

Bard Sequence

Course Descriptions (all courses are 3 credit college courses)

Division of Language and Literature

First Year Seminar I

This course launches the core of the Bard Sequence by introducing students to the skills that are the basis for most college work: close reading and annotating challenging texts, creating substantive, polished analytical writing, and participating in a student-run seminar discussion. The first year of Seminar takes on the question, “What does it mean to be human?” Students begin the semester by using Baldwin’s *The Fire Next Time* as a way of framing and understanding their engagement with canonical texts that are at times philosophically or culturally recognizable and at other times radically, thought-provokingly distant. From here they embark on a journey through thematic units including Eros (featuring texts such as Sappho’s poetry, Plato’s *Symposium*, and Jenkins’ film *Moonlight*), Explorations and Encounters (Homer’s *Odyssey*, Walcott’s *Omeros*), and Resistance (Doerries/Sophocles’ *Antigone in Ferguson*). Throughout the semester, students practice short and longer-form writing about these texts, drawing upon methods introduced in the Writing and Thinking Workshop. Using these and other texts as a basis for writing and discussion, they practice the core skills of critical thinking and the effective articulation of ideas.

First Year Seminar II

This course continues the Sequence’s examination of foundational texts in conversation around key thematic questions. In the second semester, the thematic units include Beginnings and Redemptions (looking at the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, *Qu’ran*, the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* and other “genesis” stories), Journeys Into the Self (Dante’s *Inferno*, Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, del Toro’s *Pan’s Labyrinth*), and finally, Power and Doubt (Machiavelli’s *The Prince* with Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*). As in the first semester, the course is designed to develop students’ ability to respond critically and creatively to these texts through close reading, active discussion and reflective writing. Students will continue to examine the role of power, gender, race, and sexuality in the construction of identity, building upon what they have encountered in the first semester to draw these ideas into increasingly sophisticated writing projects and class discussions, with the expectation being that all students will feel confident and well-versed in seminar discussion and academic writing by the end of this first year.

Writing and Composition

Writing is a crucial skill in any major and field, before and during college and beyond. This course seeks to provide students with an introduction to composition in a variety of different forms, chief among them the academic or argumentative essay and the personal essay (including the college

essay). Throughout three different writing “progressions,” students will familiarize themselves not just with the mechanics of constructing a strong piece of prose, but the process of editing and refining their writing, both on their own and with the help of their peers. For each progression, students will be graded on their completion of steps throughout the writing process, their participation in class discussions and activities, and their creation of a final, polished essay.

Creative Writing

This intensive reading and writing course provides you with an introduction to the theory and practice of short fiction and poetry writing. You will develop work in both mediums, short fiction and poetry, throughout the semester. En route you will learn to pay close attention to language, structure, genre conventions, and other elements of craft. Texts from contemporary and canonical authors will serve as guides as you prepare your own work for peer critique and eventual publication.

American Drama

This elective humanities course will explore the long history of drama within U.S. culture, focusing heavily on the most famous and impressive cultural moment within the mid-20th century through to days and weeks leading up to 9/11. In doing so, we will explore how drama has historically worked both as a crucial tool of political agency and reform and commercial importance. We will focus heavily on the role drama plays in the critique of American national identity. The first unit will begin with an analysis of how drama deploys representations of history to produce an idea of what it means to be “American”. We will then turn to how drama is used to critique those very identities, especially through the work of African-American authors writing in the mid-20th century. Class will end with filmic comparisons between American drama and film with *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Streetcar Named Desire*.

Division of Social Studies

Civic Engagement and Social Change

What entices communities to start movements of change? How do we best address social injustice? How do we empower ourselves as citizens to protect ourselves and our communities against inequity? What strategies can we employ to effect meaningful social change? Civic engagement is an act of problem-solving. As such, we will use moments in the long history of social justice movements in the U.S. and abroad to uncover the most thoughtful and impactful theories and practices for social action. Along the way, we will read, learn about, and discuss what strategies and processes we can use to effect social change in the communities in which we live. Some of the questions we will address include:

- What is a community? What does it mean to be part of a community?
- What do we mean by “social justice”? What do we mean by “civic engagement”?
- What characteristics of a community enhance its ability to solve its problems?
- What are the disadvantages of the different approaches to community problem-solving?
- Should community problem-solving address larger social, political,

and economic structures and issues, or focus solely on local, more readily 'winnable' issues, and/or on meeting individuals' immediate needs?

- How do we know whether or not a particular approach to problem-solving contributes to greater social justice in a community?

Jurgen Habermas's concepts of the *public sphere* and *communicative action* will provide much of the theoretical structure for our work in this course. In addition, esteemed activist Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (1971) will provide us with a look at how effective community organizing is practiced in the real world and through the eyes of theorist Franz Fanon we will explore the impact of colonialism on black people.

Topics in the History of Science: Global History of Disease, Medicine, and Society

Historian William H. McNeill once wrote, "The history of the world is the history of disease." Outbreaks of infectious disease, whether parasitic, bacterial, viral, metabolic, or genetic, have threatened, devastated, and transformed human societies for thousands of years. The bubonic plague, commonly known as the Black Death, cholera, influenza, AIDS, Ebola, SARS, and now Covid-19, to name the most feared and deadly of these diseases, have time and again engendered profound socio-economic, political, and cultural changes across the globe. Through a detailed analysis of major historical outbreaks of these diseases from the birth of humanity to present day, this course examines the ways in which different societies in different eras have responded to pandemics, and how those responses altered and continue to alter the course of human history.

Topics in U.S. History: American History, 1960 to the Present

This undergraduate survey course focuses on recent US History from 1960 to 2010. Vietnam, the Civil Rights Movement, Watergate, the rise of conservatism as well as the great changes in culture and the role of the US in the world will be explored. Cultural shifts, the changing nature of work, technological change, and their effects on social institutions will also be studied. One highlight of the course will be to study recent American history through plays, music, and film. The course will also teach the fundamentals of historical research and writing, culminating in a project involving research and a paper/project on a topic of your choice. Social movements, (e.g., the women's rights movement, the civil rights movement, the gay rights movement, the labor and environmental movements) will be at center stage.

Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy is that discipline within the academy reserved for asking the Big Questions: "Does God exist?" "What is the right thing to do?" "What is the best life?" "What is the nature of the soul?" "What is the meaning of life?" They are considered the Big Questions because these are the questions that humanity has organized itself around. One of the things that makes us human is that we seem to be the only species that considers questions like these. In a profound way, these questions make us human. And, as it will be argued throughout the course, considering these questions can lead to a fuller, richer, and more intentional life. At the heart of the liberal arts, of

which philosophy is king, is the pledge that if you undertake this endeavor, then you will come out the other side able to lead a freer life.

Introduction to Political Science

What is politics? What is power? What is political science? This undergraduate course is an introduction to political science with a focus on its four cognates: Political Theory, American Government, Comparative Politics, and International Relations. The course will give you a solid grounding in key texts, concepts, as well as facility in research and writing in political studies.

Introduction to Gender Studies

What is “gender trouble”? This provocative question was posed by the philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler in 1990, and it continues to echo with meaning today. In fact, it seems to refract into multiple questions, including:

What is the trouble with gender?

Do we – or specific individuals – experience trouble with “gender” as society defines it?

How do societal concepts of gender cause us trouble?

How do we trouble those societal concepts to better serve or describe ourselves as individuals?

These are just a few of the questions that we will explore in this course through an array of literary and theoretical texts that touch upon the concepts of gender, sex, and sexuality. Students will be asked to be close and insightful readers and to approach their reading with an open mind and an interest in “troubling” their own preconceptions of gender.

Division of Science, Mathematics, and Computing

Introduction to Statistics & Probability

This course is an overview of descriptive and inferential statistics. Statistics is inherently applied through the course, which emphasizes solutions to problems in a variety of applied settings. Measures of location and variability, probability distributions, correlation and regression, sampling and sampling distributions, hypothesis testing and estimation with confidence intervals for means and proportions are explored.

College Algebra

College algebra enables students to polish their algebra skills in order to study more advanced math; the course also serves students who intend to focus on areas outside of mathematics and the sciences in their college studies. The algebraic tools studied includes those required for pre-calculus and calculus, as well as for the study of probability, statistics, computer science, and other quantitative fields. Students learn about graphs, polynomials, rational functions, exponential functions and logarithmic functions.

The Science of Climate Change

This course begins with studies of Earth's climate system and how it works across a range of time and space. These include investigations of the circulations of the ocean and atmosphere and their dynamic interactions such as monsoons, carbon and other cycles; radiation balance, the greenhouse effect, and other factors that force climate to change; and feedbacks in the climate system. Students further explore past climates and how they give us insight into our present climate change considerations and predictions.