

# 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.

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## **FYS 100-01. *Banned Books***

Who's afraid of big bad books? More people than you might think. The American Library Association records hundreds of reported requests by parents and other community members to remove specific books from reading lists and shelves. Some of these requests result in removal, suspension, or banning of particular books in certain school districts or communities. In this class, as readers of banned books, our work will be to look at removal requests and dig into the books some find threatening to explore the feared ideas found inside.

## **FYS 100-02. *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?

## **FYS 100-03. *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.

## **FYS 100-04. *Pandorans, Wookies & Spock***

In this seminar, we will use science fiction and fantasy to delve into the way that our most "far-out" thinkers have handled historical issues such as slavery, gender relations and war. We will watch movies and series episodes, read graphic novels and excerpts from traditional novels. Science fiction is more than speed-of-light star ships, big blue people and transporter beams. We will find that it has very interesting and insightful things to say about important social and political issues.

## **FYS 100-05. *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.

## **FYS 100-06. *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.

**FYS 100-07. *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, inattentive blindness, change blindness, and the misinformation effect. The instructor for this course was a full-time professional magician for five years.

**FYS 100-08. *Behind the Scenes in Division I College Athletics***

College athletics are everywhere, but who and what make them happen? We will take a look behind the scenes at what has to occur for a team to exist, be healthy, have money to travel, and have fans in the stands. We will examine some of the unknown jobs in Division I collegiate athletics and what degrees are recommended to do these jobs. We will also discuss and debate many of the recent scandals in collegiate athletics.

**FYS 100-09. *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.

**FYS 100-10. *Watching the Detective***

"I get so angry when the teardrops start/but he can't be wounded 'cause he's got no heart," sings Elvis Costello in his praise song to the hardboiled detective... a hard-drinking, cynical, street-smart anti-hero of a world where sometimes heroes are thugs and thugs are men (or women) of honor. Hardboiled is attitude... at times the clear-eyed, objective forensics of a "high-functioning sociopath" - the cocaine-addicted consulting detective who investigate crimes to stave off boredom. From Sam Spade to Spencer, Basil Rathbone to Benedict Cumberbatch (and Robert Downey Jr. too!) we'll explore the worlds of the detective, women who love (or hate) them - not to mention those who look to replace them - on screen and in print. What can "watching the detective" teach us about masculinity and femininity? Truth and justice? Heroes? Villains? Sidekicks? "The game is on!"

**FYS 100-11. *Myth & 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.

**FYS 100-12. *Using Facts, Not Fake News***

In response to recent problems with the fast dissemination of fake news, students will practice the art of finding, selecting, and using credible information responsibly as support for their ideas and arguments. Class time will be devoted to viewing and analyzing fake news vs. factual news sources and determining how to tell the two apart. We will analyze newspapers and news websites, academic research and popular books. Students should leave the class as more critical consumers of information and better equipped to find, evaluate, and use news as a source of information.

**FYS 100-13. *Ghosts in Literature and Life***

You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than grave about you, whatever you are!" So says Ebenezer Scrooge to his old dead business partner, Jacob Marley. Ghosts frequently inhabit the pages of great works of literature. Jacob Marley, Moaning Myrtle, and Hamlet's dead father are some of the better known spirits who howl, moan, creak, and whisper dire warnings to the living. In this course we will spend a little time with such specters as we seek to understand them while at once being thrilled and chilled by them, "whatever they are." Expect apparitions from the likes of Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, Shirley Jackson, August Wilson and Stephen King along with a select tincture of scholarly spirit. And of course, you will have an opportunity to weave a phantasmagoric tale of your own. Please bring your enthusiasm and a willingness to read some fun stories and books.

**FYS 100-14. *Non-violent Protest and Social Change***

Students will study and practice social change that is achieved through non-violent protest, and the course will culminate in an immersive week-long experience in Puerto Rico. Readings and course discussion will explore three specific case studies: India, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, and will look at the actions and beliefs of the individuals who led successful non-violent protests in these countries to enhance social and environmental justice. Students will also study social action led by college students in the United States. In the second half of the semester, students will choose a social issue that is relevant to a community they care about, research possible solutions, and design and carry out a non-violent approach to alleviating that social issue. Students may have the opportunity to travel to Vieques, Puerto Rico in December 2017 after the fall term has ended to see first-hand the effects of a social movement, meet key players, and positively contribute to the island's continued restoration. Additional course travel fee: \$1300.

**FYS 100-15. *Chinese Pop Culture***

This course is an introduction to contemporary Chinese popular culture. From film to literature, from music to theatre, from popular TV shows to social media, this course traces the sociopolitical, aesthetic, and affective impact on the contemporary world and explores popular culture's relations to social change, technology development, public spaces, the state, national identity, and globalization.

**FYS 100-16. *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 . . .

**FYS 100-17. *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.

**FYS 100-18. *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.

**FYS 100-19. *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?

**FYS 100-20. *China; Friend or Foe?***

Napoleon once said, "Let China sleep, for when she wakes, she will shake the world." China is rapidly modernizing its military, and in December 2014 replaced the United States as the largest economy in the world. Meanwhile, China is also aggressively engaging in cyber-espionage and accumulating economic and financial influence around the world. Have you ever thought about what all these developments might mean for the United States? What, in particular will the Trump presidency mean for the future of U.S.-China relations? Have we already ceded the advantage to China with the decision to pull out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and to backtrack on the 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreements? Will the U.S.-China relationship be defined by cooperation or competition in the years ahead? Is conflict inevitable? You will learn about the prospects and challenges in U.S.-China relations from political, economic, national security, and cultural perspectives...

**FYS 100-21. *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?

**FYS 100-22. *Addiction***

This seminar addresses the issue of addiction (including addiction to alcohol) from several perspectives, including experience, neuroscience, society, the law, education, recovery, etc. The use of alcohol and other drugs will be examined historically as well as from a standpoint of current trends. This topic is crucial for freshman to consider as they confront the newfound freedom of their college years. During the initial weeks of the course, students will investigate the various problems that addiction causes, and as the semester unfolds, they will examine the many possible solutions for the endemic problems associated with addiction, including 12 Step Programs, other self-help groups, harm reduction programs, and rehabilitation as well as concepts, such as growth mindset and self-actualization.

**FYS 100-23. *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.

**FYS 100-24. *Demons & 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.

**FYS 100-25. *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.

**FYS 100-26. *"Got Sport"? Today's Student-Athlete in the U.S***

Whether a current or past student-athlete, the term "student-athlete" comes with controversy in today's society. This class will explore today's student-athlete as it relates to diversity, ethics, academic success and the NCAA. Big time money leads to big time pressure for some student-athletes both on the field and in the classroom. This class will assist students in understanding the role of today's student-athletes and the unique challenges and demands they deal with as they transition into college life and move towards graduation.

**FYS 100-27. *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.

**FYS 100-28. *RESIST! Theatre as Protest***

The Theatre has never been an institution that shies away from a good fight, and we understand that productions can't always be about jazz hands and silly costumes. "We are the ones who say it to their faces," argued Tony Award winner and Mount Union Schooler Lecturer Tracy Letts, "and we have a unique responsibility." Our responsibility is to force people to take a stand and not sit idly by. This seminar will examine American plays written by Arthur Miller, Luis Valdez, Anna Devere Smith, Tony Kushner, and Michael J. Arndt, each created to provoke a response to war or social injustice.

**FYS 100-29. *Wicked Problems, Small Wins & the Power of Teamwork***

Homelessness, childhood hunger, poverty and many other issues have blossomed into wicked problems that intimidate and terrify us. However, while these wicked problems have no single solutions, small wins and teamwork can make noticeable positive change over time. In this course we will examine these issues, learn about the organizations that are combating the problems daily and explore the power of teamwork. Our class promises to be interactive, full of new experiences and end with our own plan for small wins.

**FYS 100-30. *Eating on Purpose***

Want to make your life better through food? How about eating to make your community stronger? To make the world more fair? Through this course, learn how your personal food choices have a ripple effect far beyond you to people and places down the street, across the country, and abroad. Get to know Alliance as we practice "eating on purpose" through visits to local stores, farms, and eateries. By the end of the semester, you'll be living on purpose, empowered to tackle social issues (hunger, climate change, and poverty, to name a few) through your everyday decisions. This course is project-based and will help you develop critical-thinking skills, leadership qualities, and practical skills such as budgeting and meal planning.

**FYS 100-31. *Using Facts, Not Fake News***

In response to recent problems with the fast dissemination of fake news, students will practice the art of finding, selecting, and using credible information responsibly as support for their ideas and arguments. Class time will be devoted to viewing and analyzing fake news vs. factual news sources and determining how to tell the two apart. We will analyze newspapers and news websites, academic research and popular books. Students should leave the class as more critical consumers of information and better equipped to find, evaluate, and use news as a source of information.

## **Honors First Year Seminar Sections**

### **HON 110-01 *E pluribus unum? Exploring Religious Diversity in America***

Freedom of religion is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution through the First Amendment, which both prohibits the establishment of religion and the infringement of its free exercise. As a result, the United States is one of the most religious and religiously diverse countries in the world. As religions other than Christianity come to make up a larger percentage of the religious pie, tensions and issue arise. How do people of different cultures and beliefs cooperate as neighbors? How do they negotiate differences in fundamental values and traditional practices? Is it possible or even desirable to strive for unity in diversity? A grade of B+ or above is necessary to earn University Honors credit. Open only to University Honors scholars.

### **HON 110-02 *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). A grade of B+ or above is necessary to earn University Honors credit. Open only to University Honors scholars.

### **HON 110-03 *Brave New Worlds: Visions of Utopia in Fact and Fiction***

From real-life attempts at an earthly paradise to fictional worlds in which real-life trends are taken to outrageous extremes, every human civilization produces both utopian and dystopian visions, generation after generation. Some are enticing, some are horrifying, but the best of these visions have the power to make us think deeply about ourselves and our society even thousands of years after they are born. Their possible futures are critiques of the present, provoking critical thought about the logic that underpins our political, technological, and social lives. In this section of HON110, we explore a range of these visions from ancient texts to modern movies, confronting the enduring questions they raise. What is the most rational goal in life, happiness or virtue or something else? Is social harmony a realistic or even desirable goal for humans? How would you improve our society? Ultimately, the course is designed to urge you beyond easy answers and prefabricated beliefs, focusing your mind on the complexities bound up with key concepts like liberty, individualism, community, identity, and progress. Course assignments include creative as well as analytical work, culminating in a fairly involved group assignment that asks you to devise your own "utopian" community that is bold, attractive, and yet also feasible. Course activities include a visit to a real-life utopian community. Course materials include literature such as Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* and films such as *Metropolis*, *Children of Men* and *The Hunger Games*. . . A grade of B+ or above is necessary to earn University Honors credit. Open only to University Honors scholars.