

Integrated Seminar (ISEM 101) Course Descriptions for 2011-12

All Integrated Seminar courses carry 3 credits; first year students only; to be taken either in fall or spring semester of first year.

Contemporary American Experience

This integrated seminar takes a broad look at contemporary American life, from fifty years ago to the present. Students analyze films, stories, poems, court cases, popular media, and other cultural objects for what they say about aspects of American experience including religion, family, a sense of place, gender/sexual orientation, race, and social class.

Jazz: from Blues to Hip Hop

“Our jokes, tall tales, even our sports, [with their] sudden turns, shocks and swift changes of pace” are jazz-shaped. So said writer Ralph Ellison about this indigenous American art form that has shaped, and been shaped, by our country’s unique and diverse history. This integrated seminar uses the idea of jazz – individual creativity supported and encouraged by strong communities and cross-cultural influences – to look at the history and culture of America. It features explorations into music, films, literature, theatre, and dance.

Fire, Myth & Humanity

What is science? What is myth? How do both tap into humanity's need to make sense of the world in which we live? And how do people rely on artists and journalists to communicate elements of both science and myth to reach an understanding of the world in which we live? The integrated seminar Fire, Myth and Humanity will draw together elements of fire science, journalism and theatre to explore how we communicate using both reality and symbolism to explain the role fire plays in nature and in people's lives.

Globalization

This course is the study of how different cultures influence and interact with each other. It examines how people from different backgrounds come together through war and peace, marriage and divorce, food and drink, sickness and health, life and death, travel and work, buying and selling, faith and science, and a multitude of other daily acts. This integrated seminar helps students better understand globalization, its players, and the immense impact this phenomenon is having on people around the world.

Sex and Culture

From body image to head scarves, hate crimes to gun laws, culture shapes gendered behavior and commonly held beliefs about the “right” ways to be male or female. But what is gender? How it is socially produced and experienced? This integrated seminar uses films, plays, fiction, personal stories, the arts, media, science, and the law to examine how ideas about gender make us who we are.

Tribal Cultures & Histories

This integrated seminar was designed by students and faculty from the American Indian Studies Program to allow students to study American Indian culture and histories before and after contact with Euro-American culture. Readings, guest speakers, videos, and literature presenting the American Indian perspective are featured. Students focus their study on central aspects of American Indian culture including oral tradition, a sense of place, a holistic approach to all living things, and rituals.

Sports and American Society

This course uses ethics, sociology, history, literature, film, political science, physical education, and cultural studies to explore the central role of sports in America. This integrated seminar examines the relationship of sports to gender, race, class, ethnicity, consumerism, media, and a number of other topics. Course materials include essays, documentary and feature films, short fiction and poetry, and historical, legal, and sociological studies.

The Movies, the World, and You

A central aim of this course is to help students become more active, critical, and compassionate movie viewers. Because movies go far beyond entertainment to explore and document experiences and shape and challenge world views, watching them must be more than a passive activity. This integrated seminar also uses perspectives of several academic disciplines to examine the aesthetic features of movies and the social concerns they raise.

Understanding Media

This course examines the history of mass media, the forces that shape media messages, and the influence of media on individuals and society. Students learn to analyze the credibility of media content and to distinguish among news, information, advertising, and entertainment messages. Students gain the critical perspective on media necessary for responsible citizenship and discuss current issues and controversies surrounding the media.

Honors: War and the Virtual World

This integrated seminar approaches armed conflict as it is represented in the virtual world. We begin with the study and impact of electronic war-games, we then explore literary representations of war and social science explanations for the attraction of war. We end by reconsidering the virtual world as a vehicle for personal and civic responsibility. While we incorporate the play of e-generated war games, this course is not about playing video games; it is about studying the causes and consequences of the virtual world they create in relation to the literal world of war. (Only open to students enrolled in the Honors Program)

Art, Artists & Madness

What separates madness from genius? What distinguishes one person as a creative genius and another as a lunatic? Students in this integrated seminar explore mental health disturbances and the lives and work of several artists to better understand the interplay between art and madness. Through psychological case studies, film, literature, art, and creation of personal works of art, students explore how emotional, cognitive, and creative elements can reflect or expand their own emotional landscape.

Honors: The Monsters We Make

What social roles do monsters in art, film, and literature fulfill? What makes something monstrous? This integrated seminar explores the complex relationship between “normality” and “monstrosity” and the creation, role, and destruction of “the monster” in order to reveal, and challenge, the roots of the idea of monstrosity. (Only open to students enrolled in the Honors Program)

Race, Ethnicity and Identity

This integrated seminar moves beyond the tired old either/or debate about race in order to celebrate the rich heritages represented in the United States and to explore those places where conflicts need to be resolved. Bring your past experiences, assumptions, beliefs, knowledge, and most of all, your sense of humor to this class: We use them all.

The New Wild West

This integrated seminar uses conservation biology, literature, history, and other social sciences to understand varying opinions surrounding Western environmental issues such as endangered species, energy production and consumption, dams, rivers, water, tourism and land management, urban sprawl, agricultural sustainability, and the impacts of mining and logging. Students use creative problem solving, case studies and research skills to explore these and other issues.

Sacred Journeys

Students in this integrated seminar study sacred images, the afterlife, and other ideas and issues relevant to world theologies. It is nonsectarian and devotes time and consideration to primordial, Greco-Roman, Ancient Near Eastern, and African religions, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and religious minorities such as the Sikhs, the Jains, the Mormons, the Baha'is, and other religions of interest to members of the class.