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uhlenberg College

First-Year Seminars

Class of 2029

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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 talk, read, write, and think deeply and 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 the 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 — Fall 2025

Please note: this list is subject to change between now and the date of your registration.

FYS 104: Travel Writing // MW 2:00-3:15 pm

Dr. Eduardo Olid Guerrero

This seminar is designed to help you develop university-level skills in critical thinking and analytical writing that you will use during your academic life at Muhlenberg and throughout your personal and professional career. In this course we will focus on travel writing and on the many different ways to communicate the travel experience in a variety of written discourses. Students will read different writing styles from Herodotus to Polo, Columbus or Cortes, to Lewis and Clark. They will enter in a critical dialogue with the scholarship and theory on travel writing so that they can develop their critical reading skills and produce their own analytical essay on this topic.

FYS 128: The Long 20th Century // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Jim Bloom

Doritos, Disney, television Apple, Mickey Mouse, Amazon, AIDs, antibiotics,, McDonalds, Civil Rights, the Super Bowl, Hippies/Beatniks/Flappers, The Simpsons, Continental Drift, totalitarianism, refrigeration, ATMs, the internet, moon landings, The Great Migration(s), World Wars, rock & roll,, Relativity, jazz, DNA, existentialism. Martha Stewart, hip hop, Freud, Starbucks, Oprah. In this seminar, students will examine the abiding impact of the 20th century: the many curses and the blessings it has bequeathed to the current century. Students will analyze representative twentieth-century legacies and consider various approaches to accounting for the persisting impact of these transformative (often life-enhancing, sometimes revolutionary, all too often catastrophic) innovations.

FYS 139: Reading Fairy Tales // TR 9:30-10:45 am

Dr. Grant Scott

This course focuses on the origins, socio-cultural history, psychology, gender dynamics and literary genre of Fairy Tales. We will examine some of the most influential works by the Brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault in a variety of interdisciplinary contexts. We will also consider selected adaptations of these tales in different media, including illustrated books, paintings, poems, 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. We'll spend a good deal of time learning how to interpret fairy tales, and thinking about how they make complex meanings in a very small space.

FYS 143: Musical Revolutions // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Ted Conner

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 *Totem and Taboo*, Berlioz’s *The Damnation of Faust*, Bergson’s *Life and Consciousness*, and Wagner’s *Art and Revolution*.

FYS 155: Science in Italian Literature // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Daniel Leisawitz

The seemingly self-evident distinction between science and literature is peculiarly modern. After all, medieval poets theorized about the physiological effects of love on the lover’s body, Dante mapped out the entire cosmos in his *Divine Comedy*, and one of the founding fathers of modern medicine, Girolamo Fracastoro, wrote an epic poem about syphilis. From its inception up to the present day, scientific discourse and exploration have permeated Italian literature, and Italian scientists have employed literary fiction as a site of inquiry and communication. Scientists and writers alike have found insight and inspiration in each other’s work, and this course will explore the prolific process of cross-pollination between science and literature.

This course will involve significant amounts of reading, as we examine a variety of texts from different genres – including poetry, novels, short stories, scientific treatises, and literary criticism – covering a long span of time from classical antiquity to the present day. To be clear, this is NOT a course about science fiction, but rather a course about science *in* fiction, and the connections between science and literature. Students will be guided in writing exercises in order to learn strategies for deep and attentive reading as well as incisive analysis and academic writing. No knowledge of Italian language is necessary for this course.

FYS 156: The Art of Memory // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Mike Opal

We often hear that new technologies are bad for our memory—today, it’s AI, before that, it was the internet, and way back in ancient Greece, people even worried that writing itself would weaken memory. In this course, we’ll explore how memory connects to external tools designed to help it, like writing, theater, poetry, and even ghosts. We’ll also think about how imagination plays a role in remembering. Our main question will be: How do memory and creativity work together in the arts, especially in literature? We’ll also look at how memory—and the tools we use to preserve it—can be used for political purposes, including how art plays a role in these strategies. We’ll read works that explore remembering and forgetting, including Shakespeare, Borges, Brainard, and Morrison. Alongside these, we’ll dive into philosophical ideas about memory from ancient Greece to today.

FYS 160: Finding Your Muse: Creativity and Improvisation // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Michael London

In this FYS, our subject matter will be creative improvisation in the context of music. As creative people who want to develop our talents and learn to better collaborate with others, we will explore our analytical writing while we participate in experiential activities, make music, explore movement, develop our discussion skills, and unlock our improvisational abilities. We will focus on how to think, write, and discuss complex ideas critically as we learn and explore together. In exploring our “muses”, we’ll read about creative people and their process in various performance areas that feature music, such as theater, dance, improvisation, and poetry. The group of peers will also be a “live text” as we create together and then analyze that experience, applying wisdom from varied texts and each other. We will also learn how to observe and analyze our experiences toward strengthening our individual and collective “Muse”.

FYS 161: Evolution of Black Performance in America // MW 12:30-1:45 pm

Prof. Robyn Watson

In this course, we will explore the history and evolution of dance, music and theatre in America through a focus on Black performance. Students will navigate the eras of Black performance including minstrelsy, vaudeville, Broadway and film. As we go throughout, we will question: What is Black performance and why is it worth being studied? What are the roots and evolution of Black performance and how does it affect the American societal landscape? How does Black performance influence American culture? How does Black performance get appropriated by White counterparts? Artist that may be explored include: Whitey’s Lindy Hoppers, Nina Simone, William Henry Lane, Oscar Micheaux, The Nicholas Brothers, the creators of Shuffle Along, The Whitman Sisters, Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Mary Lou Williams, Sidney Poitier, Paul Robeson, Nina May McKinney, Ethel Waters, Aretha Franklin, Dorothy Dandridge and more.

FYS 168: When Gods Roamed the Earth // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Ioanna Chatzidimitriou

This course explores major Greek myths along with some of their contemporary rewritings. It seeks to understand what myth is, how it contributes to building personal, social, and national identities, when, why and how Greek myths were revisited in the modern and contemporary world and, finally, to what extent Greek mythology intersects with major Western intellectual movements. Some of the specific questions that this course will be asking are: What is the role of the hero in Greek myths? What is the nature of the divine in Greek mythology and how does it shape human experiences? How do modern theoretical categories such as gender, class, and sexuality inform our contemporary reading of Greek mythology? To what extent do modern and contemporary retellings of ancient myth inflect our politics today?

FYS 179: The Haunted Stage // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Jim Peck

Maybe it's not an accident that when we leave a lamp on overnight in a theatre, we call it a ghost light. In many times and places, theatre has trafficked in ghosts. This course examines the confluence of theatre and the spectral. Why do ghosts walk the stage in so many theatrical traditions? Often, theatrical ghosts

impel the living to answer the claims of a traumatic, unresolved past. What do these hauntings reveal about the shape of personal memory? Of collective memory? We will focus on theatre but will also consider writings about ghostliness from other disciplines. Encounters with psychoanalysis, sociology, and philosophy will inform our interpretation of the stage ghost. Why is the theatre a persistently haunted space? How do these visitations of the dead facilitate processes of remembering, mourning, and reckoning for the living? Towards what future?

FYS 190: Coming-of-Age Narratives // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Hunter Holt

In this writing seminar, we will read and analyze coming-of-age narratives. As young protagonists transition into adulthood or emerge into a new state of maturity, these stories often focus on personal journeys across topics such as identity, friendship, love, or loss. While interior in nature, these narratives also comment on political and social forces that shape our personal development. Through a mix of novels, short stories, films, music, and other media, we will examine the following questions: What does it mean to “come of age”? How might this vary based on race, gender, class, or where we grow up? What shapes our consciousness and sense of self? What happens when who we become conflicts with the values of our family, community, or culture? Or our reality does not match with our dreams and expectations? By writing about and discussing these questions, we will reflect on our own coming-of-age experiences and attempt to gain a better understanding of how we become who we are, along with the costs we might bear along the way.

FYS 192: Level Up: Gaming, Collaboration, and Storytelling // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Prof. Haley Brown

Tabletop and role-playing games, commonly referred to as ‘TTRPGs’, go beyond entertainment to craft immersive environments and foster meaningful, collaborative communities. This course critically examines the interplay between game mechanics, narrative design, and social dynamics, revealing how TTRPGs create shared goals, encourage collaboration, and can be used as a tool for creative storytelling.

A central focus of the course is the unique role of TTRPGs as tools for collaborative world-building. By constructing fictional realms together, players create not only imaginative spaces but also shared experiences that provide a lens to explore the human condition. These games challenge participants to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, develop empathy, and contribute to narratives that are as much about the fictional characters as the players behind them. In doing so, TTRPGs offer a powerful medium to craft immersive environments that are universally resonant.

Through hands-on gameplay and analysis, students will investigate topics such as the representation of identity in gaming narratives, the way games foster inclusivity or exclusivity, and how design choices shape player engagement. Assignments include analyzing games as cultural artifacts, designing gameplay mechanics, and reflecting on how TTRPGs can act as tools for connection and self-expression. Gaming experience is not necessary for success.

FYS 201: The Glorification of Youth Sports // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Prof. Sara Vigneri

We love a good high school sports redemption story. But at what cost? What happens when we turn high school athletes into sports heroes? We will read the true stories that inspired Hoosiers and Friday Night Lights and consider what is gained and lost when true stories get the Hollywood treatment. Students will critically examine the impact youth sports can have on both the athletes and their communities and explore who wins and who loses when we put pressure on kids to be superstars.

FYS 203: The Black Arts Movement // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Prof. Noel Price-Bracey

Can we effectively use art in protest? How can artists and makers use their voice to change the world? If you've ever asked these questions, this class might be for you. Together, we will learn from and about Black American activists who collaborated across genres of cinema, sound, theater, dance and visual art. We will journey to the 1960s and beyond, collecting viewpoints and drawing on primary and secondary accounts from/of the Black Arts Movement. Our writing assignments will span the analytical, the creative, and the critical, exploring historical events as though we were witnessing the events ourselves. Our writing will be in dialogue with works by Rashidah Ismaili AbuBakr, Amiri Baraka, Jean Michel Basquiat, Alice Coltrane, Nikki Giovanni, Sam Greenlee, Joan Miller, Eleo Pomare, Aishah Rahman, Sonia Sanchez, Ntozake Shange, and more.

FYS 205: Cuisine as Culture: Exploring Allentown's Hispanic Immigrant Communities // TR 3:30-4:45 pm

Dr. Erika M. Sutherland

From the earliest recorded history, humans have thought about food as something much more than physical sustenance. Proof of this can be found in nearly any context or medium, but in this course we will explore the concept of food as a marker of culture and change. In the Lehigh Valley's large and surprisingly diverse Hispanic immigrant communities, food is at once a marker of assimilation and 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 learn to consider food ourselves as an object of study and a lens through which broader issues can be analyzed. Exploring local restaurants and food stores, you will be able to add your own sensorial and analytical impressions to this mix.

FYS 214: On Monsters // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Alec Marsh

Monsters have been a feature of the human imagination, and of world literature, from the earliest times. Many of these frightening, impressive and awe-inspiring creatures mediate between humans and the gods. Some are inhuman creatures, others are human—perhaps all-too human—figures whose monstrosity might be called psychological. Others are often "The Other"—other humans who are misrecognized and misunderstood. In this course we meet, read, and write about several of these monsters as represented in a wide variety of classic texts; Medea, Beowulf, Prometheus Bound and Frankenstein (or, "The New Prometheus"); John Gardner's novel from the monster's point of view,

Grendel; also Shakespeare's *Tempest* (for Caliban), and possibly others—Gilgamesh, for example, if I can locate a readable and interesting translation.

FYS 215: East Asia in Ten Words // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Anh Le

Can just ten keywords capture the complexity of modern East Asia's history, cultures, and global impacts? In this first-year writing-and-discussion intensive seminar, we take on one keyword for each learning unit—think Confucianism, Technology, Gender, Disparity, Miracle or Cities—to discover how these concepts have resonated with people in Asia and have shaped societies in China, Japan, Korea, and beyond. Through class discussions, writing assignments, films and documentaries, and creative projects, we'll explore everything from ancient philosophies to modern pop culture, unpacking stereotypes and making unanticipated connections along the way. Whether you're fascinated by samurai, K-pop and the Hallyu wave, cultural history, or global politics, this course invites you to see modern East Asia in a new light as a dynamic culture and a constantly evolving world-region. No prior knowledge is needed—just curiosity and a willingness to explore.

FYS 230: Just Say Know: Drugs and Society // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Jeff Rudski

Mind and mood-altering substances have been used ceremonially, therapeutically, culturally, and recreationally for millennia. Despite their use, people often know very little about the effects (and side effects) of chemically altering their brains. Ignorance in this arena abounds, and opposing arguments on both sides of contentious issues often sounds convincing. Does Ritalin really help kids with ADHD excel, or does it blunt their personality? Does the use of Anti-Depressants alter your "true" identity? Does medication use allow us to ignore addressing social issues contributing to depression or anxiety? Is addiction a disease or a choice? Is cannabis gateway drug? Is fighting a "war on drugs" the best strategy to fight addiction? Should we consider legalizing not only cannabis use, but drugs such as heroin or cocaine? Is it ethical to use 'smart drugs' to boost performance? In this seminar, we will explore issues in psychopharmacology, and look at how rhetoric is used and information is presented to argue both sides of drug-related issues. Readings will include books and articles supporting and critiquing modern psychiatry, assessment of educational and governmental strategies to combat drug use, and approaches to and solutions for substance dependence.

FYS 246: Proving the Unprovable: Religion, Science, and the Unknown in Modernity // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Dustin Nash

While the search for the remains of Noah's ark, evidence of alien abductions, or the hunt for the Loch Ness Monster may seem unrelated, they are linked as products of a uniquely modern desire for "proof." Indeed, modernity has seen an explosion of interest in scientifically "proving" elements of the scriptures, folk tales, and myths that have shaped various people's conceptions of the past and the true nature of the present. In this course, we will question the origin and function of this desire within modern culture. Furthermore, we will read literature produced by authors attempting to prove such arguments, as well as those who challenge their conclusions. In this way, we will discuss the nature of "evidence" and its

interpretation, and think critically about the ways in which we, as writers, interpret evidence in order to make claims and create knowledge.

FYS 254: Springsteen's America // MW 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Christopher Borick

Few artists are more associated with America than Bruce Springsteen. For over 50 years Springsteen has been hailed as the heir to a great tradition of musicians and writers that have used their art to define the promise and perils of the nation. From Woody Guthrie and his Depression era ballads to Bob Dylan and his 1960s folk critiques of a society in turmoil, artists have helped define America through their lyrics and music. Since his arrival on the scene in the early 1970s Springsteen has used his music to portray America in a manner that shows both the beauty and ugliness that is found in his native land. In this course we will use Springsteen's work as a departure point for an examination of contemporary American life. Topics will include war, economic displacement, racial tensions, urban decline and immigration. The course will also examine Springsteen's focus on the importance of place in the American consciousness, with an emphasis on New Jersey and the northeast corner of the country.

FYS 293 Science in Film: Fact or Fiction? // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Jason Kelsey

This course will examine film, television, and other media, paying particular attention to ways science can be misrepresented, distorted, or fabricated in them. The effects of scientific inaccuracies on attitudes about public health, environmental protection, food production, resource utilization, technology, the scope and limitations of science, and funding priorities will be discussed. The semester will start with introductions to both science as a way of knowing and critical concepts of film analysis. We will then assess the validity of the scientific claims made or implied in films including *The Martian*, *Contagion*, *Jurassic Park*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Blackfish*, *Jaws*, and TV episodes of *The Simpsons*. We will also contrast the ways scientists are portrayed in these works, defining multiple archetypes (e.g., 'mad', 'evil', 'brave', 'obsessed', 'genius'), and link these differences to the believability of the science presented in each. Film screenings outside of class are required. algorithms and systems of discrimination and oppression; AI, copyright, deepfakes, the rise of disinformation, and the management of war; social media and the human effects of online content moderation; and finally the history of Luddism and the emergence of movements for tech freedom and justice in the 21st Century. This course will also introduce students to effective means of reading and organizing college-level readings and will develop their skills as effective writers.

FYS 298: *Les Miserables* in Literature, Film, and History // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Tom Cragin

Every work of art has a history. This course explores who tells the story of *Les Miserables*, and how -- from Victor Hugo's novel to the Broadway musical. Instead of moving forward in time, we will move backward. We will begin with the 2012 musical's film adaptation, reach back to Hugo's novel in Second Empire France, and then back to the historical events that inspired the novel. At each of our three stages we will investigate the texts' cultural and social contexts, uncovering meanings that alter the story and its cultural significance. How might we interrogate Cosette's expressions of fear and pain when considering the condition of children in America today, France in 1862, and France in 1820? Students will develop the

ability to interpret scholarly texts and to interact with the voices of experts in film, literature, and history. We will further complicate and deepen our readings by applying theoretical lenses such as feminism and Marxism.

Scholar Seminars — 2025-2026

All Scholar Seminar sections are offered during the fall semester.

**DNA 127-01, 127-02: (DANA Scholars) The Art of Observation: Curating Nature // MW 9:30-10:45 am
Dr. Matt Moore and Prof. Linda Miller**

This writing-focused DANA seminar will improve your reading and writing skills, by enriching your understanding of the relationship between observation, ideation, composition and communication. Through weekly reading and writing, the course will equip you with theories and processes to apply to college-level writing tasks across disciplines. We will develop critical reading and observational skills, practice how to employ different kinds of evidence in academic discourse, and learn how to build compelling essays in terms of voice, form and content. Students will rehearse and refine individual writing processes, practice revision, and talk passionately and genuinely about their words and sentences, the tools that show us our ideas.

Despite the seeming distinction between “cultural” and “natural” objects of study, both are interested in how meaning is made through acts of selection, arrangement, narration, and reception. From museum theory to environmental ethics, art galleries to zoos, botanical gardens to dormitory rooms, we will ask how meaning is being made and what those meanings imply. How do objects, words and spaces communicate and shape ideas, behaviors and relationships? How does our curation of things create understanding and meaning? And, specifically, how have various and shifting discourses defined “nature,” animals, our more-than-human world, and our relationships with them?

Note that there are two sections of this course; you can take either one as they follow a common syllabus.

**FYS 121: (Emerging Leaders) American Places, American Dreams // TR 12:30-1:45 pm
Dr. Amy Corbin**

The phrase “the American Dream” is one of the most recognizable phrases in American culture; it has been called our “civil religion.” The dream promises that everyone has an equal chance at financial security and a happy life, that anything is possible if we work hard enough, and that children should be better off than their parents. These dreams of upward mobility are closely linked to places: in some moments and for some groups, America’s cities have been glamorous places of opportunity to live out one’s American Dream, while in others, life in the suburbs beckoned as a garden-like environment where one could escape from the crime and density of the city. Using literature, film, art, and historical sources, this seminar will focus on 3 periods when these dreams lured people to both the city and the suburbs:

European immigrants in America's expanding cities of the 1930s; the city-suburb rivalry of 1950s-1970s when so-called "white flight" to the suburbs left many people of color in impoverished urban areas; and finally 21st century contemporary immigrant stories in both cities and suburbs. We will explore how the promises of the dream have clashed with the realities of racism and economic inequality, and how the arts can help us understand these past failures. The art and stories we study will also help us imagine alternative versions of success, both individual and collective.

FYS 165: (Emerging Leaders) Wisdom in Action // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Prof. Gabriel Dean

Wisdom encompasses reflection, compassion, and the pursuit of truth. Wisdom enacted means being able to consider multiple perspectives, being open to new ways of thinking that challenge the status quo, holding an optimism that life's problems can be solved, and ultimately, experiencing a certain amount of calm in facing difficult decisions. Broadly speaking, you've come to Muhlenberg to gain wisdom. But how exactly do we become wise? And how can we put that wisdom into action? This course will consider these questions through Krista Tippett's podcast "On Being" and her book *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living*. We will analyze the concept of wisdom and seek to become wiser ourselves through in-depth class discussion, short written personal reflections, and two longer scholarly essays, all inspired by the wisdom of contemporary writers, musicians, scientists, innovators, and spiritual leaders featured on Tippett's podcast. Our vastly interdisciplinary reading list includes Brene Brown, Jane Goodall, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Paulo Coelho, Eve Ensler, Mary Oliver, Eckhart Tolle, The Indigo Girls, Elie Wiesel, Martin Sheen, and His Holiness The Dalai Lama & Reverend Desmond Tutu, among others. Food and agriculture to explore the relationship between the history of food, economics, politics, ecology, and sensation. We will discuss the role of gender, race, and class in the experience of food. The diversity of what we read will give you many ways to approach the topic in your own writing for the course, which will consist of two short review essays and two formal academic essays, as well as a small amount of casual writing.

FYS 202: (Emerging Leaders) Just Climate // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Prof. Karen Tuerk

Environmental advocacy has positively impacted society in many ways, but how did the Green movement of the 20th century exacerbate global ecological inequities? As climate change urgently demands action, how do we create policy that equally serves both developed and developing regions? Nations are seeking sustainable energy alternatives, but what constitutes a just transition and who should pay for it?

In this seminar, we will explore the science of climate change and the social movement of climate justice by considering environmental issues leading to and emerging from a rapidly warming planet. Through both formal and informal writing assignments, we will examine our relationship with the natural world as consumers, community members, and components of the biosphere. Scholarly essays, policy documents, news articles, documentaries and fiction will initiate conversations about how we collectively create just environmental policy and practices.

MBS 107: (Muhlenberg Scholars) What Do You Want? // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Tad Robinson

Wanting is one of our fundamental drives, and what we want structures and animates our lives. It determines in large part what we choose to do, what we pay attention to, and to some extent, how our lives go. This observation raises a variety of questions: How does wanting work? What do we want, and do we always know? Why do we want what we want? Are there things we should or shouldn't want, and if so on what grounds? Does getting what we want make us happy? In pursuit of these and other questions, we will consider wanting in a variety of contexts: unhealthy or pathological desires, love, educational and career goals, and happiness and well-being. Exploring these questions will involve readings from a variety of disciplinary perspectives including history, psychology, philosophy, literature, and education. This seminar is writing intensive.

RJF 114: (RJ Fellows) Monument Wars: The Politics of Public Space // TR 12:30-1:45 pm

Dr. Jack Gambino

Public monuments have been an important way for a community to represent itself by glorifying its heroes, symbolizing its cultural identity, or commemorating the victims of past injustices. The building of public monuments, however, is as much a source of division as it is a unifying tribute to a people's identity. Recent protests over Confederate war memorials, Christopher Columbus statues, and George Floyd memorials are only the latest examples of the controversies surrounding public monuments and their meaning. This seminar examines the politics of public commemoration by means of monuments. What purposes do monuments play in our public life? Who or what should these monuments represent? What should they look like and where should they be placed? Why do we choose to construct monuments at certain historical moments and not others? Who gets to make these decisions and who is excluded from the decision making? What happens when monuments become outdated, offensive, and the focal point of protest? Who gets to tear down monuments? Is tearing down a statue an erasure of history or the debunking of a myth? This seminar will examine these questions by focusing on important controversies (mostly in the U.S.) around public monuments past and present.