

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR COURSES

PHIL 112 FYS: Thinking Out Loud: Public Philosophy as a Path to Social Change (3)

In this course, we will see how philosophers are working to make the world a more just and beautiful place, extending this work to people, places, and topics traditionally excluded from the discipline. Philosophy arose as an intellectual practice with a distinct public purpose. But over the centuries, it has transformed into a specialized academic pursuit, often detached from our everyday concerns. Public philosophy aims to recapture philosophy's public purpose, bringing it to bear on the most pressing questions of our time: how do we address crises of sustainability? How do we sustain our faltering democracy? How do we live meaningful, exciting lives in the face of the mind-numbing demands of the modern world? Consistent with the aims of public philosophy, students will not only study these interventions, but employ them, creating work that engages with the public in some meaningful way. **Gen Ed: Philosophy**

SW 141 FYS: Inclusive Leadership & Influence (3)

Everyone has the unique potential to be an effective leader and influencer of positive social change. This course provides the foundational knowledge needed to be an inclusive leader when working with diverse groups in community and workplace settings. Throughout this course, you will expand upon your understanding of what it means to be an inclusive leader, while learning interpersonal skills and leadership strategies that foster belonging among group members. By participating in personal reflection, you'll recognize your own strengths and personal leadership styles, while exploring practices that promote inclusivity in diverse environments. You will also gain an increased awareness of the role diversity plays when examining social problems and learn how to manage conflict in group settings. At the end of the course, you will leave with the inclusive leadership skills needed to empower others, influence human behavior and advocate for social change in your communities. **Gen Ed: Social Science**

NURS 123 FYS: Health Habits for Positive Partnerships (3)

Using a forensic nursing lens and a trauma-informed care approach, this class is designed to help young women foster self-awareness, cultivate self-love, and develop the skills necessary to engage in healthy, supportive relationships. Whether navigating friendships, family dynamics, or romantic partnerships, this course will equip students with practical tools to set healthy boundaries, communicate effectively, and recognize the signs of toxic relationships. Please be aware that some of the material covered in this class includes sensitive topics that may be distressing or triggering to some students. Students will be introduced to different types of interpersonal violence as well as campus and community resources which exist to provide compassionate care for victims of violence. The aim of the course is to empower women with the knowledge needed to live safely, confidently and courageously. **Gen Ed: Social Science**

CHEM 103 FYS: Power Up: Understanding Energy in Our Everyday Lives (3)

Energy drives everything we do, from charging our phones to fueling global economies. This course explores the fascinating world of energy in ways that are accessible and engaging for non-science majors. We'll unravel the mysteries of how energy is produced, consumed, and impacts our planet. Through real-world examples, we'll investigate topics like

biological energy, renewable energy, batteries, climate change, and the ethical dimensions of energy use in society.

Students will also reflect on their personal energy consumption and explore how individual choices contribute to larger societal trends. By the end of the course, students will be equipped to think critically about energy issues and their role in shaping a sustainable future. No prior science background is required—just curiosity and a willingness to explore the forces that power our modern lives. **Gen Ed: Natural Science**

HUST 101 FYS: Imagining Futures (3)

This course examines how humans have used imagining potential futures and ideal societies as ways to identify and propose solutions for contemporary social problems. Students will analyze films (Metropolis, Blade Runner, Black Panther) and historical and literary accounts of experimental communities (ranging from Plato's Republic and Thomas More's Utopia to the Communist Manifesto and Fordlandia to works of science fiction, such as Octavia Butler's Parable of the Talents and Kazuo Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun). After encountering debates on topics such as reliance on robots and AI, the control of human thought and reproduction, and concerns for the environment, students will research a community (living, fictional, or historical) to identify and evaluate proposed solutions to social injustices and will consider ways in which more just communities might be constructed. **Gen Ed: Interdisciplinary Thinking**

SOC 110 FYS: The Culture of College: Decoding the Hidden Curriculum (3)

It has been said that the culture of college includes an official curriculum, found in the subjects of classes, like literature, mathematics, and science, and a hidden curriculum, a secret lesson plan that some people know and others do not. What is this hidden curriculum and who wrote it? Why do some people seem to know the hidden curriculum and others have to learn it the hard way? How does knowing the hidden curriculum help you do well in school? Can we re-write the hidden curriculum? In this seminar, we will explore the hidden curriculum through readings about education, family life, and college. You will gain a better understanding of the culture of college and learn ways to enhance everyone's college experience **Gen Ed: Social Science**

MUS 160 FYS: Finding Your Voice – Using Music to Express Your Creative Side (3)

Creative problem solving is one of the skills most valued by employers in today's world. Creativity is inside all of us, and is a proficiency that can be developed through creating in the arts. In this course, students will work with music to exercise creativity, self-expression, and critical thinking. Students will learn vocabulary and strategies to listen to music on a deeper level and to analyze how music can be a force for social justice, play simple instruments like guitar or ukulele, and use computer software to create music of their own. The focus of this class is how to make learning in the creative arts more equitable by exploring how tools like technology can empower students with or without a background in music to make creative choices. **Gen Ed: Creative & Artistic Expression**

ENVS 111 FYS: The Sustainability Project (3)

Cities have been described as humankind's greatest invention. Most of the world's population lives in cities, with predictions for urban populations to more than double in size by 2050. This seminar addresses how cities can face the challenges of climate change, declining biodiversity, and social justice that accompany rapid urban growth.

Through the study of best sustainability practices and a series of interactive projects, students develop solutions for cities culminating in the redesign of a real-life community in the South Bend area.

Topics include affordable housing, transportation, fire and stormwater management, urban forests and open space, energy conservation, cultural identity, and environmental justice. Students are welcome to reflect on and employ their own experiences of the city and leave the course with the understanding and ability to influence sustainability in their own city. **Gen Ed: Interdisciplinary Thinking**

MUS 162 FYS: Her Song, Our Story (3)

What's in a song? And how do music and the arts change us, and make our world a better place? This course will introduce students to a variety of historical and global female musicians (and other artists), from Hildegard of Bingen to Taylor Swift and beyond. We will engage closely with specific songs (a term we will interpret loosely), researching their backgrounds and learning different ways to listen to and interpret music—and our reactions to it! We will also actively participate in the larger story of women in music, exploring a variety of creative practices throughout the semester such as singing and writing our own songs. (No previous musical experience required!) Students in this course will grow as musicians and music lovers, as songs will bring us together and also help us to learn about ourselves, our world, and ways that we can make a difference. **Gen Ed: Creative & Artistic Expression**

MATH 121 FYS: How Data Shapes Our World (3)

How can data empower communities while avoiding harm? In this course, we will explore how data influences critical issues, from efforts to close the gender pay gap to addressing environmental challenges like climate change and renewable energy. Students will engage in hands-on work with real-world data to develop key quantitative skills, including evaluating evidence, interpreting statistical claims, and recognizing biases in data collection. We will investigate how flawed data, misleading statistics, and biased algorithms shape policies and impact marginalized communities. Open to all majors, this course welcomes students of all backgrounds—no advanced math skills required—just curiosity and a commitment to understanding how data can drive positive change. **Gen ed: Math (equivalent to Math 104 and 108)**

HIST 150 FYS: Race and Place in 20th Century America (3)

How has race functioned in various public places throughout the 20th century in the United States? How does race intersect with gender, social class, and sexuality? We will use case studies and primary sources to understand how identity has been constructed and understood in public libraries, swimming pools, parks, buses, beaches, and streetcorners throughout the 20th century. We will examine vagrancy laws, memorials, and histories of protest and resilience in New York City, St. Louis, Charlotte, Cleveland, Chicago, Atlanta, and even our own South Bend. Our class will take a field trip to the Civil Rights Heritage Center, a formerly segregated swimming pool that now operates as a museum, where we will also meet with the granddaughter of a local Civil Rights icon. **Gen ed: Historical Inquiry**

GWS 180 FYS: Intersectional Leadership and Empowerment (3)

This FYS will explore the complexities of gender, leadership, and the challenges leaders face navigating power structures. Students will analyze how norms and stereotypes related to gender, race, class, and sexuality affect leadership while focusing on developing strategies for overcoming barriers and creating more just and inclusive leadership environments. Using a strengths-based approach, students will develop a personalized leadership plan that fosters confidence, self-efficacy, and resilience. Students will engage with diverse readings, personal reflection, and leadership development exercises to cultivate a contemporary understanding of leadership. **Gen ed: Interdisciplinary Thinking**

RLST 104 FYS: Religions and the Good Life (3)

What makes a good life? How is our own search for happiness connected to the good of others? This course will explore answers to those questions from different religions and thinkers. As we study those answers in context, we'll learn more about the teachings and complexities of different religions. We'll also be attentive to the ways that learning about religion can help us better understand our world, ourselves, and others. We'll learn from readings and videos (including *The Book of Joy* by the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Doug Abrams), guest speakers, shared conversation, mindfulness practices, and visiting a local religious community. This course warmly welcomes students of all worldviews, whether religious or not, to join in the learning and be part of the conversation. **Gen Ed: Religious Studies I**

RLST 105 FYS: Can You Be Spiritual Without Being Religious? (3)

Over the years, the expression "I'm spiritual, but not religious" has been invoked by many as an identity and a description for an array of reasons. Often it signals an individual's openness to the possibility of the transcendent, the divine, the mysterious, the numinous, but that this same individual may be disinterested in or even hostile to traditional religious institutions and traditions. This course explores the meaning of "spirituality" and its relationship to religion, viewed across diverse religious traditions including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Additionally, we will examine the emerging academic discipline of the study of spirituality, which is inherently interdisciplinary. In addition to religious contexts, we will also consider recent literature on non-theist and "secular" spiritualities. Throughout the semester, students will examine a range of perspectives from scholars and practitioners, discuss similarities and differences among traditions, consider the relationship between spirituality and justice, and develop their own understanding of spirituality and position as to whether a person must be religious adherent or affiliate with a traditional religious institution in order to be spiritual. **Gen Ed: Religious Studies I**

COMM 112 FYS: AI and the Future of Human Communication (3)

How is artificial intelligence (AI) reshaping human communication, academic learning, and societies? This first-year seminar introduces students to the transformative impact of AI, particularly generative AI tools like ChatGPT and DeepSeek, on everyday communication. Students will learn how AI challenges traditional notions of originality, creativity, and authorship, influences educational experiences, and raises ethical concerns related to misinformation, deepfakes, diversity, and digital inequality. Through engaged discussions, guest lectures, case studies, and collaborative projects, they will develop the skills needed to navigate an increasingly AI-driven world. The course fosters interdisciplinary thinking, ethical reflection, and dialogue across differences, empowering students to make informed decisions about AI's role in their academic, personal, and professional lives. By working in teams, students will explore best practices for the ethical and responsible use of AI in education and beyond, applying their learning to real-world challenges in the 21st century. **Gen ed: Interdisciplinary Thinking**

ART 106 FYS: Selfie (3)

An exploration of the self investigated through contemporary forms of imaging and visualization. This course will ask how images shape our perceptions of who we are, how they help to define the enduring contours of each generation and establish a sense of personal and communal place in the historical continuum. Exploratory activities may include work with digital and analog photography, video, holography and other imaging methodologies. Journals, and other observational writings are included.

Requirements: Phone with camera and a willingness to view the world through varied lenses. **Gen ed: Creative & Performing Arts**

BIO 132 FYS: What makes you human? (3)

You've probably heard a company say, "It's in our DNA!" What does that really mean? What role does your genome (all of your DNA) have in your identity; making you the individual and unique person you are? Would my clone be exactly like me? Do our genomes determine our race, our ethnicity, our nationality, our social group, our economic group, our gender, or our health? What do the differences between our DNA and our closest bonobo relatives tell us about being human? This course will take an applied and discussion-based approach to these questions and examine the hopes and limitations that studying human and non-human genomes has provided us. **Gen ed: Natural Science**

BIO 131 FYS: Discovering self: genes, genomes, and society (3)

How does genetic information inform you about yourself? What matters most: nature, nurture, or something else? Does understanding human development help to explain who we become? Explore the role of genetics in the past, present, and future. We will look at social understanding of genetic knowledge from ancient and contemporary viewpoints to discover historical perspectives that shape modern justice issues. We will learn basic genetic principles, unpack the arguments on human cloning, and discuss the causes of genetic diseases and current methods for prenatal testing. Of particular emphasis will be reflections on future ethical implications for gene editing, human reproduction, and the applications of genomic information. Are we entering a "brave new world"? How will genetic engineering shape our future? And, most importantly, how would you address the moral and justice issues that arise from this science of self. **Gen ed: Natural Science**

COMM 111 FYS: Communicating Community and Combatting Loneliness in Online Spaces (3)

This course asks: How can we use leading communication technologies (such as social media and other computer and digital media) to communicate in ways that build community, combat loneliness, and establish spaces of belonging? Students will engage a critical and reflective lens to consider issues of community and communication media from historical and contemporary perspectives. Drawing from interdisciplinary insights, they will build an awareness of the strengths and shortcomings of leading communication technologies in their capacity to build community and spaces of belonging. In a moment of polarization, students will examine constructive practices for communicating for community rooted in dialogic engagement. **Gen ed: Interdisciplinary Thinking**

THTR 145 FYS: Event Planning: Be the host to toast & plan like a boss (3)

Learn about the tools needed to create successful events, from business meetings to extravagant cultural affairs, from logistical needs to examining the deeper purpose for meaningful, impactful experiences. With focus on how the diversity of participants and how their collective investment can increase the value of an experience, the class will learn good planning practices that provide authentic opportunities and experiences for all involved. Classroom exercises explore making schedules, communication techniques, budget setting, and venue considerations. In class activities will develop team building, leadership training, and goal setting. Course readings and discussions will examine purpose and embracing differences. Course projects will use real world scenarios for event planning, and each will be presented for class feedback with an emphasis on creative problem solving and how to prepare for the unexpected! Skills and experiences from this course can be useful in life beyond the classroom in both professional and personal life. **Gen ed: Creative & Performing Arts**

ENLT 112 FYS: Mystery Across Time, Space, and Text (3)

Mystery is one of the most enduring features of fiction and nonfiction alike. In this literature class, we will consider not only how a mystery

story functions, but also how it functions differently across media and time. In particular, we'll focus on mysteries associated with specific places, using the lenses of cultural studies and post-colonialism. We will begin in Egypt, by reading ancient Egyptian myths, studying troubling archaeological history, and then seeing how Agatha Christie relies on both in her novel *Death on the Nile*. We will then watch two adaptations of the novel: the 2004 BBC version with David Suchet, and the 2023 film with Kenneth Branagh. What do the differences between these versions tell us about the cultures that produced them? Where is the truth in the fiction? We will then move closer to home. Our own Jill Hobgood, librarian and researcher of the College's mysterious history, will introduce unsolved crimes from the 19th and early 20th century that have Saint Mary's connections. In this class, students will gain knowledge of how mystery functions, how it creates tension, and how it reflects (and can challenge) cultural values and biases. Building on this, the semester will end with students designing their own mystery event and the Saint Mary's community will be invited to identify the culprit ... if they can. **Gen Ed: Literary Inquiry**

COMM 113 FYS: #MeToo: Communication, Advocacy, and Accountability (3)

This course engages an interdisciplinary approach to understand legacies of violence against marginalized groups, using #MeToo and the MeToo. Movement as a contemporary example. We employ an intersectional lens to explore the ways in which race, class, gender, sexuality, and other identity markers have historically influenced who is subjected to such violence (and who initiates it), highlighting the role of communication in defining, perpetuating, and resisting violence, as well as mediating accountability therefore. We read a variety of texts, including social media, docuseries, legislative testimony, comedy routines, and news coverage to survey communicative practices and their impacts on victim/survivors, alleged abusers, and societal perceptions. In this seminar, we also engage in active learning by leading class discussions, writing reflectively, and developing a social media campaign in which we advocate for justice. **Gen ed: Interdisciplinary Thinking.**