Welcome to Oberlin!

If you are an Oberlin student, you probably think deeply about things—about the value of art, literature, and music in a troubled world, about the state of the earth, about humans’ responsibility to other beings, and about your place in all of this. The First-Year Seminar Program is designed to further you along in this quest to question and understand, engaging you in intellectual inquiry, artistic endeavors, and thoughtful exploration. As first-year students at Oberlin you can take on intellectual questioning in a number of different ways—by thinking about political elections, symmetry, and the idea of utopia, to name a few topics of inquiry. You can explore such complex things as the human brain, the Bible, and a literary text. And you can examine such questions as: How can I know what is true and good? How does the studying I do in college connect to the larger world? How does study in the liberal arts prepare me to tackle tough problems and deal with conflict?

First-year seminars help you think about the connections among your courses and the personal significance and social relevance of your studies. They are introductions to liberal arts learning, designed not only to hone your skills in critical and creative thinking, discussion, and writing, but also to acquaint you with the values that sustain a community of learning.

The faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences strongly urges all first-year students to enroll in a first-year seminar. We believe that they are crucial to your Oberlin education. A seminar is a unique opportunity for you to test your ideas, learn from others, and get to know a professor well in a small classroom setting (enrollment is limited to 14 students). Faculty in departments and programs throughout the college offer first-year seminars. These seminars fulfill part of Oberlin’s writing proficiency requirement and a few help fulfill the quantitative proficiency requirement as well.

As you plan your first year, please be mindful that the vast majority of first-year seminars are offered in the fall, with very few in the spring. You have the opportunity to register in the summer for a fall first-year seminar; please refer to the Big Book of Forms for guidelines on how to do so. Please note that there is no significance to the course numbers of the seminars—all the first-year seminars are at the same level, whether their numbers are above or below 100. We have more than 100 seminars that are offered on a rotating basis, so not all of them can have numbers between FYSP 100 and FYSP 199.

For further information on the First-Year Seminar Program, visit the program’s website at www.oberlin.edu/fys/. Enjoy reading the seminar descriptions and thinking about what shape your exploration will take at Oberlin. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Bob Geitz
Director, First-Year Seminar Program
Associate Professor of Computer Science
E-mail: bob.geitz@oberlin.edu
First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions

Fall 2011 Seminars
Incoming first-year students have the chance to register for a first-year seminar over the summer; be sure to send in the preference sheet found in the Big Book of Forms. Please note that the vast majority of first-year seminars are offered in the fall. Spring offerings—which there are two this year—are listed after the fall courses. Students in their first year who have sophomore standing by virtue of credits are allowed to take first-year seminars and should contact the FYSP director, Bob Geitz, if they have difficulty registering.

012. Socialism: Real and Imagined
In the context of the most significant crisis of free market capitalism since the 1930s, and a revival of public intervention in the economy, the term socialism has undergone a renewal of interest, as both a term of abuse and as a curiosity. This course will explore the historical meanings and contemporary relevance of socialism. Its focus will be the experience and relevance of socialism to industrialized democracies. In other words, to societies like our own. The course is divided into three main sections. The first is an examination of political theory, surveying the various strands of socialist thought. The second section will examine a handful of concrete socialist experiments that are most relevant to the contemporary period, in order to investigate what worked, what did not, and why. The third section of the course imagines what a viable and democratic socialism would look like today. It samples a significant body of literature that has emerged in the last decade that investigates how we might construct a feasible socialism that is relevant to the contemporary period.

C. Howell (Politics)
4 SS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 012-01 TR 1:30-2:45

085. Karma
Karma is one of the most important concepts in Buddhism. It lies at the heart of Buddhist thought, serving as the linchpin for everything from salvation to cosmology. It informs everyday experience and inspires the imagination. While many doctrines, such as nirvana, have tended to be the concern of the elite few, karma has been important for great intellectuals and ordinary adherents alike. But what is karma? How does it work? And...
class examines conflicts such as those in Somalia, Sudan, Algeria, Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In addition to academic articles and books, students will examine novels, graphic novels, government documents, film, still images, music, cartoons, and various types of print and broadcast journalism. Students may be unfamiliar—and thus perhaps even sometimes uncomfortable—with some of the narratives examined. However, students will be encouraged to engage the narratives in order to better comprehend how various people from the Middle East and North Africa understand the conflicts they experience. The course includes four different types of writing assignments: an expository essay, a policy memo, a creative writing piece based on a novel read, and a final multiperspective narrative account of an event in a conflict in the MENA region.

M. Milligan (Politics)
4 SS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 088-01 TR 9:30-10:45

088. Narrative and Political Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa
There's more than one side to a story. Indeed, there are more than two sides to a story. Although simplistic accounts tend to present only two "sides," to various political conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, people commonly grouped into one "side" frequently hold a variety of divergent views. This examines the role of representation of political conflict in the Middle East from a variety of perspectives. This
090. Imagining Nature
What do we think, feel, or imagine when nature draws our attention? How might we understand and communicate these responses? What do our strategies for representing nature say about us? This seminar will consider the invention of nature in literary, visual, philosophical, and scientific texts. We will consider how representations of nature have been entangled with cultural forces, how they have changed over time, and with what implications. Along the way we will consider what representations of nature can tell us about human nature, and how they can help us to engage with complex ethical questions about our environment and how we live in it. Poets and fiction writers to be considered include William Wordsworth, Walt Whitman, Elizabeth Bishop, Henry David Thoreau, William Faulkner, and Phillip K. Dick. Nature writers will include Loren Eiseley, Annie Dillard, Aldo Leopold, and Susan Fenimore Cooper.

N. Petzak (English)
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 090-01 TR 9:30-10:45
FYSP 090-02 TR 1:30-2:45

093. Schools of Thought: Ideas on Education from Germany
What does it mean to learn and to grow? How does education take place, and for whom? American educators have found answers to these questions by studying German models ranging from Kindergarten to the research university. This seminar examines educational theories and practices as they appear in a range of historical and imaginative works. Studying history, fiction, and film, students will reflect upon the means by which young people gain knowledge and assume a role in society. Just as the design of a school building or curriculum reflects its founders’ ideas of how students learn, so too does the choice of a genre or medium reflect the concepts that an author wishes to convey. Form, in other words, is a critical component of content. With this in mind, we will compare philosophical and historical images of education with those found in literature or film. Does one medium give a truer picture than another? What can creative fiction reveal that other types of work cannot? Students in this seminar will respond to these questions by comparing philosophical and historical documents with such fictional genres as the Bildungsroman, or novel of formation, social novels set in Germany’s schools, and the cinema of both idealists and outsiders. This seminar will examine the ways in which we talk about education and assess its value.

E. Hamilton (German)
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 093-01 MWF 2:30-3:20

095. Moral Persons, Potential Persons, and Moral Value
In ordinary language, a moral person is someone who behaves well. In moral philosophy, however, moral person refers to a being with special moral importance, quite apart from his behavior. The typical account has it that a moral person is a being that possesses rights, such as the right to life of a typical adult human being. Adult human beings are usually thought to be paradigmatic moral persons. Some very difficult moral problems arise because of creatures who are less obviously moral persons, but who nevertheless seem to command our moral attention: animals; fetuses; on some views, badly brain-damaged persons; and even future people. Should great apes be legal persons? Is it permissible to kill other animals for food or research? Is abortion permissible? Should we compromise the interests of people alive now to save resources for future people? In this seminar, we will discuss views of what makes any being a moral person, as well as these difficult practical ethical problems.

T. Hall (Philosophy)
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 095-01 TR 3:00-4:15

105. Staying Sane in a Crazy World: The Human Impact of War, Terrorism, and Natural Disasters
The headline-grabbing events of September 11th, the war in Iraq, and images of victims of Hurricane Katrina confront us with the reality that for many people the world is hostile and violent; life is unpredictable and natural events may cause even basic necessities to vanish. Yet we know that human beings can survive catastrophic events with mind and body intact. Many may even flourish under seemingly intolerable conditions. How is this possible? This course asks: What is the human response to problems of catastrophic proportions? Under such conditions, how do we define mental health? What human qualities foster resilience to tragedy and trauma of global proportions? We will examine how people respond to the sociopolitical upheavals they
are caught in, drawing upon both the scientific literature and personal accounts to understand how people stay sane in the face of horrific life circumstances.

K. Sutton (Psychology)
4 SS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 105-01 TR 11:00-12:15

107. Making Sense of Science
Offered in spring 2012. Listings for spring semester courses are at the end of this catalog.

111. Words That Matter
We might not normally think of “literary” or “poetic” words as words that particularly matter. Nonetheless, this seminar will take poetic language—language at its most concentrated, deliberate, and artful— as a jumping-off point for larger questions about how we use language to think about and shape our experience of the world. How do words matter? How do they affect our sensory, emotional, and social realities? How do we as readers, writers, and critics interpret other people’s words, making them matter profoundly to our own experience? What is literary language “for”? The course will involve intensive study of lyric poetry, but texts will also include some reflective essays and a few novels.

J. Bryan (English)
4 HU, WR, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 111-01 MWF 10:00-10:50
FYSP 111-02 MWF 11:00-11:50

113. Re-envisioning Russia
We will explore the changing cultural climate in Russia over the past two decades by examining the collapse and resuscitation of post-Soviet film. How have directors engaged in the aesthetic, spiritual, and ideological debates of the Yeltsin nineties and the Putin aughts? How did they transform Soviet myths to shape new visions for a post-Soviet Russia? To what extent did they draw on classic Russian writers (Gogol, Tolstoy, Chekhov and others) to inform these efforts? The films and texts we will study focus on topics of vital interest in Russia today: violence and crime, the lives of the super rich, youth culture, Chechnya, rural Russian life, and the legacy of the Soviet past. Ultimately, we seek to understand the role film and new media have played in Russia’s search to define its post-Soviet identity. In what ways are these on-screen visions truly innovative, and in what ways do they remix or sample from earlier traditions? Do these films speak primarily to a national audience or do they possess a more universal appeal? Class meets twice a week for discussion and once a week for film screenings. P/NP grading only.

A. Forman (Russian)
4 HU, WRi, CD, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 113-01 MW 3:30-4:20, F 3:30-5:30

116. Natural History of the Vermilion River Watershed
The Vermilion River and its tributaries have been carving into the northern Ohio landscape for over 10,000 years. Through weekly field trips, visual arts, readings, and discussions, we will examine the life forms and natural processes that occur in and along the river. We will also study past and present human land use patterns and develop our own sense of place as the most recent settlers of the land. Field notes and weekly writing assignments will be discussed in class and with the instructor during individual appointments.

M. Garvin (Biology)
4 NS, WR, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 116-01 TR 9:30-10:50, W 1:30-4:20

119. The First Amendment and the Internet
Through the study of constitutional law cases, this course explores the impact of the Internet on First Amendment freedoms of speech, dissent, academic inquiry, and privacy. What constitutes political, offensive, pornographic, hateful, harassing, dangerous, and subversive speech? Can and should such speech be regulated on the Internet? The Internet instantly brings unmediated information and political perspectives to individuals around the world. Technological advances make it possible for governments, individuals, and private, political, economic, and social institutions to secure information about citizens without their permission. The collection and misuse of such information can also have a chilling effect on the freedoms of speech and political organization and privacy, while also placing the security of individuals and nations at risk. Topics include history and philosophy of free expression; the Internet as simultaneously private and public space; government regulation in the “anti-terrorism” age; library access to the Internet; music, file-sharing, and intellectual property; and regulating hateful, obscene, indecent, and subversive speech on the Internet. This is an introductory course for both politics and law and society majors.

R. Kahn (Politics)
4 SS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 119-01 TR 11:00-12:15
FYSP 119-02 TR 1:30-2:45
126. Tolstoy’s War and Peace

War and Peace, which Tolstoy insisted was not a novel, stands out as one of the most perverse and radically innovative works of fiction ever written, and continues to confound, captivate, and annoy readers today every bit as much as it did when it first appeared almost 150 years ago. Undertaking a simultaneously close and broad reading of this epic “non-novel,” we will both situate it concretely in its historical context(s) and grapple head-on with the unabashedly “big” and universal questions about war, peace, life, death, art, gender, love, free will, history, and the human condition (among other things!) that lie at its heart. We will bring a number of different critical approaches to bear on the work and will read it on multiple levels: as a “family novel,” a love story, a bildungsroman, and an anti-novel; as social satire; as history and anti-history; and as a philosophical tract. We will also screen and discuss several film adaptations of the work.

T. Newlin (Russian)
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester        FYSP 126-01        TR 3:00-4:20

128. Media and Memory

It’s not what you remember; it’s how you remember it. The forms in which we remember our personal and collective pasts have a strong, even overriding, influence on the content of those memories and our attitudes toward them. Different media—including oral narratives, visual art, cinema, poetry, public monuments, and electronic forms—have different ways of shaping and influencing what we remember, how we remember it, and thus how we think of who we have been and could be. We will read, view, and research a variety of works (including poetry, fiction, cinema, painting, and electronic art) that treat and shape memory in order to understand the special qualities of each medium. We will also try out these different media to attempt to communicate events from our own experiences. Finally, we will take a closer look at the ways historical events have been memorialized in our built environment, in the context of both Oberlin specifically and the U.S. generally.

J. Pence (English and Cinema Studies)
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester        FYSP 128-01        TR 9:30-10:50
FYSP 128-02        TR 11:00-12:15

131. How Early Jews and Christians Rewrote the Bible

The first Jewish interpreters of the Bible (who eventually included early Christians) did not just passively read the biblical text; they rewrote it, filling in its narrative gaps with fanciful subplots and using difficult passages as jumping-off points for leaps of poetic and philosophical fancy. We will explore these interpretations in early Rabbinic and Christian writings—including the Talmud, the New Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Apocrypha, and the works of Josephus—and the underlying principles of such exegesis (creative close reading, called midrash in the Jewish tradition). Assignments will include both analytic and creative writing in which students will experiment with these forms of creative interpretation. We will also see the ways in which the religious ideas generated by such interpretation helped to create the values and conflicts of the Western world.

A. Socher (Religion and Jewish Studies)
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester        FYSP 131-01        TR 9:30-10:45

132. Searching for Utopia: Episodes in American History

How have Americans envisioned more perfect worlds, and what have they done to bring their ideas to life? This course examines the broad sweep of such thoughts and experiments, with special attention to the optimistic heyday of 19th-century communal utopianism. In a series of case studies, we will explore how reformers thought about individualism and community, gender and sex, charisma and faith, work and leisure, and technology and nature in creating the environments that they believed would allow human beings to best flourish. We will consider how utopian experiments were shaped by the broader society and about their impacts, and we will ponder reasons for successes and failures. Subject matter includes the Oneida community, Shakers, Transcendentalists, and Mormons in antebellum America; turn-of-the-century utopian thought, including Edward Bellamy’s futuristic utopias and those of his followers; and 20th-century visions and experiments, including intentional communities of the 1960s.

C. Lasser (History)
4 SS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester        FYSP 132-01        MW 2:30-3:45

FYSP 132-02        TR 11:00-12:15

(CD, Cultural Diversity; QPh, Quantitative Proficiency-half; WR, Writing Certification; WRi, Writing Intensive)
141. Manga Genji

In this course we will read and discuss a contemporary manga (graphic novel) version of the great Japanese classic, The Tale of Genji. We will then explore the original tale. Next, using Oberlin’s museum collection and archives, we will study first-hand woodblock prints and other formats in which the tale has been enjoyed and interpreted over time. Finally, we will come back to the contemporary manga version again, to reinterpret and evaluate it in the light of its long popularity throughout Japanese cultural history. Writing assignments: For each of the three main segments of the course, students will be asked to write a four-to-five-page evaluative commentary. These will be shared with the class in preparation for each discussion. The final written assignment for the course will be a slightly longer (eight-page) piece that compares the manga version of the Tale of Genji with one of the earlier forms we have studied. For the final assignment, students will first meet with the instructor, compose an outline, write a first draft, and then, after getting instructor feedback on the draft, will write their final version.

S. Gay (East Asian Studies)
4 HU, WRi, CD, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 141-01 MW 2:30-3:45

144. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.
An interpretation of the lives and thought of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. in the context of the civil rights movement. It will focus on the theological, political, cultural, and psycho-social views which informed their religio-moral thought and actions. The course will include films, autobiographies, biographies, collected writings and speeches, and other interpretations of these two religious and political leaders. Discussions, student papers and presentations.

A.G. Miller (Religion)
4 HU, WRi, CD, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 144-01 TR 9:30-10:45

148. The Symphony in Cultural Thought and Practice, 1780-1914

When the symphony was introduced in the late 18th century, it was considered a “curtain raiser”—just one of a number of musical pieces in the concert repertoire. Eventually, however, the symphony gained pride of place within the concert repertoire. The history of the symphony was bound up in the idea of the sublime, and the genre grew to encompass compositions of extraordinary dimensions. As Gustav Mahler said around 1900, “To me, ‘symphony’ means constructing a world within all the technical means at one’s disposal.” The Symphony in Cultural Thought and Practice, 1780-1914 will investigate both the social character and the musical structure of symphonies and show that the history of symphonic compositional technique embodies a history of ideas. The investigation will address the following topics: the aesthetics and theories of the symphony; the social and institutional background for the development of the genre; the formation and history of the orchestra from 1780 to 1914; and musical analysis, meaning, and representation. Composers studied will include Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Berlioz, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Dvorak, Mahler, Elgar, and Vaughan Williams. Through this course, students will develop active listening skills, gain an understanding of how to write critically about art and music, and learn to use primary resources—both aural and written. Students need neither prior musical experience nor the ability to read music to take this class.

C. McGuire (Musicology)
2 HU, 2SS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 148-01 TR 3:00-4:15

150. Questioning Realism: The North and South American Fantastic

Not all fantasy literature involves Tolkienesque epic quests. If non-realistic literature in the United States has undergone a broad revival recently, this is in part due to the respect accorded to “magical realism” since the 1960s in Latin America. In these stories, common people (often from non-Western traditions) are not surprised by the ghosts they live among or the marvels they experience every day. The authors of these tales have also read our own U.S. tradition with intelligence and creativity. We will start with how Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar understood the American classics Poe and Hawthorne. We will then study Julie Taymor’s use of Horacio Quiroga and Frida Kahlo. We will examine the “invention” of magical realism in the 1960s by Gabriel García Márquez, and the critical borrowing of its forms by U.S. women writers. And we will see the interactions between feminism and fantasy in novels by Ursula Le Guin and Angélica Gorodischer. One of our goals will be to see how the fantastic expresses dissatisfaction with the way the world is or is perceived, whether a dissatisfaction with literary realism or with reality itself.

P. O’Connor (Hispanic Studies and Comparative Literature)
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 150-01 MW 2:30-3:45
155. Information, Knowledge, and the Internet
The Internet has been described as a conduit that has taken us from the
Machine Age to the Information Age. What does this mean? What is
information and how does it differ from knowledge? Is technology making
fundamental changes in the way we think and learn? What is “intellectual
property,” and why are people able to own it and deprive others of it? The
Internet gives us access to enormous amounts of information, much of
which is fallacious. How can we locate reliable information, and how can
we determine that it is reliable? This course attempts to answer these and
related questions. Along the way we will look at techniques for presenting
information clearly and effectively, both on paper and electronically, and
we will look at hypertext and discuss its potential. Students in this course
will develop web pages, write papers, and undertake research projects
using both print and electronic references. No prior computer experience is
necessary for this course.

R. Geitz (Computer Science)
4NS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 155-01 TR 9:30-10:45

160. Satire and the Uses of Laughter
Why do we laugh? Are some things just plain funny? Does someone always
have to be the butt of the joke? Can laughter also inspire self-awareness—
even bring about change? In this course we will read various philosophies of
laughter and examine laughter’s relationship to satire. Students will explore
and develop the analytical skills required to understand satire—the ability
to read and watch things carefully and to think critically. These skills are,
in fact, central to a liberal arts education, and much satire treats attentive
reading and looking as ethical imperatives. Furthermore, our investigation
of satire will focus on how satire can work both to critique social ills and to
supply, however indirectly, solutions to the problems it delights in exposing.
The satires we study will include literary works by Jonathan Swift, Evelyn
Waugh, and George Saunders; the Marx Brothers’ film *Duck Soup*; and
such contemporary TV satires as *South Park*. We will also explore Aristotle,
Henri Bergson, and Charles Baudelaire’s accounts of why people laugh.

L. Baudot (English)
4HU, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 160-01 MWF 10:00-10:50

162. Cold War in Asia
The collapse of the Soviet Union and the victory of the West brought
the Cold War to an abrupt end. This course examines the creation and
breakdown of Cold War consensus through a probing look at the cultural,
social, and political history of the Cold War in Asia. When and why did the
U.S. seek to extend the containment doctrine to Asia? Why was the Korean
peninsula chosen as the site of America’s first Cold War confrontation?
We will examine the ideological and security dimensions of U.S.-Soviet
relations in detail, emphasizing an exploration of the Cold War’s impact on
Asian societies, especially on China, Japan, and the two Koreas. Some of
the questions we will ask are: In what way has the Cold War influenced the
development of these countries politically, economically, and ideologically?
What sets of events, both domestic and global, led to the outbreak of war
on the Korean peninsula? What impact did culture have on the reception
of Cold War ideologies in Asia? How did Asian leaders exploit Cold War
alliances for their own political/economic interests? And how has the fall of
the Soviet Union been memorialized in China, Japan, and the two Koreas,
and to what extent do these “shared” memories of the Cold War highlight
the differences between the countries?

S. Jager (East Asian Studies)
4SS, WRi, CD, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 162-01 TR 9:30-10:45

166. Under the Banner of Science: The Crusade Against Evolution
Public school science teachers often downplay evolution’s importance
in the biology curriculum or risk the censure of parents, administrators,
and school boards. Indeed, current science standards in some states
have been amended to reflect the public’s attitudes towards questions of
biological origins and the uniqueness of the human species. The religious
and scientific communities often talk past each other in this ongoing
debate. How have the arguments shifted and how have the scientific, religious
and educational communities responded? How do primary and secondary
school science textbooks present evolution? We will explore the structure
of scientific research and methods in field and lab work in biology. We
will also follow current local and state confrontations, interpretations
of the separation of church and state, legal and political strategies and
judicial rulings, and how the worldviews of science and religion can

(CD, Cultural Diversity; QPh, Quantitative Proficiency-half; WR, Writing Certification; WRi, Writing Intensive)
controlling a revolution once it radicalizes. In the first half of the course, we will work through a detailed understanding the issues, people, and events of the French Revolution through exploring primary documents. In the second half of the course, students will do individual research projects, based mostly in secondary sources and presented to the whole group. Students will also be expected to write (and rewrite) several short papers.

L. Smith (History)
4 SS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 173-01 TR 3:00-4:15

173. The French Revolution and the Making of the Modern World

Terror, extravagance, the violent overthrow of privilege, authoritarian or even “totalitarian” rule, the legitimacy of the state, capital punishment, equality, imperialism, democracy, violence, war, peace—these and many other issues of the modern world can be traced to the French Revolution beginning in 1789. The great defining event of modern Europe came to have repercussions far beyond Europe and the Euro-American world. Every subsequent revolutionary would owe something to the French Revolution. We will explore the issues of the French Revolution in order to understand just why they have had such long-term resonance. Topics include revolutionary ideology; charismatic leadership; mass mobilization (through appeals to national identity, class, race, and gender); the contradictions of the Revolution in the French Empire; and the challenges of...
good deal of human social behavior cannot easily be explained with the usual arsenal of the evolutionary theorist. This course will explore the ability of evolutionary theory to account for social interactions in humans and other animals. We will begin by considering the selfish elements of biological entities and how natural selection can favor cooperation in nonhuman animals in spite of their “selfish genes.” The implications of these basic ideas are immense—cooperation among individuals may lead to coherent and stable groups, and group coherency sets the stage for all sorts of other complex social phenomena. We will then consider whether evolutionary theory can account for elaborate social phenomena that seem restricted to humans—for example, the preponderance of religion, economic exchange, and political alliances within human societies. How do these quintessential features of human society mesh with contemporary evolutionary theory? Is biology sufficient to understand them?

K. Tarvin (Biology)
4 NS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 181-01 MWF 11:00-11:50

182. The Body in Health and Disease
Examing the structure and function of the human body in health and disease, this seminar asks whether a universal conception of the body exists. Discussion and readings will consider whether the function of the body and its susceptibility to diseases differ between females and males, as well as the extent to which Western and Chinese medical systems share similar perceptions of the body. These questions will be explored in topics ranging from the major organ systems to mental health and the biology of love and satiety. Students will meet with the instructor for a third hour each week in small-group, Cambridge-Oxford-style tutorials. Designed to give students opportunities to share knowledge and to develop ideas with the instructor, the tutorials will feature analyses of literature and discussion of essays prepared by members of the group. Students contemplating majors outside of science are especially welcome.

T. Allen (Biology)
4 NS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 182-01 TR 9:00-9:50, plus a third hour to be arranged

183. The Literature of War, Resistance, and Reconciliation
From the bloody battles recorded in Homer’s war epic The Iliad to the grim story of WWII resistance told in Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel Maus and beyond, war and its aftermath have been subjects of literature throughout the ages. Why are war stories so central to so many cultures? How does one tell the unspeakable? What can we learn from the ways that language is used to represent, romanticize, or renounce war? In this seminar, we will explore how various literary genres present the experience of, resistance to, and recovery from violent human conflict. We will explore how writers address individual human experiences of war in relation to the social, historical, and political meanings associated with it. Readings will be drawn from the classics, as well as more contemporary literature, including but not limited to Homer’s Iliad, Regeneration (Pat Barker), Maus (Art Speigelman), The Things They Carried (Tim O’Brien), The Fifth Book of Peace (Maxine Hong Kingston), and A Long Way Gone (Ishmael Beah). Students will write several short analytical essays as well as one longer essay that incorporates research, literary analysis, and personal reflection.

N. Boutilier (Rhetoric and Composition)
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 183-01 MWF 11:00-11:50
FYSP 183-02 MWF 1:30-2:20

187. Ars Moriendi: Death and the Art of Dying
If death is not upon us now (thinks Hamlet) then it will come later, and if not later, then now. The readiness is all, but what does it mean to be ready? Is there an ars moriendi, an art to dying well? Can our understanding of death change the way we choose to live? To answer these questions we will begin by considering ideas and expressions of death from a variety of perspectives, arts, and historical periods. Works of fiction, poetry, philosophy, music, and visual art will provide models for comparative inquiries into the valuing of lives and deaths: why are some considered noble, beautiful, purposeful, or meaningful, while others are shameful, ugly, purposeless, or senseless? We will also test and extend our classroom perspectives by engaging with community partners in Oberlin. As we talk with others, we will rethink our own lives and deaths.

J. Deppman (Comparative Literature)
4 HU, WRi, CD, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 187-01 MF 8:35-9:50

192. Poetry, Experience, and the Imagination
This seminar will examine the role of the imagination in experience as mediated by poetry. How do poems represent daily life; that is, what it is like to experience life itself? What can poetry do for the imagination, and how can poetry transform our experience? We will focus on these questions as we read and interpret a selection of poems and philosophy from ancient
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Biases when they conduct experiments, collect and interpret data, and construct knowledge. Students will gain experience in these methods by learning to conduct surveys and experiments, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting their results in written and oral reports. Finally, the class will consider how fields other than psychology deal with the question of bias and how critical reasoning can lead to new understandings of real-world issues.

P. deWinstanley (Psychology)
4 SS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 198-01 TR 11:00-12:15

199. Beyond Disbelief: Can Literature Tell the Truth?
We tend to be confident about our beliefs, whether those beliefs are political, religious, moral, historical, or aesthetic. We are much less clear about why we believe what we believe, and about the different kinds of belief that govern our lives. This course will consider the problem of belief chiefly in the context of literary art: what does it mean for a story, poem, or play to be made up but also, somehow, true? What does it mean when we say that a text is believable? Is that the same thing as saying that a person we know is believable? What if a story is credible but a narrator seems untrustworthy? What if what we like about a work is its very fantastical or incredible implausibility? Our ultimate concern will be with the forms of knowledge that art underwrites. How is aesthetic knowledge different from the kinds of certainty that science, history, or philosophy seek to establish?

D. Harrison (English)
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 193-01 MWF 10:00-10:50
FYSP 193-02 MWF 11:00-11:50

198. I Knew It All Along
Sometimes what we know, or what we think we know, or even what we think we would have known biases our interpretation of events. In this seminar, we will examine some of the biases that we all bring to our reasoning about the world: How, for example, do biases affect basic cognitive processes such as sensation, perception, and memory? What do these biases mean for the way we approach the world? And how might everyday reasoning biases lead to dire consequences in medicine, the social and political realms, and legal concerns? We will also consider the methods that psychological scientists use to try to overcome personal beliefs and biases when they conduct experiments, collect and interpret data, and construct knowledge. Students will gain experience in these methods by learning to conduct surveys and experiments, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting their results in written and oral reports. Finally, the class will consider how fields other than psychology deal with the question of bias and how critical reasoning can lead to new understandings of real-world issues.

P. deWinstanley (Psychology)
4 SS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 198-01 TR 11:00-12:15

Addendum, Fall 2011

139. Political Leadership
In this seminar, from various perspectives on writing, through various case studies of political leaders, and through writing and rewriting many essays over the semester, you will learn to write better, mostly by recognizing and eliminating bad writing; you will learn to think more insightfully, by abandoning the mindless repetition of hackneyed phrases; you will gain the intellectual power to see though and reject the unclarifiable blather of politicians and political commentators; and you will learn to think politically, by understanding the ways in which political leaders attempt to cope with the contradictory demands of the American public and the frustrating constraints of the American political system.

P. Dawson (Politics)
4 SS, WRi, 4 Hours
Fall Semester FYSP 139-01 TR 3:00-4:15

Spring 2012 Seminars

086. Contemporary East Asian Cinema
In recent years, national cinemas from East Asia have received commercial and critical attention from around the globe. The popularity of stars (from Tony Leung to Maggie Cheung), directors (from Wong Kar-wai to Hayao Miyazaki), and films (from Tampopo to Old Boy) in Asia and the West raises a number of important questions: Do film productions in Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Korea, and Japan share certain historical, regional, and aesthetic experiences that make “East Asia” an important category of cinema studies? If so, what are
the interacting transnational and local cultural characteristics that are shaping the global film market? This course will compare the emergence of “New Cinema” in Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea since the 1980s. After examining the major cultural and sociopolitical contexts in which each cinematic movement is produced, we will pay close attention to the specific issues raised in individual films.

H. C. Deppman (East Asian Studies)
4 HU, WRi, 4 Hours
Spring Semester  FYSP 086-01  MW 2:30-3:45, Sunday 7-10

107. Making Sense of Science
Few would dispute the importance of science in contemporary society. Yet there are differing ideas about what science is, what it can do, and whether it can be trusted. Over the last 50 years there has been a tremendous increase in the professionalization and specialization in all areas of knowledge, which has exacerbated the gulf between scientists and nonscientists. The result is an increasing inability of these two groups to communicate in a constructive fashion. This course will discuss the following questions: What is science? How does it progress/evolve/work? How is science similar to and/or different from other disciplines? What is the origin and extent of the intellectual divide between the science community and humanities? (And does it matter?) In the first part of the course we will discuss the events leading to three major scientific discoveries. The second portion of the course will discuss the divide between scientists and nonscientists that has been described as the “two cultures.” Readings include The Structure of Scientific Revolutions by Thomas S. Kuhn, Harvard Case Histories in Experimental Science by James Bryant Conant, The Double Helix by James D. Watson, The Two Cultures by Charles P. Snow and Stefan Collini, The Common Sense of Science by Jacob Bronowski, and The Sokal Hoax by the editors of Lingua Franca. P/NP grading only.

A. Matlin (Chemistry)
2 NS, 2 SS, WRi, 4 Hours
Spring Semester  FYSP 107-01  TR 1:30-2:45
Psychology
P. deWinstanley 198. I Knew It All Along 21
J. Hanna 087. Psychological Mythbusters: What Do We Believe, Why Do We Believe It, and Is It True? 4
K. Sutton 105. Staying Sane in a Crazy World: The Human Impact of War, Terrorism, and Natural Disasters 7
Religion
A.G. Miller 144. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. 12
J. Ritzinger 085. Karma 3
A. Socher 131. How Early Jews and Christians Rewrote the Bible 11
Rhetoric and Composition
N. Boutilier 183. The Literature of War, Resistance & Reconciliation 19
Russian
A. Forman 113. Recent Russian Cinema: In kino veritas? 8
T. Newlin 126. Tolstoy’s War and Peace 10
Theater and Dance
C. McAdams 166. Under the Banner of Science: The Crusade against Evolution 15
German
E. Hamilton 093. Schools of Thought: Ideas on Education from Germany 6
Hispanic Studies
P. O’Connor 150. Questioning Realism: The North and South American Fantastic 13
History
S. Magnus 167. Who Was a Jew? Boundaries of Identity 15
L. Smith 173. The French Revolution and the Making of the Modern World 16
E. Wurtzel 089. Heretics and Infidels: Muslims, Christians, Jews and the Legacy of the Middle Ages 5
Jewish Studies
S. Magnus 167. Who Was a Jew? Boundaries of Identity 16
A. Socher 131. How Early Jews and Christians Rewrote the Bible 11
Mathematics
S. Colley 177. What Is Mathematics and Why Won’t It Go Away? 17
Musicology
C. McGuire 148. The Symphony in Cultural Thought and Practice, 1780-1914 12
Philosophy
T. Hall 095. Moral Persons, Potential Persons, and Moral Value 7
Politics
P. Dawson 139. Political Leadership 21
C. Howell 012. Socialism: Real and Imagined 3
R. Kahn 119. The First Amendment and the Internet 9
M. Milligan 088. Narrative and Political Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa 4
(CD, Cultural Diversity; QPh, Quantitative Proficiency-half; WR, Writing Certification; WRi, Writing Intensive)