

First Year Seminar Course Descriptions

Spring 2012



Morehead Campus

Rock Music: Enduring Art or Ephemeral Entertainment?

FYS 101 – 001

MWF1, 9:10a – 10:10a, Combs Building 205

Dr. Layne Neeper

Students in this seminar will explore the artistic qualities of contemporary rock and roll through an examination of its lyrics and music. They will apply the study of poetic elements to the language of rock songs in order to distinguish important values and ideas found in some rock music from the popular perception that it is a mere throw-away commodity produced in the service of a consumer culture. Class discussion, writing assignments, and oral presentations will be informed by an emphasis on critical listening and thinking. A Professor of English, Dr. Neeper has been a serious listener to rock music since he, at age 10, explained to his sister why the B-side of Neil Young's "Heart of Gold" was better than the single. Since then, he has presented scholarly papers and published on rock music and has taught classes in its appreciation.

ET and Interstellar Travel

FYS 101 – 002

TTHF2, 9:10a – 10:10a, Lappin Hall 208

Dr. Jennifer Birriel

ET captures the imagination, but is there more to the extra-terrestrial phenomenon than meets the eye? Claims of UFO sightings and alien abductions abound in popular culture. This seminar introduces students to the scientific method and the scientific study of life in the universe. Science fiction literature imagines an incredible variety of intelligent life capable of routinely communicating and traveling across vast distances in space. Students will explore whether these scenarios are fact or fiction and how scientists in the emerging field of astrobiology are attempting to determine if humans are alone or if other life forms exist in the Universe. Students will critically examine the possibilities and challenges of interstellar travel by using case studies of UFO claims, such as the Roswell, NM UFO site. An Associate Professor of Physics in the Department of Mathematics, Computer Science, and Physics, Dr. Birriel teaches general education science classes and physics at MSU. She is a contributing editor to *Mercury* magazine with a regular column entitled "The Astronomer's Notebook".

Calculating Truth, Beauty, Justice, and Fairness

FYS 101 – 003

TTH, 3:00p- 4:15p, Lappin Hall 112

Dr. Robert Skaggs

This seminar considers quantifying the concepts of truth, beauty, justice, and fairness in different contexts. Students will explore whether beauty is objective or subjective. They will examine whether these concepts can be quantified and measured in an objective way. Dr. Skaggs, an Assistant Professor of Mathematics, is interested in connections between things that seem unrelated, particularly topics to which mathematics may not typically be applied but which may benefit from a mathematical approach.

Science, Deception, and Global Upheaval

FYS 101 – 004

TTH, 3:00p – 4:15p, Combs Building 409

Dr. Timothy Hare

There is a flood of information in our world today and much of it is better characterized as misinformation or disinformation. Hence, finding facts can be like finding a needle in a hay stack and makes information literacy more important than ever before.

Furthermore, action and public participation require skills for processing and evaluating information carefully and rigorously. This course's objectives are to help build skills for acquiring information and assessing it for validity, critically exploring and analyzing information, communicating clearly and concisely to engage in public discussion and debate, and making decisions and acting based on an evidentiary foundation. These skills will be addressed by focusing on a set of key global issues; climate change, environmental destruction, population growth, and extreme poverty. These are complex problems requiring multidisciplinary approaches to address the dynamic interplay of the environment, economy, culture, society, and politics. These problems affect all people and societies at all geographical scales. For instance, continued economic growth and maintenance of a high standard of living depend on the ability to successfully analyze and respond to these complex issues. Focusing on these subjects is a step forward in building a long-term commitment to a sustainable future.

Appalachia: Myth, Stereotype, and Reality

FYS 101 – 006

MWF1, 9:10a – 10:10a, Combs 109

Dr. Steve Parkansky

FYS 101 – 009

MW, 3:00p – 4:15p, Combs Building 201

Dr. Erik Lewis

There is a flood of information in our world - much of which is better characterized as misinformation or disinformation. This is especially true of Appalachia, which has been subject to a long history of stereotype and myth. The ability to discern verifiable fact will enable our students to make informed decisions about the region. The first part of this course will use the book *UnSpun*, which provides tools to differentiate fact from fiction. From this section, students will learn how to acquire information, assess its validity, critically explore and analyze information, communicate clearly and concisely, engage in public discussion and debate, and make decisions based on an evidentiary foundation. The next part of the seminar utilizes the skills learned above to allow the student to analyze complex problems that require a multidisciplinary approach which will include the dynamic interplay of the environment, economy, culture, society, and politics of the region. In essence, students will be encouraged to distinguish real facts from those that are part of the local and nation imagination. Finally, this seminar will encourage students to examine Appalachia as a real place with real and documentable problems and needs.

You Are What You Eat - Organic Gardening

FYS 101 – 005

TTH, 3:00p – 4:15p, Lappin Hall 213

Dr. Robert Boram

This section of FYS will explore many aspects of the production of produce we eat. We will explore the multiple definitions of "organic", compare large scale commercial farming with organic gardening, explore gardening around the world, and the scientific research comparing organic gardening with other farming practices. We will attempt to separate the fact from fiction relating to the claims of organic food proponents. As part of the course we will test soil, research vegetable types, start plants, perform a service project in the "Community Garden", and taste test various fruits and vegetables. We will explore the environmental impact of common pesticides and fertilizers used in many types of gardens including organic gardens. Community resources will be accessed including farmers, master gardeners, organic gardeners, and the Kentucky Agricultural Extension Service. This is a hands-on class with the opportunity to go outside and get our hands dirty.

Global Sustainability: Switching to a Greener Future

FYS 101 – 007

MWF1, 9:10a – 10:10a, Lloyd Cassity Bldg. 104

Dr. Hans Chapman

Sustainability is a hot topic, and this seminar provides an interdisciplinary exploratory view of global sustainable development and the underlying ethics and values. Students will examine the ecological, social, philosophical, and economic realities within the context of existing technical expertise and analyze the social, financial and environmental impacts of sustainable products. An Assistant Professor, Dr. Chapman joined the Department of Industrial and Engineering Technology in 2009. He holds the PhD in Materials Science & Engineering. His research area is Alternative Renewable Energy. He has been involved in the design and testing of renewable energy systems such as photovoltaics and hydrogen fuel cells.

Becoming the Jedi in the Information Age

FYS 101 – 008

MWF1, 9:10a – 10:10a, Lloyd Cassity Bldg. 305

Dr. Yuqiu You

The seminar offers techniques for success in the digital information age. This hands-on, individual and group project oriented course helps students learn how to purchase and build a computer system, how to upgrade an existing system, how to evaluate the power of their computers, and how to manage personal information on a computer. They will examine cutting edge technologies, practice building home wireless networks to protect their privacy, establish personal web pages, create personal web servers, share information on the Web, work and play with Web 2.0 tools such as facebook and twitter, and use and upgrade their applications on their Ipod Touch/Ipod. They will explore the facts and fictions of technology and communication as they relate to college life. Dr. Yuqiu You, Ph.D. in Technology Management, Major in Manufacturing Technology. Microsoft Certified Computer System Engineer. Dr. Yuqiu You, an Assistant Professor in Industrial and Engineering Technology, holds the Ph.D. in Technology Management. His primary field is Manufacturing Technology, and he is a Microsoft Certified Computer System Engineer.

Winnie the Pooh and Buddha Too: Taoism and Buddhism as Ways of Life

FYS 101 – 010

MW, 3:00p – 4:15p, Rader Hall 219

Dr. Christina Conroy

The theme of this seminar, like all the others, is “fact or fiction,” but students will give the theme some odd twists as they think about Buddhism and Taoism as philosophies of life. Focusing on the ancient teachings of the original Indian Buddhist (the Buddha himself) and the two great Chinese Taoists (Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu), as well as recent popular expositions of these teachings, students will read both factual and fictional stuff. They will examine such questions as: Was Winnie the Pooh really a Taoist, or is that just fiction? Is the common western conception of Buddhism and Taoism at odds with the facts? What is the difference between fact and fiction anyway? Is there one? Along the way students will consider the Buddhist idea that what we think of as the world of fact is really just another fiction of our own.

Online

Love, War, Power, and Faith

FYS 101 – 301

Online

Dr. Ric Caric

People have been writing about love almost from the time human beings began to write at all. This seminar examines the facts and fictions surrounding love from the poetry of Sappho through Lancelot and Guinevere to “Love Hurts” by the rock band Incubus and other sources in contemporary popular culture. The problem of distinguishing “fact” from “fiction” is particularly important in discussing love because so many of the “fictions” associated for love are not only taken as “fact” but as “fundamental truth.” The course will focus mostly on romantic love between men and women but will also address love of country, love of nature, religious concepts of God’s love, and the role of love in the conception of society and government. According to another popular song, “Love is All Around,” and this seminar will be addressing a wide variety of the questions surrounding love.

Science Fiction: Turning Fiction into Fact?

FYS 101 – 302

Online

Dr. Robert Royar

Science Fiction (or sf) is a guilty pleasure, from grade-B movies to pulp novels and serials, sf rarely gets the respect it deserves despite its great popularity. This course offers the opportunity to explore short sf spanning over three centuries. We will see how ideas develop in fiction before they come about in reality. We will explore how sf creates worlds that cause us to question our day-to-day perceptions. Some sf creates a real stretch for our ability to “suspend disbelief” while other sf only shifts reality a bit to the side. As the great sf author Philip K. Dick wrote “Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn’t go away.”

Mt. Sterling Campus

Online Culture: More than Facebook

FYS 101 – 095

T, 11:30a – 2:00p, MTST

Connie Grimes

This seminar focuses on technology, particularly internet-based, and how it influences society and culture. Students will explore a number of controversial topics and develop a fuller understanding of how the technologies we use and experience shape our society and our lives. Topics will include social technologies and how they build cultures, technology and information privacy, information ownership and sharing, and ethics and behavior in a connected world. The course will use active learning and discussion-focused formats, with a significant portion of the content details driven by student interest. Students will research, formulate, present and argue multiple points of view and become adept at evaluating online information sources and integrating technology into their learning experiences.

Rev. 10/20/11