

# Changes in our Fall 2011 First-Year Seminar Courses

Two of our seminars will not be offered as planned. These are

FYSP 090 Imagining Nature (both sections are cancelled)  
FYSP 093 Schools of Thought

We have six new seminars. Here is a list of them; descriptions follow

FYSP 081 Modernism *as* Media  
FYSP 082 Sex, Gender, and Power  
FYSP 083 Invisible Cities: Urban Environments and Urban Experience  
FYSP 084 Enlightenment or Post-Enlightenment: The University and the Liberal Arts  
FYSP 094 *Das Kapital*  
FYSP 110 Black Women and Liberation

## **081. Modernism *as* Media**

In this first year seminar, we will analyze modernist literary productions in a variety of genres—readings will include poetry (T.S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land”), short fiction (Henry James’s “In the Cage” and “The Real Thing”) and novels (E.M. Forster’s *Howards End* and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*)—and will analyze the forms of modern media featured within these texts. We will examine the ways in which these modernist texts engage with modern media forms: telegrams, phonographs, photographs, and advertisements. Modernist authors saw their texts as competing with these other expressive media. How is a poem like or not like a photograph? What traits does a novel share with a telegram? How do our reading and writing strategies change when we think about modernist literature *as* media? In other words, we will learn to read across media and to compare the textual strategies of modernist literary texts with competing media forms. In addition to exploring old “new media” featured in modernist texts, in the writing for this course we will also experiment with the kinds of condensation required by the telegraphic 140-character “tweet.” You will tweet and write multiple close-reading analyses which will build toward an extended analytical argumentative essay.

J. Sorensen (English)  
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours  
Fall Semester

FYSP 081-01

TR 3:00-4:15

## **082. Sex, Gender, and Power**

This course is an introduction to the history and practice of the study of sexuality in the U.S. We will turn to literature, science, and the humanities to gain exposure to various theories of human sexuality and the processes that shape the sexual culture and people’s understanding of their place within it. We will analyze how sexuality is mediated by gender, race, ethnicity, able-bodied-ness, age, religion, and looks, and we will explore why discussions of sex are both taboo and yet omnipresent in our culture, often provoking volatile reactions in American society. We

will explore sexuality as having political implications, as well as being fundamental to human rights and personal agency.

In this discussion-based, writing-intensive course students will improve their critical thinking, writing, and argumentation skills through participation in large and small group analyses of primary and secondary sources, revisions, and peer assessment.

K. Schreck (History)

4 SS, WRi, 4 Hours

Fall Semester

FYSP 082-01

TR 11:00-12:15

### **083. Invisible Cities: Urban environments and urban experience**

What is a city? Is it streets and buildings? The people who live there? The words and images that represent it? How can a single city be many cities at once? How do subjective experiences grow out of the material conditions of urban life? How are those material conditions shaped in turn by human ideas, desires, and memories?

In this seminar, we will examine cities as spaces that are at once physical places, subjective experiences, and the product of their representations. We will read literary texts like Charles Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*, short stories by James Joyce and Donald Barthelme, and the crime fiction of Raymond Chandler in addition to nonfiction texts on the architecture, geography, and history of various cities. We will consider films like *Chinatown* and the television series *The Wire*. In addition, we will consider a variety of other texts, including, maps, painting, photography, music, and hypertext.

We will consider several different modes of making sense of urban space and urban life, but our two main guides will be Italo Calvino, whose playful novel *Invisible Cities* sorts imaginary towns into the categories around which the course is organized, and Walter Benjamin, whose *Arcades Project* attempts to transform a mountain of facts about nineteenth-century Paris into a recreation of both the life of that city and the impersonal forces that shaped it. By striking a balance between Calvino's rigorous play and Benjamin's playful rigor, we will think about how we can use the full complement of the liberal arts to make sense of urban life, and to arrange the unruly and transitory experiences that pile up in the city into something meaningful, beautiful, and lasting.

J. Kolb(English)

4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours

Fall Semester

FYSP 083-01

TR 11:00-12:15

### **084. Enlightenment or Post-Enlightenment? The University and the Liberal Arts**

Liberal arts education roots itself in the belief that received wisdom and tradition need to be interrogated and re-interrogated. The liberal arts has come under assault in recent past for this very focus, as calls from mainstream politics and voices within the academy fail to see the benefit of continued questioning of common values. In this first year seminar, we will examine works that have produced enduring interest and which were developed under the rubric "liberal

arts”—philosophy, sociology, linguistics, economics, literary criticism, history, and journalism. We will then try to build our own senses of what this legacy of critical thinking gives to us and what it remains good for. The seminar will ask students to read widely, participate vigorously, and write carefully and insightfully. Four short papers, one revision, one conference-style presentation; regular contributions to discussion forum.

J. Gonzalez (English)  
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours  
Fall Semester

FYSP 084-01

TR 9:30-10:45

### **094. Das Kapital**

A close reading of the first volume of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. This breathtaking classic - not just of economic analysis but also of political economy, sociology, history and literature - is worth reading at any time for what it can teach us substantively and also about the dialectical method. And since *Das Kapital* is, among much else, a theory of the crisis tendencies of capitalism, it is all the more pertinent at a time when existing models and theories to manage and analyze our economy have failed.

We will read all thirty-three chapters methodically, paying attention to both the substance and method of the argument. In so doing we will learn what the dialectical method is and how, in its focus on the tensions and oppositions in structures, it differs from the standard analytical approach that focuses more narrowly on causes and effects. Of course, we will also learn what Marx had to say about commodities, value, money, labor, “exploitation”, class, the state, and mystification (the process by which the capitalist system systematically obscures its inner forms and relationships).

The course will deploy three different learning formats. We will read each chapter carefully. We will also take advantage of an extraordinary resource: the online lectures by Professor David Harvey, the distinguished scholar who has been offering this course for four decades and who has now generously put videos of it into the public domain (<http://davidharvey.org/reading-capital>), while also publishing a volume of the lectures. In class we will discuss the book and the lectures, dividing our time between getting a grasp of the arguments and exploring their analytical value and implications for our time.

M. Blecher (Politics)  
4 SS, WRi, 4 Hours  
Fall Semester

FYSP 094-01

TR 11:00-12:15

### **110. Black Women and Liberation**

This seminar investigates the various ways in which Black women of the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. and South Africa have served their communities and their freedom movements (e.g., civil rights, anti-apartheid) with an important array of skills, personal and material resources, vision, and will. Until very recently, historians and other scholars (including many feminists) have not seen women at the center of these liberation struggles as the important leaders they have been.

What would the history of these movements reveal had the voices of the women themselves not been muted and disregarded? Students will be asked to think critically about the properties of women's leadership, the development of political consciousness, and how Black women view their own activism. We will be examining important primary sources (especially autobiography), developing library skills, and exploring the bridge between community-based activism and intellectual life.'

P. Brooks (African American Studies)

4SS, WRi, CD, 4 Hours

Fall Semester

FYSP 110-01

MW 2:30-4:00