

Frontiers First Year Colloquium

Fall 2011 Courses

Where the Wild Things Are: Representations of the American Wilderness

FRO 100.001

Mary Marchand

This seminar brings together the work of adventurers, children's writers, visual artists, natural scientists and visionaries in order to trace changing perceptions of the American Wilderness. Their works span the continental United States, and range from America's virtual obsession with the cowboy to our tendency to glorify individual forays into the wilderness. Our class will focus on interpreting texts-written texts and visuals texts, fiction as well as nonfiction. We will explore how works like James Dickey's Deliverance, Jon Krakauer's Into the Wild, and a statue in Disney's Epcot Center form a literary and visual record of changes in external but also internal landscapes: what happens to us when we step across the frontier separating the garden from the wilderness, the tamed from the untamed?

Living in the Margins: Experiences of Vulnerability

FRO 100.002

Joan Wilterdink

All of us have had moments when we felt nearly invisible: times when instead of being the story at the center we were just a note jotted in the margin. This class will explore the realities of being marginalized by looking at groups of people who are frequently not visible. In the first part of the semester, we will read personal stories, agency reports, and scholarly works to learn about two vulnerable populations: people living in nursing homes and children who have been separated from their birth parents. To put experience in context, we will consider the history of and policies concerning nursing homes. We will then meet some people who live in nursing homes so that we can compare the theory to reality. We will also learn about the foster care system and how it impacts the children who live apart from their birth parents. Together, we will formulate questions, gather information, and share our newfound knowledge. We will write papers that analyze facts and figures as well as papers that attempt to capture the daily realities of vulnerable people. Each student will be expected to be a vital component of the learning environment as we seek to understand the realities of complex situations and people. In the second part of the semester, each student will work independently and with the support of the class and college resources to explore the realities of a marginal group of particular interest.

Frontiers in Musicality

FRO 100.003

Jeffrey Chappell

This course, designed for the total beginner as well as the advanced student, provides the experience and knowledge for you to understand your own musical self. Recognizing that each person has different natural tendencies and relationships to music, the course examines four types of musicians: improviser, composer, arranger, and interpreter. We will explore the issues confronting each type and the techniques available for each type to achieve musical expression. The course will consider different uses of music (concert, commercial and theater music) and distinguish broad categories of music, such as song/dance, absolute/program music, and folk /art music. Other topics addressed are music theory and notation, music in sociological and historical contexts, the origin and analysis of musical styles, and acoustical versus psychological aspects of music. Course participants will play music and talk about music, and reading assignments will be taken from the writing of major composers and theorists.

Frontiers in the Philosophy of Science

FRO 100.004

Robert Welch

How does science advance? Is the development of scientific theory based on empirical evidence and rational reasoning free from bias and cultural context? The primary goal of this course is to study various philosophical analyses of the foundations of scientific theory in the 20th century. We will examine perspectives on the formation of scientific theories provided by Nelson Goodman's *Fact Fiction and Forecast*, Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, and other selections. This course requires active participation in electronic and in-class discussions and is designed to encourage critical thinking, help you embrace a multiplicity of perspectives and foster an engaged intellectual community. You will write frequently and receive detailed feedback on your analyses and arguments. Course work will include two short papers in which you will evaluate a secondary source on Goodman and Kuhn, two take-home exams, and one group project on a selected post-Kuhn author.

Writing Behind Bars

FRO 100.005

Barbara Roswell

In this writing-intensive course, Goucher ("outside") students will join with a group of incarcerated ("inside") students to learn about the criminal justice system and experiment with a range of creative, reflective and analytic approaches to writing. The seminar will meet once a week inside a correctional institution located near the Goucher campus. The class will take the form of a writing workshop, and we will draw on creative writing techniques to craft profiles, reflections, and personal essays. Together, we will also consider a range of questions, from "How do we explain crime?" to "What are the causes and consequences of policies that have put 2.3 million Americans, one in every one hundred adults, behind

bars?" This intensive course requires a willingness to step out of your comfort zone, to prepare thoughtfully and engage collaboratively with others to explore complex issues, and to write weekly in a range of creative, reflective, and analytic genres.

Science Fiction as Philosophy

FRO 100.006

Margret Grebowicz

What are the specific questions that fuel the science fictional imagination? What makes a work of science fiction "great"? What are the concerns that organize the science fiction (SF) canon, if there is one? This course will trace philosophical themes through the iconic texts--print and film--of the genre in an effort to show how SF provides a unique entrée into exploring the most pressing problems of human existence. What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be social? How is knowledge produced and maintained? What can philosophers learn from science fiction's treatment of these questions, and vice versa? We will explore urban dystopias, otherworldly sexualities, interplanetary wars, and various apocalypses.

Examining Alternative Medicine

FRO 100.008

Janet Shambaugh

Why are Americans turning to alternative therapies to address their health problems? In this course we will investigate a variety of alternative therapies, including homeopathy, acupuncture, herbal medicine, nutritional supplements, and traditional remedies developed by native populations across the globe. We will examine the scientific evaluation of both pharmaceuticals and alternative remedies, including the role of the FDA in this process. We will also examine the emerging field of complementary medicine, which integrates alternative therapies with allopathic medicine. Guest lectures and demonstrations will give us the chance to hear directly from practitioners of alternative therapies. Students will discuss assigned readings that include reports of scientific studies. Required writing assignments help students learn to use sources as evidence in order to assess the effectiveness of available treatments. In addition, students will present orally in teams and individually.

Social Movements and Film

FRO 100.009

Elham Atashi

This course explores the role of film as an alternative form of social force leading to change and dialogue. It encourages students to look beyond the entertainment value of film in order to analyze the ways that portraying issues in images and narratives can empower local communities to address social problems. Taking a global and comparative approach, we will examine how people in different cultures

and social environments use film to challenge racial, class, gender, and political inequality as well as to respond to war and violence. We will read film as text and as a tool to educate, promote understanding, and raise awareness of significant social and global issues.

Reading Genesis

FRO 100.010

Jerome Copulsky

Genesis—the first book of the Hebrew Bible and Christian New Testament—is one of the foundational works of Western civilization. This course will undertake a close and careful reading of the biblical text. We will then look at the ways in which Jewish and Christian readers have grappled with Genesis throughout the centuries. Throughout the course, students will consider diverse approaches—historical, theological, philosophical, literary and artistic—to encountering the biblical text.

Prima Donnas: Social Constructions of the Fantasy Female in Performance

Frontiers 100.011

Thomasin LaMay

In this course we will consider, and enjoy, constructions of the Prima Donna cultural fantasy from early modern times to the present. We will look at her agency as a voice in her culture, and examine how that voice is presented, received, manipulated and sometimes repudiated by the people—including us—who produce it. The image of the Prima Donnas often helps us negotiate, or ignore, something complex in our cultural space, and these complexities, ambiguities and responses to social concerns are essential to the Prima Donna. Some of the figures we will examine include a Renaissance courtesan, castrati, and “stars” from opera, jazz, film, and popular music, such as Maria Callas, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Judy Garland, Marilyn Monroe, Madonna, and a transgendered community in New York. We will move fluidly back and forth between “then” and “now,” but will look particularly in our own time at performance artist Sarah Jones, and pop stars Mariah Carey, Beyoncé, Lindsay Lohan, and Gabourey Sidibe (of the movie *Precious*). Your assignments will include responses to visual texts (movies and documentaries), balanced by a series of short critical readings for each section and an emphasis on oral presentation and group work in class. By examining the prima donna and the fantasies of her makers and beholders from various vantage points, we will also, of course, examine ourselves.

Community Radio

FRO 100.012

Phaye Poliakoff-Chen

This course explores the philosophy behind community-oriented radio. We will study how acquiring media skills empowers communities around the country and around the world. Students will learn the fundamentals of producing audio documentaries and will have the option of airing their work on local

radio stations and local and national internet sites. No experience or audio equipment is required. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to: discuss the value of community-based media; write radio scripts and academic essays; and perform simple audio production tasks, such as recording and editing.

Creative Nonfiction: Finding Your Voice

FRO 100.013

Kathy Flann

Creative Nonfiction is a broad genre comprised of memoir, biography, travel writing, reviews, and more. We will explore some of these areas, focusing on the skills, strategies and pitfalls unique to each. How does a writer render his or her own experiences without seeming self-indulgent or narcissistic? Which details are important and how do you know? Is it even possible to report “the truth”? We will examine these issues as well as many others. This is a course for anyone who enjoys creative writing. We’ll read the works of published writers, and students will produce portfolios of their own creative work.

Shakespeare: Stage and Screen

FRO 100.014

Michael Curry

This course will examine ways in which Shakespeare's works are translated on the screen. We will look at issues of aesthetic translation between different media, particularly those around translation of a highly verbal medium into a highly visual medium. The course will involve reading several of Shakespeare's plays, doing performance exercises, analyzing and critiquing films and film clips of Shakespeare's works, and writing about Shakespeare on the screen. Course combines lecture, discussion, watching videos and writing. A final group project will give you the opportunity to analyze a scene from one of Shakespeare's plays in detail, stage that scene for a class presentation, and then video record the scene as a short motion picture.

Envisioning Apocalypse: The Shape of Things to Come

Frontiers 100.015

Gail Husch

More than a decade after Y2K, the word “millennium” has lost its immediacy while, in the wake of September 11, 2001, the word “apocalypse” has acquired greater resonance. Overused and misunderstood, to many Americans both words convey little of the true importance of apocalyptic (including millennial) belief in Western culture. In this course, we will investigate Judeo-Christian conceptions of linear time, of a divine plan for human history, and of an ultimate and just resolution to

the problem of evil. We will discuss the reasons for and the religious, social and political uses of such apocalyptic belief, as well as its secularization. Above all, we will explore how apocalypticism has been manifest in visual form from the Middle Ages through the 21st centuries, exploring a range of paintings, prints, sculptures and films, and undertaking a number of written and visual assignments.

Free Speech

FRO 100.016

Sanford Ungar

In this age of rapid globalization, nations, communities and individuals are working hard to preserve and reaffirm their distinct identities and values. Drawing on media reports, commentary by scholars from diverse cultural positions, and your own experiences about what you can and cannot say, this course will examine the dialogues taking place across cultures about different values and ways of life, and the rules by which this dialogue is conducted. We will ask, Which factors promote civil dialogue? Why do some conversations become confrontations? We will consider the protests over the cartoons about Islam in Danish newspapers, recent unrest in France and the debate over who is really French, and the increasing use of English worldwide, often at the expense of other languages and the cultures associated with them. Not least, we will examine constraints on free speech in our daily lives, and the debate in this country over what it means to be patriotic and whether patriotism requires us to, or prohibits us from, saying certain things. Weekly response papers will give you the opportunity to examine arguments critically and to develop informed positions on a range of significant issues.

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Non-Verbal Communication

FRO 100.017

Katherine Choe

Human communication is like a dance--we continuously adjust our behaviors based on both verbal and nonverbal signals from our partner(s) as we interact with other people. This course is designed to examine critical cues derived from the various areas of nonverbal communication, such as facial, body, eye movement, physical appearance, and paralanguage and explore the function that nonverbal communications have in interpersonal relationships. We will use an interactive approach to develop an in-depth awareness of how the presentation of nonverbal cues influences our behavior and affects the outcome of any given communication transaction.

Gödel, Escher, Bach: A Twisted Odyssey

FRO 100.018

Mark McKibben

In 1931, the German logician Kurt Gödel proved that any attempt to formalize logical reasoning would fall short in that there would always be unprovable yet true statements within the system. Douglas R. Hofstadter's 1979 book "Gödel Escher Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid" explores Gödel's result with unprecedented wit, ingenuity, and insight. Deciphering Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem is a fantastic experience with no prerequisites except a willingness to engage some formal logic and innumerable surprises. Illustrated by M.C. Escher and scored by J.S. Bach, our journey will pass through the philosophical worlds of Lewis Carroll, artificial intelligence, non- Euclidean geometry, Zeno and Zen Buddhism. There will be considerable variety in your assignments: you'll write about your journeys through the Annotated Alice, with a watchful eye for "strange loops;" explore a mathematical jungle entangled with logical puzzles and dilemma as a means to tackle the Towers of Hanoi and other famous puzzles; and write of the connections across the disciplines of music, art, genetics, and mathematics.

The Psychology of Money

FRO 100.019

Victor Ricciardi

What is your money personality? Are you a risk taker? Are you a spender or a saver? This seminar explores the question of how individuals make cognitive and emotional decisions about money. Students will fill out basic psychological and personality assessment tools (questionnaires) on weekly subject matter and then determine how the results from these instruments influence their decision-making about money, relationships, spending habits, and risk-taking behavior. Students completing this course will be able to:

- define and explain the basic concepts of the psychology of money;
- interpret behavioral and psychological aspects of money-related decision- making; and
- discuss the basic issues confronting their personal life such as money behaviors and disorders, spending habits, and risk-taking behavior.

Portrayals of the South in Modern Literature and Film

FRO 100.020

Alison Tatum-Davis

Although each region of the United States can be identified by the stereotypes of its people, customs, and economics, none stands out more prominently than the South. From writing by William Faulkner to John Grisham, from the films *Gone with the Wind* to *The Blind Side*, Southern characters are portrayed with unique, interesting and complicated personalities. In this course, we will explore these personalities and the existing stereotypes in some of the most popular films, short stories, and novels from the mid-1900s to the present day. Why are stories depicting life in the South so entertaining? Does art imitate life? Do the stories reflect real life in the South? How do we see the South in terms of race, religion, class and gender today? In this course, you will be an active member of daily class discussions about these themes and more. Additionally, you will write reaction papers on each work and a more in-depth final paper on a work of your choice. You can expect to finish this course with a better understanding of your own feelings about and stereotypes of the South and its cultural and sociological influence on the rest of the United States.

Middle East Politics in Film and Literature

FRO 100.021

Amalia Honick

In this course, we will use the lenses of film and literature to gain insight into some of the complex questions about the politics of the Middle East. This course is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of the Middle East, but will focus on several of the critical political issues in the region, including the Arab-Israeli conflict, Islam and politics, the war in Iraq, religious and ethnic identities, and the role of state and religion in Turkey. Recognizing that film and literature can be considered a form of political commentary, we will critically assess the different political visions presented by the filmmakers and writers and the statements they make about the politics of the Middle East. Books and films for the course will include excerpts from Thomas Friedman's *From Beirut to Jerusalem* and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, and recent films such as *The Band's Visit*, and *Waltz with Bashir*. Writing projects will include policy papers and opinion pieces, written as "op-ed" columns for a newspaper. By the end of the course you can expect to have developed a nuanced understanding of a range of issues and well informed opinions on a variety of political events and trends in the Middle East.

Beethoven: Recluse, Romantic, and Revolutionary

FRO 100.022

Elisa Koehler

Is it necessary to suffer in order to produce great art? Can we get to know the personality of a composer through his or her music? Is it possible to be “perfectly imperfect”? This course will consider these and many other questions as we study the life and music of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). Beaten by his drunken father as a child, deaf by the age of 38, and never married, Beethoven overcame thoughts of suicide to become one of the greatest composers the world has ever known. We will read Edmund Morris’s short biography, *Beethoven: The Universal Composer* and study selected examples of Beethoven’s compositions, especially the Fifth and Ninth Symphonies. We will also view *Immortal Beloved* (1994), *Eroica* (2005), and *Copying Beethoven* (2007) and discuss the relative historical accuracy and artistic license of these films. Course work will include online listening exercises, group activities, two short papers, and an oral presentation. The ability to read music is not required for this course. By the end of the semester you will be able to identify the hallmarks of Beethoven’s musical style through listening, discern appropriate source materials for academic research, and evaluate Beethoven’s unique contribution to human history.

Controversy: Race and Sexuality on the American Frontier

FRO 100.023

Angelo Robinson

“Am I Black or White? Am I Straight or Gay? CONTROVERSY?” Since its founding, and long before recording artist Prince penned these lyrics in the 1980s, America has been a space and a place demanding and mandating polarized definitions of race and sexuality. This course will examine the reasoning behind and ramifications of these dichotomies from the Colonial Period to the present in genres that include literature, film, and music. We will also explore how these binaries affect people who identify as biracial and bisexual.

This discussion-based course requires intensive reading, viewing, and listening and will foster your critical thinking and analytical writing. Topics of discussion will include the “one-drop rule,” the slavery debate, miscegenation, racial passing, segregation, integration, interracial desire, and sexual passing. Special attention will be given to individuals who and organizations that refuse to follow racial and sexual dictates. Authors will include Thomas Jefferson, Harriet Jacobs, Mark Twain, Nella Larsen, James Weldon Johnson, Ralph Ellison, June Jordan, James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, Stevie Wonder, Prince, Adrienne Rich, E. Lynn Harris, and Barack Obama.

Contemporary Filmmakers: Global Cinema

FRO 100.025

Nsenga Burton and Shirley Peroutka

This course will examine recently released films from a variety of countries, both western industrialized nations and less "developed" nations of the global south. Issues of authorship, power, and representation will be discussed through the lens of political

economy, history, and narrative theory. Although film--in our culture--is often viewed as mere entertainment, this course will focus on film as art, as cultural expression, and as the product of a specific place and time. Students will be expected to read academic articles and reviews in order to better understand the context of production and the cultural significance of the films featured in the class.

Children's Literature

FRO 100.026

Tami Smith

Have you ever been swept away by the illustrations and playfulness of children's literature? In this course we will explore a variety of texts ranging from picture books to young adult stories. Particular emphasis will be placed on multicultural and intercultural understanding through consideration of illustrations and writing techniques across cultures. In the course we will review books from the perspective of historical and cultural contexts, developmental levels, and societal uses and implications. As a summative reflection of learning, you will develop an original children's book and evaluate books created by your peers.

Science and Pseudoscience in Psychology (and Beyond)

FRO 100.027

Tom Ghirardelli

There is a misperception that Psychology, unlike other sciences, is based on common sense and conjecture instead of evidence. Many people's familiarity with the topic of human behavior (we are all human after all) leads them to falsely believe that they know, or can quickly understand, the topic in all of its complexity. In this course we will examine scientific evidence for, and pseudoscientific belief in, various topics within and beyond psychology. We will begin (as psychology did) with a discussion of epistemology, or how we know what we know, and discuss such current themes as the self-help movement, parapsychology, brain myths, questionable psychological assessment and therapies, false memory and suggestive memory recovery techniques. This seminar will require you to play an active role in the information exchange through presentations to the class and active participation in discussion. In addition, this seminar requires weekly reading assignments, several short writing assignments, and a longer research paper, as well as two take-home exams. By the end of the course, you will be able to: identify pseudoscience and distinguish it from science, critically evaluate evidence for and against assorted pseudoscientific assertions, and demonstrate a healthy skepticism regarding a wide variety of claims.

Linguistic Crossroads: Where Cultures (Con)/(Di)verge

FRO 100.028

Annalisa Czczulin

This course will investigate world's language families from a linguistic perspective. Students will be introduced to the IPA transliteration system, followed by an examination of the structures that are common to several language families, as well as others that are uniquely their own. Emphasis will be placed on the historic context of language in order to explore the phonetics, morphology, and basic syntax of representative languages from around the world, including English, German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. Course projects will include interview projects with native speakers of related languages, applying the tools learned in the course to investigate similarities and differences in language structures.

Frontiers in Spanish

FRO 140.001

Admission by Spanish placement exam only, 4 credits

Frances Ramos-Fontán

¿Comprendes, hablas, lees, y escribes español? This course challenges you to use your listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to embark on a cross-cultural journey around the Spanish-speaking world. Through individual and cooperative work, we will examine cultural and social issues that affect Spanish-speaking communities in their home countries and in the United States. Within this context, grammar and vocabulary will serve as learning tools to improve your communication skills in Spanish. An integrated community-based learning component will provide you with meaningful opportunities to increase your language proficiency while engaging with the local Spanish-speaking community. This interaction time will replace one hour of class per week and will take place on campus on either Saturday or Sunday. Frontiers 140 is equivalent to the final course in the Spanish 100-level sequence. It fulfills both the Foreign Language and the Frontiers General Education requirements.