor classic short story collections, linked narratives are strange hybrids that define a world, delivering disparate narrative pleasures—“the novel’s long immersion into a character’s world and the short story’s energetic (and mortal) brevity.” We will consider how linked collections—such as Kingston’s The Woman Warrior and Torres’s We the Animals—uniquely draw into focus the ways our layered lives are ruptured by and wedded to others’ narratives. Through a series of critical essays and creative reflections, we will investigate how individual stories are linked by an incident, a place, or the development of characters, and explore what this reveals about being simultaneously (subjectively) alone and in community, essentially the protagonist of our own lives and a small part of events. The individual stories remind us how quickly everything we are can be upended, while the collections reveal the protracted evolution of our lives. We will examine how stories work with and against other stories in a book, collectively producing feeling and knowledge beyond the sum of parts, as well as how large social narratives and individual stories complicate one another, paying particular attention to the necessary fire and silences that rise up from the gaps between stories.

FYS 149: The Power of Maps
Prof. Sharon Albert
Seth Krivchenia, Writing Assistant
In this course, we will read, think, and write about maps: how we use them, how we make them, and the power they have to inform, to transform, and to shape how we understand our world. Readings will include work on the significance of maps as visual representations of space and the authoritative power they can wield. We will also read texts dealing with the history of cartography, as well as some travel literature and geographies, real and imagined. Our questions will explore the assumptions that underlie the making and using of maps. For instance: What gets included on maps? How are they oriented? What gets left out? Who makes the maps? How do maps sustain structures of power? And how and when can they be instruments of change? Students will use the theoretical work we read to create their own critical analyses of maps, and will also think and write analytically about the creation of maps and how maps are used.
FYS 151: No Song Left Behind  
Dr. Roland Kushner  
Gregory Kantor, Writing Assistant

Songs captivate listeners with sound, with memory, and with voice. This seminar examines the large body of songs in such canons as the “Great American Songbook,” folk music, musical theatre, “classic rock,” and more, and tries to answer the question of why some songs captivate listeners for a very long time. Seminar participants will read and think about songs as evidence of their historic and social contexts, as expressions of the artistic movements of their day. We’ll use songs to learn about measurement and dimension, to explore how they have fit into the music marketplaces over time, and learn the business of songwriting over the centuries and decades. We’ll write about songs as individual forms of expression that are shared and sung together in ensemble and choral work, and as the work of individual singer-songwriters. Student participants do not need to be musicians, but they should be good listeners with open hearts who welcome discussion and learning about different kinds of artistic and lyrical expression.

FYS 154: Now I Am Become Death: Brains, the Bomb, and the Bellicose  
Dr. Brett Fadem  
Weston Conner, Writing Assistant

The gathering of intellectual talent for the construction of the atom bomb was attended by many of the world’s most creative scientists. The product of their labors, however, was the most destructive weapon yet assembled. This seminar will explore the lives of these geniuses, the environment of the Manhattan Project, and the ethical issues that wove their way through the daily existence of scientists both in the United States and Europe. While some of the major players appeared to be deeply engaged with the ethical minefield that surrounded them, others seemed oblivious, and a few went so far as to adopt an attitude of active disengagement. We will explore these issues both from a modern perspective and from that of the participants.

FYS 155: Cinema/Cyberspace/Cronenberg  
Dr. David Tafler  
Genevieve Wall, Writing Assistant

The work of film director David Cronenberg explores behavioral and environmental events in a world shaped by contemporary technology. Those films with characters struggling with physical and spiritual change and decay include: the reprogramming of the human mind in Videodrome, gene-splicing in The Fly, immersion in eXistenZ. Cronenberg focuses on the characters' shifting mental and physical condition during their respective heroic struggles. The heroes of his films represent the "odd-man out," who tries to cope with some weird aspect of the emerging cybersphere. Cyberspace opens new avenues of interaction among people occupying different territory in a virtual environment. The Cronenberg films become a catalyst for considering the changes taking place within that environment, in the construction of narrative, through the organization of cinema experience. The seminar will juxtapose Cronenberg's three-decade fascination for technology's cultural effects with the social and media positioning of students entering college in 2015. The seminar will question the relationship between technology and the human body (itself circumscribed by technology in the form of genetic mapping, drug therapy, advanced surgery). Finally, the seminar will look at the transformation of these issues within a techno-psychological medium, the cinema.

Disclaimer: These films contain scenes of graphic violence and vulgar language. If you feel uncomfortable watching and discussing these films, then you should choose another seminar.

FYS 158: Art, Experience, and the Irrational  
Professor Kevin Tuttle  
Ann Corrao, Writing Assistant

Artists and writers work at the limits of understanding. As they struggle with experiences that seem beyond language, possibly in realms that appear irrational, how do artists and writers invent the language they need to reveal these experiences? What is
the nature of language and what is its potential for newfound experience? In what ways have artists and writers created new structure in order to describe their experience? Picasso said "There is no such thing as 'feet' in nature." The French artist Matisse, as an old man, said with satisfaction "At last I've forgotten how to draw." What can these statements have in common? We will examine these and other unusual statements that artists have uttered and analyze how artists think, how they work, and investigate the paradoxical worlds they inhabit. Through reading, weekly informal writing to extended written analyses, discussion, drawing, and working in a sketchbook/journal we will analyze these issues; issues which haunt artists and may propel their work in unexpected directions. Some of the readings will come from John Dewey’s Art as Experience, Charles Baudelaire’s Flowers of Evil, Suzuki’s Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind, Rudolph Arnheim’s Art and Visual Perception.

FYS 167: Imagining Michael Jackson
Professor Roberta Meek
Ashley Gerhardt, Writing Assistant

Few would argue that Michael Jackson’s star persona was in a realm of its own. At the time of his death on June 25, 2009 at the age of 50, he had been a global superstar for four decades. This course will trace his public persona from child prodigy, cherubic front man of the Jackson 5 to global megastar responsible for the biggest selling album of all time to the demonized “monster” accused of child sexual molestation as a lens through which to understand the complexities of race, racism and gender identity. We will explore the social construction of race, gender and specifically Black masculinity. Questions we will explore are: Who was Michael Jackson? What were Jackson’s cultural, social, and political origins? What Black vernacular practices shaped Jackson’s performance practices? How was Jackson’s race and gender “read” at various stages and why? The sources we will examine to begin to answer these complex questions include among other things, Jackson’s recordings, short films, scholarly articles, news coverage, and readings on critical theory.

FYS 168: The Horror of Race on Film
Professor Frederick Staidum
Lena Schneider, Writing Assistant

People of color are constantly endowed with supernatural and monstrous qualities from depictions of Michael Brown’s “demon” face to Latin@ children as carriers of “plague.” These associations between perceived human difference and fear, however, are not new. The First-Year Seminar, The Horror of Race on Film, explores a sampling of twentieth-century Horror cinema alongside nineteenth-century Gothic literature in order to explicate the long history of representing the scary Other via the nonwhite and foreign presence. Through confrontations of good/evil, human/monster, and living/dead, the Gothic and its filmic offspring, Horror, embodies societal anxieties regarding difference and the unknown. This course reveals the myriad ways Horror and the Gothic incorporate marginalized racial, ethnic, and national identities as analogies for the terrifying and sublime. We will ponder the following: How do these racialized “monsters” simultaneously reinforce and trouble the lines between human and non-human, normal and abnormal, Self and Other? How has society deployed the grotesque figure of the monster/corpse/alien/ghost/freak to regulate the fluid definitions of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, class, and sexuality? What are some of the ramifications for marginalized individuals and communities who are forced to negotiate these monstrous forms?

FYS 171: Emerging Adulthood: Coming of Age in the 21st Century
Dr. Erika Bagley
Francesca Aldrich, Writing Assistant

Are you an adult? It is a straightforward question that the majority of college students cannot answer with a straightforward “yes” or “no.” While no one was looking, a whole new stage of development has made adulthood one more step out of reach. Between the awkwardness of adolescence and responsibility of adulthood comes “emerging adulthood” which describes a period of feeling in-between and a journey to adulthood that happens on a longer, more winding road than in previous generations. We will explore the economic, social, educational, and political forces that have changed how many in the Western world will experience the transition to adulthood. What are the privileges and challenges that come with a longer maturational process? Does an extended period for “coming of age” change how we will view and experience adulthood? Ultimately, we will consider whether “emerging adulthood” is necessarily a good thing? We will draw on work by
psychologists, sociologists, journalists, and historians to examine these questions and gain a deeper understanding of what emerging adulthood means for the individual and society.

FYS 176: Road Trip: American Literature & Film
Professor Susan Clemens
Tara Werner, Writing Assistant
Road Trip! The excitement of dropping everything and taking to the road is an American joy. We love the road and the freedom and adventure it represents, whether by automobile, train, bicycle, or on foot. In this seminar we will read books, short stories, and articles about other people’s journeys. We will see films, listen to the music of the road, take a short road trip, and connect the intellectual with the actual wherever possible. In the past, core readings have been chosen from the following: Water for Elephants, On the Road, Into the Wild, The Motorcycle Diaries, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, The Glass Castle. We will watch a number of films that deal with road experiences, for example: Oh! Brother, Where Art Thou, Thelma and Louise, Big Fish, Little Miss Sunshine, Elizabeth Town, and even Up! From our readings and film, we will explore the lessons learned on and from the road, including personal growth and new ways of thinking.

FYS 179: Who’s Eating What? Food, People and Earth
Dr. Mark Wolfmeyer
Joanna (JoJo) Tsacoyeanes, Writing Assistant
The global community faces two seemingly disjointed crises: one of environmental sustainability and the other of social justice. Are there common points between social injustice and environmental catastrophe? In our efforts to understand such connections, this FYS will focus on how acquiring and distributing one of our basic needs, food, impacts people and the earth. How does what we eat affect the global community? We will grapple with questions like "Is it ethical to eat a fast food burger" and discuss notions ranging from genetically modified food to the lack of fresh foods in urban areas. We will read, think and write about the ways food can be gotten, from industrial agriculture to foraging. In all cases, we will engage notions of justice, from socioeconomic to political to ecological. Ultimately, we will face tough questions about the ethics of eating, especially as these relate to the possible exploitation of people, animals and environments. Students will engage in both formal and informal writing across course materials and experiences. Activities will include films, discussions with farmers and chefs, and lessons on cheese-making and fruit canning. As soon as the ground thaws, we will till soil, plant and harvest in the college's Community Garden.

FYS 181: Microbial Chefs: Bacteria and Fungi in the Kitchen
Dr. Debra Walther
Lydia Condoluci, Writing Assistant
Bread, cheese, yogurt, beer, wine, and chocolate. These favorite foods and beverages have been an integral part of human society for millennia. The common thread amongst this group is that microscopic organisms are crucial to their development. Humans have been producing these foods using organisms that until the last few hundred years have not been visible/identifiable, yet have played critical roles in not only the production of these foods, but also the vast nuances of texture, flavor, and scent that they impart. This course will focus on live-culture and fermented foods from the perspectives of culture, history, socio-economics, science, and politics. We will examine the relationship between microbes and the foods they help to produce and explore the larger cultural and historical impacts of these types of live-culture foods. How has the use of microbes in food production helped shape/influence differences in taste across cultures and/or in establishing societal norms in this regard? What role(s) have these foods played in establishing cultural traditions and potentially forging cross-cultural connections? How has the use of microorganisms impacted politics and regulations on food production in the U.S. vs. worldwide? What are the potential impacts of various microbial infestations of crops on the final product/taste of fermented beverages? A combination of readings, in-class discussions, field-trips and a variety of analytical writing assignments (in-class writing, journaling, weekly response pieces) will foster student connections between these types of foods, the role of microorganisms in their production, and their impacts on society and culture.
FYS 182: Developing a Global Identity
Dr. Paula Irwin
Emily Morton, Writing Assistant
Globalization impacts us in complex ways and forces us to constantly re-think our sense of identity and place within society. How can we overcome our own prejudices and increasingly connect with and understand the rest of the world? This course will explore issues related to cultural identity and try to reconcile cultural differences that often reflect incompatible norms and behaviors. We will discuss how we can engage with issues that concern the world in and beyond the United States -- human rights, environmental protection, gender equality, and poverty. Readings will draw from a variety of disciplines including anthropology, political science, ethnolinguistics, and international business. Students will do in-class writing frequently and hand in three longer essays during the semester. Revision will be a regular part of all assignments that are handed in for a grade.

FYS 183: Warm Regards: The History, Psychology, & Art of Letter Writing
Professor Tina Hertel
Amulya Makkapati, Writing Assistant
When was the last time you sat down and wrote—not typed but “pen and paper” wrote—a letter to someone? Received a letter? This course will examine the importance of letter writing in our culture. We will explore the extent to which, as some cultural critics claim, letter writing is dying and what implications that might have for our culture. But we will also consider alternative possibilities—that, rather than dying, letter writing is assuming new and vital forms. We will look at letter writing as a cultural practice, examining famous letters in a historical context, learning about who writes letters and why, and analyzing the impact of digital technology on letter writing. And yes, there will be some actual letter writing! We will also be writing analyses that engage what scholars in various disciplines wish to teach us about the subject.

FYS 205: Cuisine as Culture: Exploring Allentown's Hispanic Immigrant Communities
Dr. Erika Sutherland
Alison Smith, Writing Assistant
Humans have always thought about food as something much more than physical sustenance. In this course we will explore the concept of food most specifically as a cultural marker. In the local Hispanic immigrant communities food may be a marker of assimilation or socioeconomic status or it may be a nostalgic link to a distant homeland or disappearing culture. Looking at food through the eyes of filmmakers and the words of poets, historians, visionaries, and activists, we will consider food as an object of study and a lens through which broader issues can be analyzed. Exploring the area’s diverse Hispanic communities, you will be able to add your own sensorial and analytical impressions to this mix.

FYS 212: Power of the Pen and Rachel Carson
Dr. Patricia Bradt
Jadmin Mostel, Writing Assistant
When best seller Silent Spring was published in 1962, marine biologist Rachel Carson launched the environmental revolution. This book changed forever the way humans not only interpret their relationship to their environment, but also how they viewed government’s role in protecting human and environmental health. Ms. Carson's earlier books about the ocean (ex. The Sea Around Us) established her reputation as an outstanding author and also provided a foundation from which she developed scientific arguments for irresponsible pesticide use. This course will examine Ms. Carson's writings about the sea, the controversies precipitated by Silent Spring and the effectiveness of current legislation. By reading several biographies students will observe how different biographers view Ms. Carson’s life. Readings from reviews of Silent Spring and from Ms. Carson’s personal letters will provide insight into the impact of Silent Spring on the agro-chemical and government establishments and on Carson’s personal life. Students will read Murphy’s What a Book Can Do, which discusses Silent Spring’s impact and how it inspired the public to force governmental institutions to investigate indiscriminate pesticide use and to respond with appropriate legislation.
FYS 225: Think Like Leonardo da Vinci
Prof. Tim Averill
Brendan O’Hara, Writing Assistant
This writing-intensive seminar will be an exploration in learning how to think creatively and critically about everything. This seminar will ask you to expand your imaginative powers and become a Renaissance woman or man. We will use the recent bestseller *How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci* by Michael Gelb to fuel your ‘everyday genius’. Students will learn Gelb’s seven da Vincian principles: curiosity, demonstration, sensation, embracing ambiguity, balancing art and science, self-awareness of one's body, and the interconnectedness of all things. Work will include daily notebook entries, short analysis papers, and a final project using writing and visual collage. Readings may include excerpts from Leonardo’s Notebooks and books on creativity, design, cooking physics, drawing and fencing. Students might also learn the beginnings of how to draw, mind-map, cook, and fence.

FYS 229: Endangered Writers: From Free Speech to Hate Speech to Censorship
Professor Linda Miller
Catherine LoDato, Writing Assistant
This first-year seminar focuses on the first amendment of our Constitution, which states, “Congress shall make no law….abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press...” Our seminar will focus on what “freedom of speech” means. We will begin our investigation by analyzing various theories on the extent to which freedom of speech is important. We will read various essays by philosophers like J.S. Mill and constitutional scholars like Cass Sunstein. Once we have a handle on the core debate, we will turn to novels, perhaps by Milan Kundera and Nora Gold, and films, such as *The Lives of Others*, which place into context what’s at stake when writers put unpopular or controversial words to the page.

FYS 243: Murder Ink
Dr. Francesca Coppa
Alexandra Loeser, Writing Assistant
"Murder Ink" will explore an immensely popular fictional genre: the detective story. We will examine its evolution out of the 19th century gothic and its evolving techniques, as well as its impact on literary and popular culture. We will also study the methods of the detective and use them in our own critical thinking and writing: we will ask questions, gather information, evaluate and interpret evidence, and construct compelling arguments. We will be reading primary sources - mystery novels, short stories, plays – as well as history and theory; we may also look at some filmic adaptations. Writers studied will include Edgar Allen Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, G.K. Chesterton, Agatha Christie, Dashiell Hammett, and Raymond Chandler.

FYS 256: Finding Your Muse
Dr. Michael London
Hannah Dempsey Schott, Writing Assistant
In this seminar we’ll explore how inspiration and group dynamics play a role in the creative process and learn to write and think about something we love: making music. There is nothing more satisfying than being creative in a community where everyone is actively collaborating with each other. In exploring our “creative muses”, we’ll begin by looking at various areas of musical performance including singing, instrumental work, soloing, dancing, accompaniment, songwriting and musical theater. We'll read about how creative people have gone about their work and examine the factors that enhance musicality and our ability to create with others. Finally, we’ll engage in active learning through small group discussions, collaborative writing, reflection and improvisation as we study our own efforts to create together and learn to analyze the factors that bring success. We’ll end the term by becoming a performance ensemble, writing and performing an original ensemble show for the Muhlenberg Community.
FYS 267: Why We Work  
Dr. Holmes Miller  
Ashley Malafonte, Writing Assistant
Why do we work? How do we work? What does "working" mean? For some working implies spending time doing a job to earn money to buy things or pay for services—a necessary endeavor to facilitate the real aspects of living. For others work can become addictive—an end in itself. Work often includes much more than the something one does to earn money or to escape from the rest of life; work also includes a venue for creative and professional expression, a means for self-fulfillment, an outlet for social contact, and a way to help others. Yet work (and unemployment) also can create tensions that affect family life and induce stress. Work can be an anchor keeping us down to a liberating force lifting us up. In this seminar we will investigate work's place in our lives through oral histories, novels, autobiography, and readings and films. Our goal is to understand more clearly how work affects us and to develop a perspective to analyze our actions and the actions of others.

FYS 275: The Wire: Representations of Inner City Life  
Dr. Brian Mello  
Rebecca Phillips, Writing Assistant
This seminar utilizes works of sociology, political science, and political philosophy to provide critical lenses for examining and evaluating the representations of the urban experience depicted in The Wire. The Wire is not a documentary, but the creators of the series hoped it would restart a conversation about problems and concerns affecting American cities. This course will use season 3, as well as segments from the other four seasons, of the series as a representation and critique of the state of life in America’s urban neighborhoods. We will examine what assumptions are made by, and what implications should be drawn from the representation of socioeconomic concerns in The Wire? Students will watch (out of class) one episode per week, which will stand as the guidepost for readings and class discussion. These episodes will serve to focus issues in the readings, which will concentrate on the status of the war on drugs, persistent socio-economic problems, pathways and impediments to social mobility, the dynamics of race, constructions of masculinity, and the hollowness of the American dream.

FYS 277: Exploring Meaning  
Dr. Chip Gruen  
Forrest Kentwell, Writing Assistant
By bringing incompatible elements together, mythmakers, artists, and entertainers alike are not usually attempting to provide answers, but they are attempting to create an opportunity for thought. In this seminar, we will consider examples from mythic texts, contemporary artistic expression, and popular culture that seek to stimulate conversation and speculation about meaning, values, and reality. Why is comedy funny? Why is horror horrific? What makes myths relevant? We will explore these questions using theoretical models from several disciplines to delve deeply into both ancient and contemporary expressions of human culture; from Gilgamesh and the Bacchae to Monty Python and zombie apocalypse.

FYS 282: Coffee: The Great Soberer  
Dr. Keri Colabroy  
Rebecca Herz, Writing Assistant
The sale and consumption of coffee is a billion dollar industry, making it the second most traded commodity around the world (behind petroleum). The coffee bean was first discovered in the mountains of Ethiopia and treasured for its psychoactive properties. This powerful elixir has fueled political, cultural and economic revolutions since its discovery in the 6th century. Today growing and exporting coffee employs some of the world's most impoverished people, while the urban chic flock to a new generation of coffeehouses. Did coffee really shape world history? Why are so many of the world's poor tied to the economy of coffee farming? Why do we think of coffeehouses as places of comfort and conversation? Can coffee really break down social barriers? In this seminar, we will explore the globalization, economy and culture of coffee and the coffee industry. Course work will include analysis of short stories, other narratives, essays, and film. Students should expect to analyze through writing and improve that analysis by revision.
FYS 287: Middle Earth Stories  
Dr. William Tighe  
Lacey Davies, Writing Assistant
J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy became something of a craze in the 1960s, and has maintained its popularity ever since, and in recent years became the subject of a film trilogy which attracted a vast audience. Tolkien’s trilogy actually emerged as almost a by-product of his professional (and professorial) interest in language, philology (the study of words, their origins and changes in meaning), myth and legend and Anglo-Saxon England and its literature. In this course we will study the sources of Tolkien’s creative imagination and its origins in his own life experiences, and how it has been received and purveyed as a work of popular culture, working our way backwards from the films through the stories to their sources and origins. We will also look at the historical and biographical contexts of LOTR (and ancillary works), and at Tolkien’s own ideological, cultural and aesthetic commitments.

FYS 292: Individualism, Faith and Violence in the Films of Martin Scorsese  
Dr. Amy Corbin  
Megan Beispiel, Writing Assistant
Martin Scorsese is one of cinema’s most acclaimed living directors. While he is often associated with films about violent men, his oeuvre is broader than that. In this course, we will watch a variety of films by Scorsese to explore his central themes and cinematic style. We will read scholarly criticism of the director and consider the issue of auteurism, or the way in which we can trace a film director’s style across diverse films. We will also read scholarly writing in other disciplines that thematically relates to the films, so you can be exposed to a broader range of academic writing. Scorsese is a student of film history and so we will occasionally pair his films with clips of others to see the echoes of classic directors and movements. Thus the class provides an introduction to fundamental issues in film studies in addition to teaching the analytical and writing skills that are the core of all First-Year Seminars.

Disclaimer: These films contain scenes of graphic violence and vulgar language. If you feel uncomfortable watching and discussing these films, then you should choose another seminar.

Scholar Seminars — 2015-2016

DNA 118: 1917—The Year that Changed the World  
Dr. Jessica Cooperman  
Chandler Cross, Writing Assistant
1917 was a pivotal year in history. In the chaos unleashed by World War I, the Russian tsar was overthrown by Communists, the Balfour Declaration established Zionism as a viable nationalist movement, and the United States entered the war and announced its arrival as an economic, political, and military super power. These events, the reactions that they triggered, and the conflicts they engendered, set the stage for the ideologies and cultural movements that defined the twentieth century. This seminar will explore this momentous year of change and turmoil, and consider its implications for modern society. Working with primary materials like the wartime writing of Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves, the music of Irving Berlin, the work of artists like Kathe Kollwitz and John Singer Sargent, British and American wartime propaganda, and the ideas of political leaders from Lenin to Woodrow Wilson, we will encounter both the trauma and the idealism of the war. Through readings, class discussion, and writing assignments, students will develop an appreciation of the ways that the experiences of 1917 set the stage for the artistic, social, and political revolutions that continue to shape our world.

DNA 119: George Orwell: Art of Political Writing  
Dr. Jack Gambino  
Avery Deutsch, Writing Assistant
Can writers take sides in the struggle against tyranny and injustice without sacrificing their intellectual honesty and artistic integrity? Can political writing become art and not merely propaganda? This seminar considers these questions by examining George Orwell’s career as both a writer and political actor. Orwell lived through, and wrote about, some of the most
traumatic events of the 20th century – the Great War, Russian Revolution, the rise of Hitler and Stalin, Spanish Civil War, WW II, and the early Cold War. He responded to these events by taking sides "against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism," and he sought to use his writings not only to resist imperialism, capitalism, fascism and communism but also to promote revolutionary politics. At the same time, Orwell aimed to make "political writing into art" capable of truth-telling by means of satire, parody and irony. Students will be asked to write about the complicated relationship between Orwell’s political commitments and his novels, reportage and essays. They will follow the literary and political paths that led him to socialism and revolutionary politics, as well as to his celebrated last novels, Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four, both of which portray the betrayal of revolutionary hopes and the forebodings of a dystopian future.

RJF 108: Exploring Anarchy
Dr. Brian Mello
Logan McCabe, Writing Assistant
This writing-intensive first-year seminar explores popular and philosophical interpretations of anarchy and anarchism. Anarchy is, at its root, the absence of authority. For some, this means anarchy is tantamount to chaos, violence, immorality; in the words of Thomas Hobbes, anarchy leads to a life that is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” From AMC’s The Walking Dead to William Golding’s Lord of the Flies, to Hobbes’ Leviathan, we are repeatedly informed that mankind does not function well in the absence of authority and order. This course seeks to challenge these beliefs by seriously engaging the works of anarchist political thinkers. We will ask how the philosophical writings of anarchists cause us to challenge or rethink some of the assumptions behind our popular, literary, and philosophical fears of anarchy. In addition, we will explore whether and how anarchist thought can provide a critical lens for thinking about our contemporary world from wars and prisons to education and the response to Hurricane Katrina. Students will engage in daily informal writing, which will be used to generate three formal analytical essays over the course of the semester.

MBS 102: Decisions Under Uncertainty
Dr. Daniel Doviak
Mark Panas, Writing Assistant
For many of life’s important questions, we rarely have clear-cut answers. Whether we’re trying to resolve an ethical dilemma, decide which career to pursue, or make a responsible choice regarding our own health or education, circumstances often require us to form opinions and make decisions on the basis of fuzzy, incomplete, and conflicting information. Are there reasonable and effective ways of responding to these challenges? Is it possible to think and choose rationally in a world full of uncertainty? This writing-intensive seminar will explore these questions by examining methods for analyzing and interpreting ambiguous evidence, for weighing conflicting values, and making tough choices when the outcomes are unclear. As an integral part of this investigation, we will identify and take measures to prevent some of the main biases and errors we’re subject to when thinking, reasoning, and deciding in the gray areas of life. Readings will draw from a number of disciplines including philosophy, legal theory, economics, business, medical ethics, psychology, and public health and include texts such as Resnik’s Choices, Baron’s Thinking and Deciding, and Goldman and McGrath’s Epistemology, among others.
First-Year Seminar Registration Form

Please complete this form prior to your June Advising session.

Muhlenberg ID Number__ Last Name__ First Name __ Middle Initial __

Please circle your top 8 choices.

(Before you complete this form, please read all the seminar descriptions, which are listed in the First-Year Seminar brochure. Make sure that you are interested in all 8 of your choices. As a member of the Class of 2019, you will take one seminar, either in the fall or spring.)

2015-2016 First-Year Seminars

FYS 103: Mad Men, Geniuses, & Nerds
FYS 108: All You Can Eat?
FYS 113: Quentin Tarantino, Film Geek
FYS 119: Representing the Body in Art
FYS 125: Reasoning with Sabermetrics: Answering Baseball’s Tough Questions
FYS 128: The Ideology of Love from Plato to Brain Science
FYS 133: Cultivating Curiosity
FYS 134: American Utopias
FYS 139: Reading Fairy Tales
FYS 142: Who Controls Your Digital World?
FYS 143: Musical Revolutions
FYS 146: On Interwoven Lives: Linked Stories
FYS 149: The Power of Maps
FYS 151: No Song Left Behind
FYS 154: Now I Am Become Death: Brains, the Bomb, and the Bellicose
FYS 155: Cinema/Cyberspace/Cronenberg
FYS 158: Art, Experience, and the Irrational
FYS 167: Imagining Michael Jackson
FYS 168: The Horror of Race on Film
FYS 171: Emerging Adulthood: Coming of Age in the 21st Cent.
FYS 176: Road Trip: American Literature & Film
FYS 179: Who’s Eating What? Food, People and Earth
FYS 181: Microbial Chefs: Bacteria & Fungi in the Kitchen

2015-2016 First-Year Seminars

FYS 182: Developing a Global Identity
FYS 183: Warm Regards: Letter Writing
FYS 205: Cuisine as Culture: Exploring Allentown's Hispanic Immigrant Communities
FYS 212: Power of the Pen and Rachel Carson
FYS 225: Think Like Leonardo da Vinci
FYS 229: Endangered Writers
FYS 243: Murder Ink
FYS 256: Finding Your Muse
FYS 267: Why We Work
FYS 275: The Wire: Representations of Inner City Life
FYS 277: Exploring Meaning
FYS 281: Coffee: The Great Soberer
FYS 287: Middle Earth Stories
FYS 292: Individualism, Faith and Violence: Martin Scorcese

2015-2016 Scholar Seminars

DNA 118: 1917—The Year that Changed the World
(Open only to Dana Scholars)
DNA 119: George Orwell: Art of Political Writing
(Open only to Dana Scholars)
RJF 108: Exploring Anarchy
(Open only to RJ Fellows)
MBS 102: Decisions Under Uncertainty
(Open only to Muhlenberg Scholars)