

# First Year Seminars

The **first year seminar** (FYS) focuses on a specific topic in a wide range of areas. The small class size allows you to interact closely with a professor who will help you cultivate a vision for your liberal arts education. The FYS will also expose you to basic writing, communication, and critical thinking skills, among others. Additionally, the faculty member who teaches this seminar will serve as your initial academic advisor during the fall semester and will help you explore the opportunities of a University of Mount Union education, including scheduling for classes until you've declared a major.

These courses are full four credit hour courses that will last throughout the entire fall semester and have the same academic rigor and expectations as any other college course. Please carefully consider this as you share your preference for your First Year Seminar below. To aid you in making this decision, please read the descriptions of the seminar courses to help you choose your top five FYS choices.

## **01. *Monuments & Memorials: A Design Perspective***

This course will examine how monuments and memorials are conceived and designed. Students will become aware of the social, political, and environmental events that shape the circumstances for the creation of large and small, local and national monuments. The course will introduce students to the many varied design considerations that must be factored into the artist's interpretations of what has been termed "the collective memory." The course will demonstrate through an interactive, collaborative, hands-on studio application of design processes of how abstract ideas are manifested into the real structures and environments that individuals, communities, nations and cultures can both accept, appreciate, revere, and also reject, diminish, despise.

## **02. *Moneyball: The Art of Sport Performance Analysis***

Over the last decade, a data revolution has swept through sports. Teams now seek to gain competitive advantages by objectively analyzing every conceivable aspect of player performance. More-and-more, general managers and coaches are valued not for their experience as former players, but for their ability to systematically evaluate data to make optimal decisions. The movement has gained traction with fans, as well. Statistics that once seemed like complex mathematical jargon are now routinely used by fans to evaluate players and construct fantasy teams, and *Moneyball* has become a box office hit. In this course, students will learn to gather and evaluate numerical and observational player performance data. They will assess uncertainty and bias and explore how the pendulum of risk and reward shifts in different game situations and throughout a season. Ultimately, students will formulate arguments for particular decisions based on the conclusions of their analyses.

## **03. *Freedom of Speech & Religion in the United States***

The course "Freedom of Speech and Religion in the United States" addresses the issues of expressive freedom, prior restraint and newspapers, fighting words, hate speech, profanity, obscenity, and defamation. In addition, the class will consider the impact of new technology on freedom of speech law and whether "commercial speech" is entitled to the same protections as "individual political speech." In the area of "Religious Freedom," the course will provide legal definitions of religion. The concepts of the "free exercise clause" and "establishment clause" will be analyzed and explained. Within the context the class will explain how these issues are applied to the right to proselytize, unconventional religious practices (polygamy, peyote, animal sacrifice), patriotic rituals, religious practices in public education, school prayer, and the teaching of creationism. This course will rely heavily on U.S. Supreme Court decisions.

## **04. *Socrates & Plato: Life, Death & Legacy***

Socrates – sentenced to death for corrupting the youth, and for not believing in the gods of Athens. Plato – the student of Socrates, famous for telling the story of the life and death of his teacher, and for writing dialogues on love and justice. In this seminar you will learn about two of the most influential thinkers in the Western world. What did they really believe, and, why? How were they viewed in their time, and, how should we view their ideas now, in the 21st century? In learning about their ideas, you too will risk being "corrupted" – that is, you will learn to ask questions about the most fundamental aspects of being human. What is love? What is a good life? What does the ideal society look like? What is knowledge? What is wisdom? And even . . . what is education?

**05. *On War***

Why do we go to war? What would drive groups of people to systematically kill other groups of people? Is it human nature? Are we hardwired to kill each other? Is there something about the way countries function that drives them to fight? Is it just the way the world works? Is it possible to prevent war and is there such a thing as just war? This seminar will examine these questions in order to try to explain why wars happen and whether or not they can be prevented.

**06. *Can You Hear Me Now? Propaganda and Resistance Listening***

This course is an examination and application of what it means to be an effective listener in a mediated world. Students will acquire the skills of effective listening, and the ability to apply that knowledge in a variety of contexts. First, students will focus on building a foundation of both theory and practice of effective listening. Once this foundation is set, students will examine classic and contemporary examples of persuasion and propaganda in the media. Students will examine speeches, campaigns, social movements, and popular culture. The class will explore how different types of persuasion operate, and students will be asked to understand, apply, and critique how they listen to the world around them. Students will examine major communicative components of persuasion, including primary outcomes of persuasion, attitudes towards a speaker, and intention of the speaker. The overarching aim of this course is to empower students to become more critical consumers (and creators) of media and information.

**07. *Sleight of Hand Magic – Theory & Performance***

Want to learn how to create and perform your own sleight of hand magic effects, as well as critique your performances and the performances of others? In this class you will study how to create each of the nine major types of conjuring effects: appearance, vanish, transposition, transformation, penetration, restoration, extraordinary feats, telekinesis, and extrasensory perception. Theoretical topics will include (but not be limited to) visual illusion, cognitive illusion, faulty logic, good continuation, active misdirection, time misdirection, social misdirection, inattentional blindness, change blindness, and the misinformation effect. The instructor for this course was a full-time professional magician for five years.

**08. *Malcolm x***

Have you ever been told that you could do something? Or that you did not have what it took? Then you will relate to Malcolm X, one of the most controversial figures in American history. As a youngster Malcolm wanted to be a lawyer but was told he was not being realistic. As a person with a different background than others, you may have had to deal with stereotypes and misconceptions, too. This course will examine the life and times of Malcolm X and see how he was not only able to achieve but to become a role model for many others. We will also look at the lives of two other men who themselves were told that they could not achieve but were able to overcome their background and become successful.

**09. *Anywhere but Home: Exploring Adventure Travel***

Pack your bags, and get ready to embark on an in-depth look at the joy of travel. In this course, you'll discover and discuss what renowned authors have to say about leaving home (as we also engage in a bit of our travel-related writing). Together, we'll explore both the spiritual and practical sides of away-from-home adventures . . . examining everything from cultures and customs to planning and packing. If you believe that the journey can be as captivating as the destination, we'll save you the aisle seat.

**10. *Go Jump Off a Cliff! Latest Health Fad or Educated Choice***

Have you grabbed a Red Bull® or Monster® lately? How about that Cross Fit Extreme Fitness program you started last week? Would you like to choose the DNA for your future children? Hey, that TV commercial just said that Cymbalta® will help me cope! Every day we are bombarded with statements about the latest and greatest thing we should do to make our lives better. Is there truth behind them? What are the consequences? What does better really mean? Have you taken the time to really think about these decisions? This course will examine some of the latest fads related to human health, the science behind them, the pros and cons, and lead you on the path to making more informed decisions for your life. After all, if your best friend told you to "go jump off a cliff", would you?

**11. *Demons and Diagnoses***

Historically, illnesses such as schizophrenia, autism, and epilepsy were viewed as cases of demonic possession. The afflicted would be subject to exorcism to drive the demons out to cure the individual. The rise of psychiatric knowledge allowed for different explanations and treatment for individuals suffering from mental disorders. However, in modern society exorcisms and claims of possession are curiously on the rise. Is demonic possession possible? Are cases of possession explainable through a Psychiatric lens? You will investigate these questions as we engage in an exploration and debate between an ancient rite and a modern practice.

**12. *Myth and Meaning***

Myths are prominent in popular culture right now, from Percy Jackson to *Lord of the Rings*. Because myths are narratives that provide meaning and perspective for our life journeys, is the use of myth in books and movies a sign that our culture is seeking order, meaning and direction? Explore the earliest stories from around the world and discover the deep meanings behind the myths. In this class, we will read ancient myths to contemporary works that utilize mythic characters and structures.

**13. *Different Realities: Inter-Cultural Encounters***

This seminar will address how the world is perceived and experienced differently in different cultures. This will be facilitated by deliberately creating a class made up of half U.S. students and half international students. Using sociological methods, at each class meeting students will examine differences in social structures and social processes experienced among the countries they come from through discussions, demonstrations, and cooperative explorations. This early opportunity to understand their own identity and their own taken-for-granted assumptions through being exposed to cultural diversity as well as learning how to make successful interpersonal relationships – friendships – with a diverse group of people will help students widen their horizons and lead them to take better advantage of opportunities offered to them to enrich their experiences during their four years at the University of Mount Union.

**14. *Freshman 15: Reality or Myth***

The Freshman 15! This phrase has been floating around college and university campuses for decades. Are you afraid this could happen to you? Can you avoid gaining 15 pounds your first year of college? In this FYS, we will explore social, environmental, economic, and emotional issues associated with the freshman 15. You will critically examine your daily nutritional intake and determine how to achieve a healthy balance between nutritional intake and physical activity. In this seminar, you will learn to examine the environment around you to better understand how to make balanced choices.

**15. *Contemporary Civilization***

This is a seminar about the human condition in the context of the Western intellectual tradition. What is goodness, freedom, happiness, a just political order? What role ought money, power, love, sex, friendship, and tolerance play in our lives? Students in Contemporary Civilization read excerpts from works by Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Epicurus, Augustine, Aquinas, Hume, Wollstonecraft, Jefferson, Adam Smith, Nietzsche and more, and will apply those readings to their lives and to events in contemporary society.

**16. *The Holocaust in Print & Film***

How effective is propaganda in encouraging racial/ethnic hatred? What steps were taken to bureaucratize the extermination process? How can otherwise ordinary people be transformed into merciless killers of men, women, and children? To what lengths will people go to stay alive? To what extent are people willing to turn against their long-time neighbors?

**17. *Kree-ey-tiv-itee***

Sir Kenneth Robinson claims, "Creativity is as important as literacy." This seminar is an exploration of the creative process . . . how people are creative, why people are creative, when people are creative . . . The course will develop creative problem-solving and critical thinking skills as well as examine current cognitive research regarding (capital-C) CREATIVITY as well as more common forms of creativity including what might appear to be serendipitous creative acts. Biographies of Capital C Creative folks will be investigated, including Albert Einstein, T.S. Eliot, Sigmund Freud, Pablo Picasso, Igor Stravinsky, Martha Graham, and Mahatma Gandhi. Special topics will include the necessity of imagination as a by-product of globalization, empathy as a feature of the "new" creativity, education and curiosity (and other C-words, e.g. cosmopolitanism), future thoughts, the "optimism" bias, humor and creativity, multiple intelligences ala Howard Gardner, IQ and Creativity Tests, the new Bloom's Taxonomy, lateral thinking and Eureka Thinking, creativity as a function of the human spirit, as well as common mental locks that inhibit creativity – and education as a conspirator to these locks. The class will take on a group creative project, which will involve a product to be on display on campus, as well as in one of the local schools.

**18. *Global Competition: Are You Ready?***

Have you ever asked yourself what it takes to be successful in today's world, whether as an individual, a business, a nation? Do you have what it takes to succeed in a world that constantly serves up new challenges and opportunities? Are you able to identify and take advantage of new trends? Do you have global awareness and a global mindset? In short, are you positioning yourself for success in tomorrow's world, a world shaped by GLOBAL competition? In this seminar, we will lay that foundation by exploring the ideas of competition and competitiveness from educational, economic, political, societal, geographic, business, and geopolitical perspectives. The pursuit of happiness and success, like every journey,

begins with a single step. If you want to know what it takes to be successful; where to look for maximum opportunities, and how to manage the challenges of today, this seminar is made for you!

**19. *National (In)security***

The attacks of September 11, 2001, the subsequent war of terror, the rise of ISIS, ambitions of emerging and resurging world powers (China and Russia), and growing cybersecurity fears have reshaped America's notion of security. What are the pressing national security challenges facing the U.S. in the 21st century? Is the U.S. adequately prepared to manage these emerging challenges and threats? If not, what can/must be done to effectively strengthen U.S. national security? What are the intended and unintended consequences of U.S. national security strategies in the 21st century? In this seminar, we will tackle these and other pressing questions and debate the domestic and international manifestations of America's 21st national security policy.

**20. *Election 2016: Deciphering Campaign Rhetoric***

During presidential election seasons, we are exposed to vicious ads on TV, endless rounds of televised debates, and newsroom analysis 24/7. As tiring as the coverage can be, we should learn who's in the running and what the candidates really stand for. We'll study the art of persuasion as it's employed by our current presidential candidates in their campaign platforms, promises, ads, promotions, and distortions, with an eye to discerning fact from fiction and/or opinion. The goal: to develop as analytically engaged people who recognize flawed arguments when we see them and avoid similar communication traps in our own lives.

**21. *Anticipated and Absurd***

"Why do we splurge on a lavish meal but cut coupons to save twenty-five cents on a can of soup?"

In this seminar we will look at the hidden forces that shape our decisions. We will discuss and analyze dozens of experiments to try to understand why we still make ABSURD decisions, especially when they can be ANTICIPATED. Students will complete a similar social experiment to those they will discuss as part of their final.

**22. *Superman was Created in Cleveland***

In the summer of 2014, LeBron James decided to bring his talents back to Northeast Ohio. So, what exactly did the King come back to? Northeast Ohio, also known as the Western Reserve, has a fascinating and rich history that serves as a microcosm reflecting larger themes and issues apparent throughout the nation and even the world. At the same time the region has its own identity. In this class we will trace the development of this identity and work to describe it. As students at the University of Mount Union, you can experience this culture first hand either as someone who has grown up in the Western Reserve or as one who is experiencing Northeast Ohio for the first time. Our laboratory is all around us, or at least a few miles to the north. And yes it is true, Superman was created in Cleveland.

**23. *The Meaning of Life***

What is the meaning of life? Those who believe in God often claim that, apart from God, life would have no meaning. Is that true? Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living. Is that true? What makes life worth living? Many argue that science shows that there is no intelligent design behind the universe. Does it? In this seminar you will explore questions like these. At the end of the day, we may not all agree about the meaning of life, but we will have explored interesting and thought-provoking answers to life's ultimate question.

**24. *ULTRA: Ordinary People Doing Extraordinary things***

Can you imagine running 135 consecutive miles, starting at the basin of Death Valley and finishing at the 14,505 foot summit of Mt. Whitney . . . and doing it in temperatures that exceed 115F? How about ascending and descending the 19,000 foot Mt. Kilimanjaro without any assistance, and doing it in just over 9 hours? Or even still, how about swimming in open water for 2.4 miles, riding your bike for 112 miles, and then running 26.2 miles . . . on two prosthetic legs? This course will explore the stories of athletes who sacrifice their time, energy, money, and bodies to achieve incredible feats. Most of the examples we will discuss will involve athletes, but we will explore some cases that involve people in business, education, and the arts. Over the course of the semester, you will be introduced to these people and explore the theories that attempt to explain 1) what motivates them, 2) what regulates their behaviors during training, and 3) whether they may apply the discipline in one domain to other aspects of their daily lives. We will also look at the role of failure in their performances and discuss how we can learn and benefit from our own successes and failures in everyday life. In addition to learning about other people's adventures, you'll be given the opportunity to train for your own feat of "endurance" during the semester.

**25. *Is the Theatre Dead? Should it Be?***

Live theatre, which has been an important and integral part of the human experience for centuries, has taken a serious challenge in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries from a variety of electric and electronic technology, such as

cinema, television, computers, etc. Consequently, theatre is no longer the vital and immediate form of entertainment, to and for the general public, that it once was. Considering this, is theatre still a viable art form today? Should it be? If theatre is essentially live actors with a live audience in the same place at the same time, is theatre still relevant and feasible today? Or do we now have better ways for humans to examine their lives and their lifetime experiences? Ultimately, is theatre dead?

**26. *From 'Breaking Bad' to Ebola: Science is Sexy!***

Were you fascinated by the TV show *Breaking Bad* and its account of a high school teacher turned drug kingpin? Were you afraid when Ebola came recently to the United States? This course will examine such topics and show how they are connected by considering how science is presented to the public in TV, movies, books, and theatre. We will specifically discuss how science and scientists are portrayed in each setting and how these portrayals might help or hinder the public from appreciating science. In doing so, we will seek to answer questions including: why do we care about science? Is the science shown in TV and movies real? Do I have to understand all of the science to appreciate it? Should we celebrate science or be afraid of it?

**27. *Cryptography***

Join our "Black Chamber: bolted, hidden, guarded, sees all, hears all." Learn how code-makers and code-breakers cost Mary, Queen of Scots, her head; Isoroku Yamamoto, the architect of Pearl Harbor, his life; and Samuel Tilden, the Presidency of the United States. Use math and statistics to study the rotating grille, the one-time pad, le chiffre indechiffable, and public key ciphers. Examine the Playfair cipher John F. Kennedy used to avoid capture by the Japanese and try to solve the Beale cipher that pinpoints the location of \$40 million in gold. Now, about that credit card number you typed into iTunes . . .

**28. *The Truth is Out There: Biology Meets Science Fiction***

What might be the future of human evolution? How would we react to an alien species? How could we survive on Mars? How does our environment influence our behavior? Could we clone a dinosaur? Should we? These and other exciting questions will be answered, or at least addressed, when Biology Meets Science Fiction in this First Year Honors Seminar. From H.G. Wells to Michael Crichton, science fiction authors have explored the scientific discoveries and controversies of their times, weaving tales of mystery and adventure that have entertained readers for more than a century. By studying selected novels and films, we'll learn about some ground-breaking biological discoveries, and how they have helped shape our relationships with our fellow creatures on planet earth.

**29. *Sports and Culture: A Link?***

Taking a virtual around-the-world-trip, you will experience sport and games as you never imagined. Seen through the lens of religion, gender, nationality, legal issues, economics and geography, indigenous and internationally known sports and games will be researched, presented and PLAYED. The world will never be the same for you!

**30. *From the Great Wall to the Silk Road: Myth and Reality***

The Great Wall of China is one of the greatest wonders on earth. This seminar is designed to explore its architectural grandeur, historical significance, and relevance to the contemporary world. In this seminar you will examine various aspects of the Great Wall and through our discussion broaden your world view of different cultures and history.

**31. *Think Weirdly....Save Your Iceberg***

Do you want to become a more creative problem solver? What is that issue that needs to be solved? What do you see that needs to change? How do you make life better for your neighbors, friends, family, or your community? It could be building a more sustainable community, forming an athletic league where you live, or dealing with childhood obesity. In this class you will learn how you take "what pains your heart" to a level that becomes part of the solution and do it creatively. During the semester, you will study successful social projects that have identified social issues that need attention and develop a plan to present to future partners using an entrepreneurial process. Because every organization must raise more money than it spends, you will need to identify various ways to fund your endeavor. Finally, you will study the change process developed by Dr. John Kotter that will help you implement your solution.

**32. *Don't Fear the Walking dead – Embrace Aging!***

If forty is the new twenty, is it safe to assume eighty is the new sixty? This course will examine the physical, physiological, psychological, and societal changes which naturally occur with aging. The lifestyle decisions we make today impact who we become as we age, so this course will take an in-depth look at these potential cause and effect relationships. Special emphasis will be placed on personal and cultural perceptions of aging and older adults and alterations to those perceptions as we ourselves become older.

**33. *Malcolm x***

Have you ever been told that you could do something? Or that you did not have what it took? Then you will relate to Malcolm X, one of the most controversial figures in American history. As a youngster Malcolm wanted to be a lawyer but was told he was not being realistic. As a person with a different background than others, you may have had to deal with stereotypes and misconceptions, too. This course will examine the life and times of Malcolm X and see how he was not only able to achieve but to become a role model for many others. We will also look at the lives of two other men who themselves were told that they could not achieve but were able to overcome their background and become successful.

**34. *There's a Place for Us: The Individual Voice***

During his Nobel acceptance speech in 1950, William Faulkner argued that the anxieties of the 20th century nuclear age had stripped from us "the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths ... love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice." Faulkner feared that, having lost touch with these values due to the threat of imminent nuclear annihilation, writers of the modern era wrote "not of the heart but of the glands." Notably, each of the universal truths Faulkner mentions is social in nature. In this seminar students will consider the relationship between personal liberty and the social order in a public sphere -- a hallmark of modern Western society. How do we understand the public sphere? Do we define it or does it define us? How do we reconcile civic duty with individual freedoms? What happens when they conflict? How do our own stories shape, reflect and mediate individual and social conflicts? Harkening back to Faulkner, how do the scientific, technological, political, and social advances typical the modern public sphere connect and separate us?

**35. *Election 2016: Deciphering Campaign Rhetoric***

During presidential election seasons, we are exposed to vicious ads on TV, endless rounds of televised debates, and newsroom analysis 24/7. As tiring as the coverage can be, we should learn who's in the running and what the candidates really stand for. We'll study the art of persuasion as it's employed by our current presidential candidates in their campaign platforms, promises, ads, promotions, and distortions, with an eye to discerning fact from fiction and/or opinion. The goal: to develop as analytically engaged people who recognize flawed arguments when we see them and avoid similar communication traps in our own lives.

**36. *Freshman 15: Reality or Myth***

The Freshman 15! This phrase has been floating around college and university campuses for decades. Are you afraid this could happen to you? Can you avoid gaining 15 pounds your first year of college? In this FYS, we will explore social, environmental, economic, and emotional issues associated with the freshman 15. You will critically examine your daily nutritional intake and determine how to achieve a healthy balance between nutritional intake and physical activity. In this seminar, you will learn to examine the environment around you to better understand how to make balanced choices.

**37. *What Does It Mean to be an Educated Person?***

What does it mean to be "educated"? Does having a high school – or college – diploma mean that you're educated? Or is education more than just a credential? As they embark upon their liberal arts educations at Mount Union, students will explore the "true meaning" of education. Who should be educated? To what end? Public schools? Private schools? Home schooling? Vocational or pre-professional training? Or liberal arts, aka general education? Students will draw upon their own educational experiences – in and outside the traditional classroom – along with philosophers and theorist of education from Socrates, Plato and Saint Augustine to Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Dubois and John Dewey, religious thinkers, politicians, social activists and ordinary citizens to engage in this debate and answer the perennial question: "What does it mean to be educated?"

**38. *Martyrs or Fools? Heroes of Faith-Based Social Justice.***

This course investigates the lives and work of individuals who, based on religious values and commitments, have worked for social justice and change in their particular contexts. Through the use of both primary and secondary resources, students will consider some of the "greats" in this area: Mohandas Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, Archbishop Oscar Romero, William Wilburforce, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and others. The course will also pay some attention to the work of more local individuals who likely will never be famous for their efforts but who nonetheless have dedicated their lives to the work of social justice and change. The course will include a service learning option and a site visit to an appropriate venue(s).