



First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions

2024-2025

www.du.edu/fsem

Below are the course descriptions, alphabetically ordered by faculty last name. All incoming First-Year students are required to register for a First-Year Seminar online during summer registration (the week of **July 22 – 26, 2024**). You will register for **ONE** First-Year Seminar course. Classes fill quickly, so have a few FSEMs in mind that you are interested in taking. Be sure to look at course conflicts to avoid FSEMs that conflict with major requirements and athletics practices.

updated May 16, 2024

Charting Your Path: College as an Authentic Learning Journey

Instructor: Paula Adamo, paula.adamo@du.edu

Course Description: College offers students the unique opportunity and privilege to dedicate time to self-exploration. This exploration starts from within—understanding first who we are, then moving outwards towards different majors and disciplines, and eventually choosing careers and diverse life paths. Through a variety of readings and activities, this class will create space for deep exploration. Informed by research from various fields such as education and psychology, we will reflect on who we are as individual human learners and as a community. We will interrogate concepts such as success, passion, and talent, and explore the crucial role of mindsets, sociality, joy, play, purpose, failure, and perseverance in our lives as authentic learners. Honoring our diversity as learners, this FSEM will employ an array of active learning and teaching approaches to stimulate your curiosity about yourself and the broader world—thus deepening your learning experience. Students will engage in individual and team work, and we will use readings, audiovisual materials, dialogue, oral sharings, presentations, and creative projects as tools to support learning.

Your World Today: Current Affairs in Context

Instructor: Kevin Archer, kevin.archer@du.edu

Course Description: A global pandemic, the fall of Afghanistan, the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, climate change, consumer price inflation, immigration, and political extremism are just a few of the many issues facing our world today. This course is designed to give students the tools necessary to critically evaluate and understand these issues in context. Using case studies and various social scientific approaches this course will engage students in the process of critical inquiry in such a way that they gain the ability to understand and impact the world in a more meaningful way.

This Course will be based on Critical Inquiry and a Case Studies approach. By the end of the course a first-year student will be able to:

- Contextualize global affairs
- Critically examine how to think about current global issues
- Understand how global issues impact their lives and the communities in which they live
- Debate the merits of various questions related to solving global challenges

The Trouble with Gender

Instructor: Luc Beaudoin, luc.beaudoin@du.edu

Course Description: Why is there an uproar across the globe about gender, gender identities, gender roles, and sex? What seems to be something new in fact has its roots starting in the late 1800s, in things as disparate as the trial of Oscar Wilde, the Bolshevik Revolution, reinforced through fascism and the Second World War, the McCarthy era in the United States, sexual liberation, the feminist movement, AIDS, queer theory, and a resurgent political illiberalism and backlash worldwide. In this course we will chart the progress of what gender (and conversely, sexuality) have meant over time in the West (and in other societies as well). We will uncover how questions of gender identity became known as “gender ideology,” something to be fought at the ballot box, in government, and on the street; how queer theorists such as Judith Butler became vilified in countries such as Hungary and France; how societies such as in the People’s Republic of China are worriedly trying to masculinize their young men; how the Russian Federation uses the fear of gay pride parades to justify its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. What is the “trouble with gender,” after all?

With and Without Nature

Instructor: Brad Benz, bradley.benz@du.edu

Course Description: Jim Harrison famously states that “to say ‘nature writing’ is to say water swimming.” His point? Humans are nature, too. Using sustainability and interconnectedness as organizing principles, this FSEM explores the natural world, asking students to examine humanity’s position with, against, and without nature. Students will read as eco-critics and write as green rhetors. The substantial reading list will include short stories, non-fiction essays, memoirs, poems, and films. Students will also conduct regular field trips by studying a local outdoor green space, one they will visit regularly, researching the site in a hands-on manner, and recording their findings in a lengthy writing project – a multimedia naturalist’s site journal. The site journal will ask students to study their site from a number of perspectives, including ones they may not already be familiar with (for example, historical, eco-feminist, and scientific).

Probability & Games - Fat Chance

Instructor: Sara Botelho-Andrade, sara.botelho-andrade@du.edu

Course Description: Statistics and probability intersect our lives every day. For example, will it snow tomorrow? Or perhaps you're more interested in devising a winning strategy for a game like blackjack. Probability allows scientists to analyze chance in a logical manner which helps in making predictions and modeling complex real-world scenarios. In this class, we will use games, like roulette and blackjack, to illustrate counting techniques and core concepts in probability. The goal is to have some fun and learn some practical math along the way.

The American Road Trip

Instructor: Russell Brakefield, russell.brakefield@du.edu

Course Description: For as long as there have been roads to travel in this country, people have hit the pavement, stuck out their thumbs, stowed away, and headed west. Themes of adventure and exploration dominate the early cultural history of our country and remain central to American literature, art, film, music, and advertising. In this interdisciplinary course, we will explore the place of the road trip in American culture and in our lives. We will start by interrogating the complicated history of travel in this country, starting with that first, unruly road trip that was westward expansion. We will trace the impact of this history on our culture and politics today. Then we will use a variety of mediums—fiction and creative nonfiction, film, music, and academic scholarship—to study the impact of the road trip through twentieth century art and popular culture. We will explore the position of the road trip in our own lives as well, thinking about how our own personal journeys have shaped our identities. Assignments for this course will include reflective writing, narrative travel writing, presentations, and a creative project. By engaging with themes related to the American road trip, you will have an opportunity to reflect on the journeys that shaped you as a person, student, and creative thinker as you embark on the first leg of a new adventure here at the University of Denver.

Investigating the Natural World Through Documentary Film

Instructor: Joseph Brown, joe.brown@du.edu

Course Description: "Investigating the Natural World Through Documentary Film" is a course that combines critical inquiry with active storytelling through the examination of film texts and the creation of film stories. The course focuses on three basic themes. 1.) Developing a sense of place through storytelling; 2.) Becoming an active participant in one's community; and 3.) Developing media literacy through the examination of popular environmental media. Particular emphasis is given to documentary film research, current environmental debates, and filmmaking technology. Through in-class exercises, field trips, and reasoned debate, students will develop academic and life skills in reading, writing, research, persuasion, and the creation of media texts. This course is an opportunity for students to further develop their environmental awareness while becoming storytellers in their own right.

Using our BRAINS: An Interdisciplinary Study of Zombies in Popular Culture

Instructor: Jennifer Campbell, jennifer.campbell@du.edu

Course Description: Zombies may be mindless, but they have sparked significant intellectual interest among the living for decades and they are as relevant now as ever. This course will examine the evolution of zombies and their current popularity from a variety of perspectives, including cultural studies, history, ethnobiology, film studies, literary analysis, psychology, and sociology. We'll study classic and contemporary films, fiction, academic writings, and pop culture publications, events, and artifacts in order to trace the types and origins of zombies through Voodoo, reanimation, and contagion and explore how these different incarnations manifest cultural concerns about colonialism, race and gender, the dangers of science, and the implications of capitalism and consumer culture. Please note that this class is not for the squeamish, as we will read and watch texts that include uncomfortable topics, graphic violence, and gore. Remember also that all students are expected to keep their brains and use them throughout the course.

Meet Emily in Paris: Discovering French Pop Culture

Instructor: Virginie Cassidy, virginie.cassidy@du.edu

Course Description: U.S. TV Show *Emily in Paris* introduces French culture through the eyes of a young, American professional in Paris as she struggles to connect with the French, often failing to understand the complexities of the cultures shaping French identity. An artifact of American pop culture itself, the show also provides opportunities to reflect on one own's culture, for French and American viewers alike. This seminar invites you to join Emily in her discovery of what shapes contemporary French identity through the study of pop culture (sports, cyberculture, music, cinema, food, language, etc.). You will explore how products, practices, and perspectives the French encounter in everyday life reveal social changes and relate to global issues. The study of French pop culture will lead to questioning your relationship to American pop culture and evaluating how it contributes to shaping your identity. To pursue your investigation, you will experience pop culture à la française through various media as well as study academic articles. No prior knowledge of French is required for this course.

Disability in Fiction

Instructor: Angelo Castagnino, angelo.castagnino@du.edu

Course Description: What role does fiction play in the public perception of disability? What does it mean to live in an ableist society? What can the educational system do in order to increase awareness about disability? What is the "social approach" to disability and what changes has it brought to Western societies? In the attempt to answer these questions, this course will explore the fictional representation of disability in several Western cultures, while introducing students to the tools that are necessary to a critically-oriented approach to literature and films. In doing so, the course will address the role that fiction can play in dismantling preconceptions about people with disabilities. Among other things, the course will address the fictional representation of disability as a "rebirth" that discloses previously overlooked narrative possibilities; the faulty

perception of people of disability as lacking professional ambitions and sexual desires; consideration on the increasingly aging population in Western countries and the realistic possibility that everyone, sooner or later, directly experiences a form of disability.

The Right to Health in Theory and Practice

Instructor: Alejandro Cerón Valdes, Alejandro.CeronValdes@du.edu

Course Description: This course is an introduction to the “right to health”. It asks, “Is health a human right? And if so, what does that mean?” We will use film and literature to explore ideas and behaviors around health and health care. We will learn about the right to health through the reading of core documents that define it and academic and activist articles that explain it. We will contrast theory and practice through discussions, reflections, and a problem-based project in partnership with a community organization. This course includes a “service-learning” component that consists of volunteering with Metro Caring, a Denver, Colorado non-profit anti-hunger organization. More information on the specifics of the service learning will be given in class. However, there are a few things to note about your service learning commitment: It requires a significant time commitment—approximately 12-16 hours over the course of the quarter—spent outside of the classroom. To accommodate this time commitment, please note that the amount of reading and formal writing for the course have been reduced. If you are unable to meet this requirement, you should not enroll in the course.

Intersectionality: Rethorizing oppression, rethinking coalition

Instructor: Santhosh Chandrashekar, santhosh.chandrashekar@du.edu

Course Description: Perhaps no other concept captures the soul of feminism as much as intersectionality. Rooted in Black feminist thought, intersectionality is a theory of power and oppression that helps us understand how identity is dialectically constituted in relation to them. Its basic premise is that gendered oppression cannot be understood outside of its intersection with racial, sexual, class, and religious categories, among others. As such, it forces a centering of those subjects, especially Black women, whose experience of oppression is located at the intersection of different axes of oppression and should be the starting point for the development of any theory that seeks to understand social inequities. We will start by looking at the work of Black women that draw attention to the intersection of gender and race, among others, before moving to how intersectionality has been taken up by other feminists of color. Then, we will explore some of the controversies surrounding intersectionality, including its appropriation by white feminists and others, which decenter the Black feminist impulse. This class ends by making a strong case for intersectionality as a robust theoretical and ethical tool that can help us comprehend the world that we live in.

Fracturing Fairy Tales: Moving Beyond a Simple Story

Instructor: April Chapman-Ludwig, April.Chapman-Ludwig@du.edu

Course Description: This course is designed to examine the rhetorical and ideological changes grafted onto different redactions of classic fairy tales. The class examines the origins of fairytales and then uses that framework to analyze fairytale adaptations. We focus on addressing each tale's re-telling as historically and culturally bound, investigating the layers of meaning related to gender and familial relationships, class structure, and sexuality. The course focuses on three main fairytale units, each looking at multiple renderings of the fairytale through different mediums (e.g., artwork, movie, and music, etc.), and then applies theoretical lenses to examine the re-adaptations. For example, one unit might analyze the original version of Little Red Riding Hood, written by Charles Perrault in 1697 ("Le Petit Chaperon Rouge"), and then compare a 1908 version to discuss the meanings re-purposing based on audience and gender. Students will critically interpret these texts to uncover the forgotten origins, hidden meanings, and original purposes of these texts. Ultimately, the class engages students with texts and academic interpretation in a variety of ways, from analytical to socio-political to creative, to more deeply understand the cultural purposes of fairytales.

Critical Grace Theory or The Art of Happiness

Instructor: Frederique Chevillot, frederique.chevillot@du.edu

Course Description: The Dalai Lama tells us: "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." Our own sense of happiness does depend on the happiness of others, all sorts of individuals around us, friends, family, as well as, and especially, those who seem to be so different from us. In this course, we will learn to appreciate "otherness" and "difference" in people all around us, for they resemble us much more than we have been raised to believe. We will create together our own form of "Critical Grace Theory" through the reading and in-depth discussion of key texts among which: the Dalai Lama's The Art of Happiness, Ijeoma Oluo's So You Want to Talk About Race, and Sophie Williams's Antiracist Ally: An Introduction to Activism & Action. To discover how to bring diversity and inclusion to our daily lives is to practice grace and gratitude for a happier world.

Contemporary Queer Fiction and Nonfiction

Instructor: Patrick Cottrell, patrick.cottrell@du.edu

Course Description: Queer literature as an art form is currently going through a transition. In the last ten years, numerous works of queer literature have entered mainstream conversations, for example, most recently, the highly touted Detransition, Baby by Torrey Peters, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous by Ocean Vuong, among many others. Many students might arrive at Denver with an initial curiosity about queer literature. Through surveying the landscape of contemporary queer literature, with a focus on memoir and autofiction, this course invites students into a deep contemplation of the entanglements of queerness, gender, conceptions of identity, narrative, the body, and the self.

Poetry and the Public

Instructor: David Daniels, ddaniel4@du.edu

Course Description: This seminar examines poetry's relationship to the public by looking at the poetry from key writers and specific traditions or movements such as Indigenous American poetry, Slave Spirituals, collage poetry of the Avant-Garde, midcentury feminist poetry, poetry slams, and the Internet. But this isn't a traditional literature course: in addition to standard reading and writing, students will actively engage in their learning by creating poems of their own, presenting poems to the class, and delivering a final group project that brings poetry to the public.

History of Animation: Critical Watching and Critical Making

Instructor: William Depper, william.depper@du.edu

Course Description: For over a century animation has thrived as a film-based art form and method of expression. It has become an important and prevalent part of our popular culture. By learning to critically watch animation through a variety of theoretical lens we can see the influences it has had upon our culture. We can examine changes that have occurred in the form and nature of the art form in response to the cultures and circumstances within which it was created. By creating simple forms of animation, we can further our understanding of the processes involved as well as explore ideas through a process of critical making. Students in this class will use readings, screenings, and written responses to investigate introductory critical theory, animation history, and basic film theory. Their findings will be used in a series of short animation exercises to explore how these ideas can be used to inform their making. Digital tools will be used to aid in the creation and editing of these short animations.

Mexican American History and Culture

Instructor: Elizabeth Escobedo, elizabeth.escobedo@du.edu

Course Description: Mexican American history is both an integral part of US history and a unique subject of historical investigation. In this course we will explore the history of Mexican-descent people in the United States from 1848 to the present, thinking about the ways in which race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship shape(d) the lived experiences and identity formation of Mexican-descent people (both US-born and immigrant) in the United States. Together we will explore an array of historical sources—including photos, oral histories, songs, film, literature, and visual art—to understand how Mexicans and Mexican Americans have negotiated, influenced, and responded to the political, social, and economic circumstances that shape their lives in the United States. Throughout the quarter our class will also consider the ways in which the history of Mexican America appears in curriculum and public sites of historical memory in the United States, and what the inclusion or exclusion of Mexican Americans reveals about shared values, identity, and sense of belonging in the nation.

Latinx Futurism(s), SciFi, and Interactive Fictions

Instructor: Rafael Fajardo, Rafael.Fajardo@du.edu

Course Description: In this course we will read/view/play LatinX Futurist (SciFi) short stories, graphic novels, films, and games. We will make non-linear, branching, interactive fictions in response to our readings/viewings/playings. This will be a laptop class. Students will be required to download and create with a specific software. Examples of works we will experience include: Sleep Dealer (2008) by Alex Rivera, The Cached Map (2019) by Malka Older, Difficult At Parties (2012) by Carmen Maria Machado, and Aztech Forgotten Gods (2022) by Lienzo. Interactive and Non-linear fictions from Latin America pre-date the existence of the worldwide web and digital hypertexts. Student will participate in extending this tradition into the 21st century with contemporary digital tools. Futurism(s) address questions about who gets to imagine the future, and who is present in visions of the future. We will look at recent and historical examples of LatinX/Latine populations imagining futures that include themselves.

Physics of Smartphone Sensors

Instructor: Xin Fan, xin.fan@du.edu

Course Description: Smartphone gradually integrates into our lives not only because it is a mobile computer, but also because of its various state-of-the-art sensors. These embedded sensors allow the phone to gauge where you are, which direction you face, how bright the light is, and even air pressure and electromagnetic field around you, which are otherwise difficult to perceive. Practically, you are carrying a multi-functional mobile lab in your pocket. In this course, we will take a close look at these different sensors, learning underlying principles and their limits. We will apply these sensors to some fun activities, such as mapping electric wires behind walls. With the help of ChatGPT, students will design an iPhone or Android APP based on these sensors toward the end of the quarter.

The Heart of Mathematics

Instructor: Kelly Flaherty, kelly.flaherty@du.edu

Course Description: Mathematics is not just “doing problems”. In this course, the students will discover what mathematics really is and (hopefully) become fans.(quoted and paraphrased from Burger and Starbird’s “The Heart of Mathematics” 2013) Students will be learning mathematical concepts and using these to answer mathematical questions by writing proofs in the way a mathematician would. They will also need to present a topic that they find interesting. This will include proving something in the area they choose and they will also need to write a problem that the rest of the class will need to solve using the information given in the presentation.

Digital Platforms and Society: A Sociological Inquiry

Instructor: Jessica Garrick, jessica.garrick@du.edu

Course Description: The “platform” economy—comprised of companies like Uber, Lyft, TaskRabbit, Airbnb— has been the subject of considerable controversy since its emergence. While supporters praise such companies as the icons of a new economy built on technological

innovation, sharing, and flexibility, its critics question how much the gig economy is about sharing vs. survival and flexibility vs. precarity. They also point out that new technologies, such as those necessary for companies' platforms, require new policies to ensure the protection of individual and communal well-being. Such policies are hotly contested by platform companies. In this class, we will take a deep dive into this part of the US economy. We'll work hard to define and understand the platform economy, dig into its social, as well as technological, origins, and explore its consequences. We'll end with a look at policy solutions and the political challenges to achieving them. These subjects will allow us to discuss more general questions, including the relationships between society and technology, changing forms of employment, and political struggles over material and ideal resources. While our main approach will be a sociological one, we will also draw on economic and business history, political science, philosophy, and cultural studies.

The Art and Science of Healing and Wellness

Instructor: Karen Geiseker, Karen.Giesecker@du.edu

Course Description: The World Health Organization defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." This course will explore the art of healing and well-being through creative practices such as drum circles, sound healing, art therapy, journaling, meditation, forest bathing and other modalities. Additionally, the science of healing and wellness will be explored through the documented evidence base of published scientific journal articles around these various modalities. Through this course students will be introduced to the academic rigor of the college experience as well as gain skills, knowledge, and hands on experience of self-care and well-being.

Memory: Self/Public/Community

Instructor: Robert Gilmor, robert.gilmor@du.edu

Course Description: What's your first memory? What's it mean to you? How do our memories inform who we are? What memories matter the most? What do our memories tell us about ourselves and the world? How can we make sure that everyone's memories matter?

Memory (the concept) and memories (what we each have) play a role in several academic fields, and consideration of memory can lead to important discussions and analysis that students will find useful regardless of their major or career goals. Our main focus will be the rhetorical nature of memory, and how the concept and ideas shape public discourse, and this seminar will explore the relationships between memory and several features of modern culture: everyday life, media, pop culture, and our identities as members of the DU community (students, staff, faculty).

Through a range of small writing assignments, we'll consider our own memories and analyze images and artifacts, we'll explore the memories of others through memoirs, and we'll examine how memory informs understanding and thinking in a variety of areas. We'll close out the quarter with a DU-focused project in conjunction with DU's Special Collections and Archives: a look at stories of student life at DU throughout its history.

Metropolitan Denver: Growth and Change in the Mile-High City

Instructor: Andrew Goetz, agoetz@du.edu

Course Description: Since the late 1800s, the city of Denver, Colorado has been one of the leading urban centers in the western part of the United States. Originally founded by settlers mining for gold, Denver has escalated to the ranks of the largest U.S. metropolitan areas through its role as a major urban center for the western Great Plains and Rocky Mountains region. This course explores the geographic, historical, environmental, economic, political, social, and cultural factors that have contributed to the growth of metropolitan Denver and have shaped its character. Through intensive study of historical and contemporary processes of urban growth and change, and interactive field experiences, students are introduced to the place where they will be living and studying as they begin their college careers.

Youth Cultures: Inequalities, Resistance, and Empowerment

Instructor: Hava Gordon, Hava.Gordon@du.edu

Course Description: Although commonly understood to be a natural and universal phase in the life course, many scholars argue that “youth” is in many ways a social construction: one that varies widely across history and across culture. The goal of this course is to examine how young people in the United States are both “constructed” as a distinct social group by institutions such as media, schooling, and work, and how youth in turn construct their own social worlds and spark social change.

Questions that will be considered in this seminar include the following: Do we live in a youth-worshipping society, or are youth convenient scapegoats for larger social problems? How do young people constitute a socially subordinated group, and how do they develop resources to resist their subordination? Do these forms of resistance have the potential to empower youth in significant ways, or do they compound young people’s subordination? In this course we will focus on the complex interplay between youth subordination and resistance, paying particular attention to the ways in which these dynamics vary by class, race, gender, and geographic region.

This seminar is designed to be a hands-on exploratory course about youth cultures. This means that in addition to reading about contemporary youth, we will be immersed in youth worlds in Denver by selecting a “youth scene” of our choice to study.

The Political Development of the Western United States

Instructor: Michael Greenberger, michael.greenberger@du.edu

Course Description: This class introduces students to the development of the American West and contemporary topics in its governance. We will focus on political development in the West: beginning with the ethnic cleansing of indigenous Americans, manifest destiny, hydrological resource management, and the massive economic and population growth periods of the 20th Century. We will also learn about contemporary challenges in Western Politics including natural resource management, immigration, state and local governance, and regional representation in the federal U.S Government.

The American West is distinctive in many ways. Governance is fractured across a variety of local jurisdictions, yet the federal government owns roughly half of all land West of the Mississippi River. Additionally, the West has been by far the most demographically dynamic region in the United States since World War II, and continues to grow faster than any other region in the United States despite acute challenges poised by a warming climate and shrinking water supply.

Environmental Change and Human Health

Instructor: Helen Hazen, Helen.hazen@du.edu

Course Description: Health and environmental issues are constantly in the news: Will we experience another coronavirus-like pandemic? Why did Zika suddenly spread through Latin America in 2015? What impacts will climate change have on people? Increasingly, issues of environment and health are being linked, with more and more evidence emerging to suggest that human disruptions to the natural environment carry significant health implications: climate change is changing the range of mosquitos that carry infectious diseases like malaria; deforestation and settlement of wildlands is exposing humans to animal pathogens such as the virus that causes Ebola; pollution causes thousands of premature deaths every year; loss of wildlands may even be having an impact on our mental health.

In this class, we take the ideas of health and sustainability as starting points to explore the many ways in which environmental change is influencing disease patterns. We will explore population change, emerging infectious diseases, biodiversity loss, agriculture, climate change, pollution, and the physical and mental health impacts of our increasingly urbanized lifestyles. As we explore this thematic material, we will spend time developing some of the core skills needed to succeed at the college level, including reading, writing, data interpretation, and presentation skills.

The Soundtrack of a Revolution: Popular Music of the Civil Rights Movement

Instructor: Roger Holland, roger.holland@du.edu

Course Description: Music has often been used as a vehicle to express thought and emotion, as well as an agent for change. An examination of the Negro Spirituals will show this to be true. In this course, students will examine the music of popular culture and its response to the social climate of the 1960's and 1970's as the United States wrestled with its conscience on the issues of civil rights, justice and equality. With a particular focus on the life and music of Nina Simone, we will closely examine the events in history that sparked outrage and response from musicians, who in turn sought to influence a change of heart and legislation in the land of the free and home of the brave.

The Once and Future Short Story

Instructor: Joanna Howard, Joanna.Howard@du.edu

Course Description: The Once and Future Short Story is a praxis class which will examine the historical evolution of the short story by pairing foundational works from the 19th and early 20th century with 21st century writers connected by content, theme or setting. We will examine how themes and content are treated differently across time: can we see evidence of a progression of thinking toward evolved, ethical, or more nuanced values? Richer psychological portraits? Which voices are represented and how does that change (or not) over time? Is the short story a snapshot in time resistant to rational evolution or should it seek to expand to offer us more hope in a potential future? Is there a consistent relationship between the historical moment and subject matter or do stylistic trends or aesthetic preferences play a bigger role in the way stories treat their content? This course takes a praxis approach through critical and creative writing assignments and discussion focused on close reading and literary analysis. Foundational writers will include Chekov, Woolf, Kafka, Lawrence, James, Poe, Baldwin, Gogol, Borges, Cortazar, Paley. 21st Century authors will include Zadie Smith, Batuman, Tommy Orange, YiYun Li, Ishiguro, Machado, Kang, Rooney, Tartt, Saunders and others.

Shakespeare's Americas

Instructor: William Howard, showard@du.edu

Course Description: How and why has Shakespeare's legacy become entangled in our country's national and international culture wars? We will investigate Shakespeare on the page, stage, and screen, connecting the plays and their source materials, their adaptations and performances to cultural criticism, history, and politics during Shakespeare's times and ours. We will study four plays—The Tempest, Julius Caesar, Hamlet, and Macbeth—as we examine Shakespeare's contested legacy from England to Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and the USA at the intersections of colonialism, postcolonialism, racial justice, gender and sexuality. Our work engages with an international and interdisciplinary field from the early modern to the modern & postmodern eras, following routes of travel, translation, and trade. We will pay special attention to the role of the First Folio in transnational democracy and dissent, the archival interventions of artist books, and the agency of Shakespearean texts, performances, and adaptations across media encountered as forms of resistance against systemic violence. Students will work individually and collectively on research projects that combine creativity and critique.

Physics for Future Presidents

Instructor: Steve Iona, siona@du.edu

Course Description: Many topics of social and political importance are directly related to science in general and physics in particular. This course will address basic physics concepts and knowledge so that these issues can be understood and discussed in a meaningful way from a scientific point of view. We will cover a wide range of physics topics such as energy, atoms, radioactivity, chain reactions, electricity, magnetism, space travel, and climate. The use of basic algebra, graphical interpretation, mathematical modeling, clear writing, and thoughtful

discussion are expected. Regular short writing assignments are expected, and a thoughtful analysis of policy and scientific data will be part of most class sessions. The main objective of this course is to teach some basic facts about how the world works, from the viewpoint of physics. These facts are intended to inform your views on important developments and policies in the modern world. This will require you to learn new words, new ideas, and abandon some old ones. It will also require numeracy. The course will provide multiple opportunities for you to express claims, evidence, and reasoning in a scientific fashion in response to written prompts, readings, and experiences.

Religion and Hip-Hop Culture

Instructor: Jason Jeffries, jason.jeffries@du.edu

Course Description: Understanding religion as the “Quest for Complex Subjectivity” or more simply the effort to make life meaningful in complex ways, this course explores the relationship between Hip Hop culture and religion. That is to say, this course is concerned with discussion of the ways in which Hip Hop culture discusses and provides life meaning in complex ways. This will be accomplished by: (1) discussion of the history and content of Rap Music; (2) examination of religion in rap music; (3) exploration of the religious sensibilities of rap artists; and (4) discussion of the implications of the connection between rap and religion.

[Im]migrant Stories: Theirs and Ours

Instructor: Lydia Keff, Lydia.Gil@du.edu

Course Description: This course explores the different ways in which individuals displaced by emigration and exile have chosen to tell their stories. We will discuss texts by 20th and 21st century immigrants, migrants, and exiles to the United States (and back) in a variety of genres, from literary memoir and film to digital story and performance art. We will examine how these texts chronicle the intersection of cultures and to what extent they define a new culture with its own characteristics. We will also analyze the impact of social, political, economic, and cultural factors on the writer's self-definition as a "hyphenated being" and how these autobiographical texts fit within the broader frame of U.S. literature. For the final project, students will explore their own stories of displacement (ancestral, familiar, individual, or collective) in the form of a literary essay, short memoir, collection of poems, digital story, performed monologue (filmed), graphic story, or short documentary film.

Trash & (Zero) Waste in a Disposable World

Instructor: Megan Kelly, megan.j.kelly@du.edu

Course Description: Anthropologist Robin Nagle observes that trash is an integral part of our daily lives; however, the effects of trash on our communities—from a local to a global scale—are oftentimes invisible (or at least ignored). One of the goals of this course is to make trash visible as an object of academic inquiry. In this course, we will observe our own habits of consumption and waste, confronting the trash that we produce locally in Denver and on the DU

campus. We will also identify how our individual behaviors connect to collective social patterns and issues related to trash by uncovering what happens to our trash after we throw it away. This course will explore trash from multiple disciplinary perspectives—including anthropology, sociology, criminology, journalism, media studies, advertising, art, architecture, health, and education—through a wide range of academic and popular genres. Through the critical examination of these texts, as well as the networks and institutions that rely on and profit from the production of waste, we will understand how rhetorical strategies are used to promote mass consumption and disposable culture as clean and convenient. And ultimately, we will consider the various economic, political, and environmental implications of these rhetorics.

Im(possible) Worlds: The Fantastic Short Story in the Américas

Instructor: Alison Krögel, akrogel@du.edu

Course Description: This course is designed to introduce students to the variations and influences of the Fantastic sensibility in the short fiction of North and Latin American authors. Within the context of Fantastic short fiction, I will introduce students to the field of comparative American literatures and the study of texts originally written in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Quechua. We will read, analyze and discuss Fantastic short stories that explore the human psyche and all of its accompanying madness, ambiguity and mystery.

This seminar begins with a discussion of the rise of the short story genre and the ways in which we can understand the Fantastic and its relationship to the Gothic and the Magical Real. Students will study the ways in which short story authors from the Américas have come to influence and respond to each other's work beginning in the late nineteenth and continuing throughout the twentieth century. We will also discuss the ways in which the Fantastic sometimes serves as a tool for critiquing Power under the guise of a simple "ghost story".

A Friendly Introduction to Number Theory

Instructor: Anh Le, anh.n.le@du.edu

Course Description: Bertrand Russell said "mathematics, rightly viewed, possesses not only truth, but supreme beauty—a beauty cold and austere, like that of sculpture, without appeal to any part of our weaker nature, without the gorgeous trappings of paintings or music, yet sublimely pure, and capable of a stern perfection such as only the greatest art can show." In this course, we will explore that beauty of mathematics through its most ancient and also most elegant branch -- number theory.

In a nutshell, number theory studies the natural numbers 1, 2, 3,... and it aims to uncover many deep and subtle relationships among them. To take a simple example, many people through the ages have been intrigued by the square numbers 1, 4, 9, 16, 25,... If we perform the experiment of adding together pairs of square numbers, we will find that occasionally we get another square. The most famous example of this phenomenon is $3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$. The triples such as (3, 4, 5) are called "Pythagorean triples". Anyone with a lively curiosity is bound to pose various questions, such as "Are there infinitely many Pythagorean triples?" and "If so, can we find a

formula that describes all of them?” These are the sorts of questions dealt with by number theory. In this course, we will study the aforementioned Pythagorean triples together with other fundamental concepts in number theory, including divisibility, congruences, sums of higher power, the famous Fermat's last theorem, prime numbers, and the role of prime numbers in computer encryption.

Down the Rabbit Hole: Critical Theory Through Literature & Film

Instructor: Chad Leahy, chad.leahy@du.edu

Course Description: This course introduces students to key concepts in critical theory through close readings of a variety of texts (including film, short story, novel, theater). The works studied in this course challenge us to explore how language, memory, gender, race, politics, economics, and other factors shape how meaning is constructed and how ‘reality’ itself is represented and perceived. Can our assumption about ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ be trusted? How or why might our perceptions be distorted? To what extent are our identities fashioned through such processes of distortion? What role do narration and representation, gender and sexuality, race, language and memory, politics and economics, play in these sorts of processes? Decisively, what interpretative tools are required to critically approach such questions? And how might these same tools be deployed in the interpretation of texts and social phenomena more generally? We will explore these and other questions throughout the quarter with reading, writing, presentations, dialogue, and critical reflection on short stories, novels, and plays as well as films including *Arrival*, *Children of Men*, *Get Out*, *The Matrix*, *Memento*, and *The Truman Show*.

Media, Power & Sexualization

Instructor: Rachael Liberman, Rachael.Liberman@du.edu

Course Description: In a contemporary cultural landscape, we often question: What is the relationship between the increased visibility of sexuality in media culture and our everyday lives? Recent scholarship suggests that we are experiencing a “sexualization of culture”; a process whereby sexual meanings are becoming more mainstream through mediated channels such as film, television, magazines and online platforms. This course unpacks the “sexualization of culture” thesis and prompts you to think critically about the impacts of media messages on sexual knowledge and meaning-making practices. Readings will draw from scholars who support this thesis as well as scholars that argue that the current “sexualization of culture” argument relies on moral, rather than social or political, frameworks. This course focuses on developing media literacy skills, from an intersectional perspective, and explores issues such as the sexualization of girls; sexting and privacy; and pornification. You will have the opportunity to explore these issues in-depth and will be encouraged to develop your own critical stance through course discussions, in-class activities, screenings, and a final group project.

Great Discoveries in the Life Sciences

Instructor: Daniel Linseman, daniel.linseman@du.edu

Course Description: In this course we focus on topics that have reshaped the way scientists view the life sciences. We read a set of papers that focus on the following topics: the discovery of DNA, the nature of the human genome (how do we store so much information), viruses (types and outbreaks), neurotransmitters and disease (e.g., Parkinson's), cloning procedures (how might it be done, should it be done), and stem cells (characteristics, uses, and ethical considerations). We have a set of short writing exercises to complement these articles and here the goal is to improve one's technique for writing an "argument" (i.e., defending a position). In addition to these writing assignments, evaluation is based on a term paper and a group presentation (students work in teams of 4-5).

Exploring Latinx Immigrants through Culture

Instructor: Sergio Macias, sergio.macias23@du.edu

Course Description: This FSEM delves into a variety of Latinx migrant narratives through the lens of contemporary popular culture. Students will actively engage with and analyze cultural texts such as film, music, comics, fashion, visual arts, literature, and social media. These mediums provide platforms for U.S. Latinxs to not only share their immigrant experiences and voices but also to navigate the dynamic processes involved in articulating and negotiating their identities. The course challenges the notion of stable identities, emphasizing their constant evolution and movement.

Central questions explored:

1. How do contemporary expressions of popular culture serve as powerful platforms for U.S. Latinxs to share their experiences and voices as immigrants?
2. In what ways do cultural texts reflect and contribute to the dynamic processes of articulating and negotiating the identities of U.S. Latinxs?
3. How does the examination of movement across boundaries (geography, nationality, race, etc.) enhance our understanding of the perpetual making and movement of identities within the Latinx migrant experience?

Additionally, the course covers a range of topics, including cultural and political exchanges along the U.S.-Mexico border, immigration policies, language controversies, Latinx activism, coping with the feeling of being "othered," mainstream Latinx stereotypes and media representations, Latina voices and Afrolatinx.

Personal Histories of Photography

Instructor: Roddy MacInnes, roddy.macinnes@du.edu

Course Description: Since the invention of photography was announced in 1839, the enduring legacy of photography has been its magical ability to freeze time and mirror reality. As ideological constructs, reality, and time describe everything while also confounding comprehension. Such an inherent paradox situates photography to be an ideal medium for

scrutinizing any, and all fields of inquiry regarding the enigmatic nature of life. Through presentations, readings and writing assignments, this course advances the multidisciplinary impact of photography and how photography is directly or obliquely linked to all fields of experience and knowledge. The course objectives embrace interdisciplinary learning and promote the premise that absolutely everything is connected. Employing an epistolary approach to many assignments (writing letters) students respond to weekly assignments by corresponding with a diversity of practitioners and scholars related to the cultural, historical, and scientific evolution of photography. A more in-depth fictional midterm assignment, plus an autobiographical final assignment will be required. Both, midterm and final will be presented via Blurb online publishing.

Design Your DU

Instructor: Heather Martin, heather.martin@du.edu

Course Description: When we were young, many of us were taught that adult life proceeds in an orderly and linear fashion, moving smoothly from one life stage to the next. Yet, most human lives are populated with tragedies and disruptions, unexpected joys and challenges. We may choose to fight against these uncertainties; or, we may delight in our beautiful and unpredictable journey.

This FSEM is about transitions: how we understand and manage them; and how we can use them as opportunities to grow and thrive in lives of our own making. By taking a deep dive into our past, present, and multiple possible futures, we will learn about the art and science of change, and how to become agents in our own academic, personal, and professional lives.

The Human Condition

Instructor: Joseph Martin, jmartin@du.edu

Course Description: This course studies the lives and works of civilization's masters of expressing emotion. We'll study music compositions, paintings, sculpture, and literary works, and see how geography, time periods, and personal crises influenced the way these creators of art expressed themselves. In seeking similarities in emotional expression across diverse time periods and different forms of art, we will strive to find a truth to these expressions that is timeless and helps us come to a greater understanding of how we, ourselves, express things artistically. Students will leave the course with a better understanding of how to approach art in a true sense of appreciation, and will be challenged to develop an artistic and intellectual curiosity to embrace a lifelong experience of growth in understanding art. Students will be guided on how to view art, and how to listen to music and formulate personal opinions about the pieces presented. Critical reasoning will be required to evaluate the effectiveness of each artist and to ultimately find a way to express your own emotional truth through expressive weekly assignments. Through the writing component, class discussions, and additional projects, students will have a broad range of experience to help them embrace the academic community here at DU.

All We Have is Each Other: Challenging Narratives of Criminalization, Punishment, and Safety

Instructor: Logan Middleton, logan.middleton@du.edu

Course Description: Our social worlds are saturated with narratives surrounding criminalization, punishment, and safety. Not only are these topics present everywhere from true crime podcasts to university plagiarism policies to the security checkpoints at the airport. So too do they shape dominant ideologies about law and justice, gender and race, life and death—as well as everyday people’s lived realities.

In this first-year seminar, then, we will unpack commonplace notions of criminalization, punishment, and safety to better understand these concepts and what they do. Together, we’ll consider the following questions:

- How and why have ideas about criminalization, punishment, and safety come to be?
- How do these notions permeate our media and structure our daily practices and habits?
- How can we develop critical orientations toward institutions that disproportionately criminalize and punish Black, Brown, Indigenous, disabled, trans, queer, immigrant, and/or poor people?
- What can safety really look and feel like?

In doing so, we’ll cultivate more ethical, just, and humane orientations toward criminalization, punishment, and safety and explore how communities work together to keep each other safe.

Pirates: Sailors, science, and society

Instructor: Keith Miller, keith.miller@du.edu

Course Description: Pirates are a misunderstood lot. Villains to many, heroes to some, and hired mercenaries to others. Yet their stories, ones of adventures, battles, and treasure, capture the imagination of most. Science too, especially in the public domain, is often misunderstood. Why is that? I posit it is all about “your attitude.” This seminar will engage students to analyze pirates and their stories, to identify underlying science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) concepts hidden in their adventures and the pirates “way of life”. Inspired by films and readings, students will research selected scientific principles as well as discuss literature on informal science education. Students will play, yes PLAY throughout the course as they develop, test, and produce pirate-inspired science outreach activities for children. The study of piracy is engaging, interdisciplinary and involves people! Thus, class discussions will also explore social conditions that lead to piracy, both from the past and in the present. Each student will research a topic related to piracy throughout the course, presenting a summary of their research to the class in the final weeks. Students will connect these experiences, as well as experiences outside the classroom in their first quarter, with intentional reflective practices. Using this reflective work, students will design their own “pirate’s life” (again, it’s all about your attitude!) to help chart their course for success in college. In a culminating class project, students will put their teamwork skills and collective knowledge to the test, building a “sloop” from simple materials

that they will race across the swimming pool, competing for the ultimate title: DU's fastest corsair!

Reading, Writing, Translating: A Triptych

Instructor: Poupeh Missaghi, poupeh.missaghi@du.edu

Course Description: Reading, Writing, Translating: A Triptych will dive into the art and practice of reading, writing, and translating, both as separate activities and in relation with one another. It guides students to learn about foundational elements of each and their varieties, then moves into their correspondence and conversation with one another, as well as their transfer into our worlds beyond the classroom. Students will also explore how their new knowledge of the three can be applied to their practices of reading, writing, and translating in their respective disciplines. Students will be engaging with a wide range of material (from texts to artworks to videos) and will be asked to respond to them through various modes, such as critical and creative responses, class conversations, and presentations. The class will use an ungrading methodology to train students in approaches to evaluate their own practices, gain agency and autonomy as students and thinkers, and find the language to discuss their practice with others. To aid students in this process, clear guidelines and various forms of feedback (written/oral, individual/group) will be offered throughout the quarter. The final project of the course consists of a final portfolio for which students will receive specific guidelines.

Highlights of Islamic Art and Architecture

Instructor: Bilha Moor, Bilha.Moor@du.edu

Course Description: What makes art 'Islamic'? The course introduces students to art and architecture in Islamic lands over the span of 1000 years in parts of three continents (c. 650-1650 CE). Through select case studies discussed in chronological order, students will learn to discern and appreciate the formal qualities of works of art, to understand their content, meaning, and their larger cultural significance. The course further familiarizes students with museums and galleries in Denver. The field trips acquaint students with art of different cultures, regions and periods and allow them to draw connections to class discussion and engage in larger art historical discourses.

From DNA to Diversity -and Beyond!

Instructor: Julie Morris, julie.a.morris@du.edu

Course Description: You are currently living in the midst of a revolution—a genetic revolution. Scan the news concerning any biologically related topic (from human health and disease, to agriculture, to endangered species conservation), and you will find a conversation about genes. These conversations are currently shaping procedure and policy that will have wide-ranging impacts on the future of medicine, food production, energy production, environmental stability, and possibly even the nature of human nature itself! Unfortunately, few people really understand what genes are or how they work. This seminar will explore the relationship of DNA and genes to each of these topics, and provide students with the basic information we will all need to

successfully navigate this revolution. To frame this exploration, we will read a graphic novel entitled *The Stuff of Life*, in which Bloort 183 (an alien interplanetary biologist from the Glargal Royal Science Academy) attempts to explain Earthly genetics to his Supreme Highness Florsh 727, in an attempt to influence governmental policies on his own planet. Students will be asked to fact check Bloort 183's report, and produce any necessary updates and addendums.

How Thingamajigs Work? Moving Beyond the Technical Lingo

Instructor: Balasingam Murugaverl, bmurugav@du.edu

Course Description: Intelligent devices are rapidly entering into our everyday life. We are constantly bombarded with technical lingo - intranet, GPS navigation, bandwidth, DSL, multi-media... Unfortunately, these jargons make it difficult to sort out important terms from technical trivia and contribute to the fear and ignorance towards technology that many people have. The aim of this seminar course is to ease students' fear of technology and improve their understanding of how modern technology works. This course is appropriate for students of any discipline who are just curious about how things work. The approach here is somewhat unorthodox, instead of dwelling on the abstract concepts and the underlying theories, students will engage directly into exploring the inside of familiar intelligent devices like computers to see what makes them work. Students will be introduced to the basic components of the device and their functions through the process of disassembling and assembling it. The underlying motif of this course is to create scientifically informed citizens while making it both useful and enjoyable. Students will find the basic skills and the scientific concepts they learned from this course to be valuable throughout their life.

Ancient Tragedies in Modern Life

Instructor: Marco Nathan, marco.nathan@du.edu

Course Description: We all know the plays of the great Ancient Greek tragedians: Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. We've all heard the epic stories of Iphigenia, Agamemnon, Oedipus, Medea, and their other mighty characters. We are all quite aware of the historical poignancy and artistic splendor of these timeless masterpieces. But what do they have to teach us about our own lives? What is their philosophical value? The goal of this course is to read some of the greatest literary works ever produced by humankind, but to re-interpret them in contemporary fashion. By integrating original plays with contemporary philosophical literature, we shall discuss the modern valence of these ancient classics.

Buddhist Meditation: Traditional and Modern Contexts

Instructor: Benjamin Nourse, benjamin.nourse@du.edu

Course Description: This course explores the wide range of Buddhist meditations and their relationship to Buddhist ethical and philosophical teachings. We also investigate how these Buddhist meditations are currently being adapted for use in a variety of settings, from health care and psychology to education. These adaptations prompt questions about the nature of meditation.

What is lost or gained when meditative practices are taken out of their traditional cultural and religious contexts? Is it appropriate to teach meditation in places like US public schools where other religiously-derived practices such as prayer have not been allowed in recent decades? Are recent scientific studies of meditation compelling enough to warrant wide-scale promotion of these practices? To help think through these issues, students will read about new research in neuroscience and psychology that suggests meditation can have profound impacts on the way we think and feel and can even change the functioning of our brains. We will also explore some of the debates that have taken place in news media and the popular press around the issue of meditation and its applications. Students in the course will also practice secularized forms of meditation, keeping a journal of their experiences and reflections.

Principle-based Leadership for Business

Instructor: Kathleen Novak, kathleen.novak@du.edu

Course Description: This FSEM is a look at what principled leadership looks like in today's organizations. It will challenge you to think of you as a principled leader, both in college and in the world post-graduation. You will work to develop your personal code of ethics, and practice how to handle yourself in ethically challenging situations. Sounds fun? I hope so! We will also help you make the transition to this new world of college.

Modern Classics of World Literature

Instructor: Maik Nwosu, maik.nwosu@du.edu

Course Description: This course is a literary journey around the world – with some of the best literary texts as our tour guides or windows into different cultures and aesthetics. We will also examine how these literary works and the literary traditions that they represent engage one another in (a reconstructed) conversation across space and time. Central to these inquiries is the idea of the “classic.” What is a literary classic, particularly a modern literary classic, and how does a work of literature become canonized?

Language and Identity

Instructor: Alfred Owusu-Ansah, alfred.owusu-ansah@du.edu

Course Description: Whether spoken, written, or signed, whether on TIKTOK, in the classroom or on the playground, language is something that humans use every day – it is an essential part of being human. Yet language's role in human identity construction is not something that we regularly submit to critical reflection. This seminar addresses the questions of “how do we use language to project our identities?”, “How do we use language to perceive the identities of others?”, and “How do we use language to identify as members of distinct linguistic and dissimilar communities?” To answer these questions, we will examine language's role in politics, culture, economics, and social stratification. Our approach will examine how language is used in both the private and public spheres as ways of being. Of particular interest will be examining how our identity construction strategies have broader implications for nationhood and

globalization. Topics that will be treated include linguistic imperialism, the science of naming, language and race/ethnicity, language and gender, and language standardization.

Who Do You Think You Are?: Performing Characters in Film and Literature

Instructor: Anne Penner, anne.penner@du.edu

Course Description: Who Do You Think You Are is designed to give first-year students several learning opportunities. First, it will allow them to analyze and respond imaginatively and empathically to a range of characters in literature and film, thus coming to understand character as a critical storytelling element. They will think deeply about the essential elements of characterization through various young protagonists in popular films (such as *Ladybird* and *Moonlight*), as well as in novels, graphic novels, and plays (such as *Fun Home* and *The Wolves*). Second, they will write, share with the class, and revise a monologue in the first person for each of three different characters, either of their own creation or ones they've studied. And third, they will revise, rehearse, and present two of their monologues "in character," practicing performance techniques, including of body and voice. They will be required to visit the Writing Center at least once to get guidance on their written pieces. Though this course fulfills all five Promises for the Future described in DU IMPACT 2025, it will most deeply investigate "The Promise of Creative Collaboration and Ethical Engagement."

Interfaith Civics

Instructor: Sarah Pessin, sarah.pessin@du.edu

Course Description: Chances are you don't share your religious neighbor's views and values. You might even find some of them offensive. So now what? In this course, we explore religious diversity within liberal pluralist democracies and the challenge of upholding religious freedom while preventing religious overstep. The course also helps students explore and refine personal habits and concrete best practices around interfaith bridge-building and ethical civic leadership—including the ability to listen to understand and dialogue across difference, as well as opportunities to participate in campus Spiritual Life projects cultivating interfaith literacy and religious inclusivity.

We engage political theory and challenging case studies. And we consider the "lived feel" of a healthy liberal democratic approach to neighborly coexistence: Is it about agreeing to disagree or finding our way to deep kinship? Is it about tolerance, respect, or something more (or less)? Is it about friendship or responsibility? And we ask these questions while cultivating a spirit of "hard hope," an ability to stick up for what we believe in and work across difference without erasing—but also without necessarily embracing—the neighbors we like least.

History of Colorado

Instructor: William Philpott, william.philpott@du.edu

Course Description: We'll study a wide sweep of Colorado's past, from Natives before the arrival of Europeans to current debates over environmental sustainability. I've designed the

course for students from outside Colorado who want to feel more rooted here, AND for students who grew up here and want to dig deeper into the history of their home state. For both groups, I try to channel their energy into intensive reading and writing that is consistent with college-level expectations of intellectual inquiry. Colorado history is rife with stories that are fascinating to a nonacademic audience—stories shot through with the romance and adventure of America’s mythical frontier past. My goal is to draw on the students’ pre-existing passions and assumptions to energize a re-examination of the myths. This does not just mean proving them “wrong.” It also means trying to understand how historical figures and events became mythicized—why people picked up on the stories they did, embellished them, found wider audiences for them, and made them meaningful in sometimes deeply symbolic, and sometimes problematic ways. This is useful to more than just prospective history majors. Telling stories and finding meanings in the past is arguably one of the most basic ways we make sense of ourselves; identify with communities, nations, or other identity groups; develop a sense of attachment to place; and make sense of our relationship to the wider society and the wider world.

True Crime Media: Journalism, Justice, or Just Entertainment

Instructor: LP Picard, lauren.picard@du.edu

Course Description: There’s no denying that we are in the midst of a true crime boom. The 2010’s have brought us prestige true crime dramas, like *Serial*, *West of Memphis*, and *The Keepers*. In the 2020’s, true crime content has exploded on platforms like TikTok and YouTube. But this boom, with its tiger kings, forensic-file investigations, and murder make-up tutorials, has revealed more than just the marketability of the genre. It’s shed light on our own dark obsessions, raising important questions about the blurry lines between reporting, unpacking, and sensationalizing. This seminar will explore the history and landscape of true crime entertainment, which goes back to at least the birth of modern journalism if not all the way back to the violence captured in early cave paintings. Our course will not focus on the crime itself but rather the stylized depictions of real events that make up the genre—podcasts, documentaries, episodic television shows, written texts, TikToks, and more. The task of our seminar is to examine the factors that shape these stylized narratives, to explore the effects they have on their audiences, and to unpack their ethical, rhetorical, and critical implications.

Biotechnology and Me

Instructor: Yan Qin, Yan.Qin@du.edu

Course Description: Biotechnology exploits living systems to develop tools and products that are useful in research, agriculture, industry and the medicine. The word “biotechnology” is not just a fancy and futuristic word that makes people think of science fiction movies, it can be heard from daily news, and it brings innovative products to human community. This course is expected to help students build basic understanding about how biotechnology works and lead students to participate in the discussion of various topics. We will start with an introduction and historical overview of biotechnology discoveries. Students will learn the basics of DNA, protein and cells and get an understanding about the principles of genetic engineering. Then students will be introduced to various research and commercial applications of modern biotechnology in order to

discuss the broader social, ethical, risk, and regulatory issues that arise from them. A range of topics will be covered including GMO foods, forensic biotechnology, molecular diagnostics, stem cell, gene therapy, the human genome project, and genetic testing. Students will participate in debates that have taken place in the wider community about ethics, human well-being, and public regulation in relation to these applications of modern biotechnology.

American Dream and Asian American Experience

Instructor: Ping Qiu, Ping.Qiu@du.edu

Course Description: Asian Americans have emerged as one of the rapidly growing minority populations in the United States, encompassing both immigrants and long-time residents. This course presents a critical lens to examine the Asian American experience: how is the "American dream" envisioned, lived, and confronted by Asian Americans; how does "Asian American" operate as a contested category of ethnic and national identity? Where does the allegiance lie between Asia and America, and how does one find a sense of belonging? Our exploration will delve into a diverse array of scholarly, literary, and filmic texts, providing a comprehensive understanding of how factors such as immigration and migration, citizenship, wartime experiences, the American empire, race, identity, social movements, and media representation have historically and contemporarily shaped the lives of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Special emphasis will be placed on personal narratives and diverse ways of knowing, anchoring our inquiry into the rich tapestry of debates, contestations, and contentions surrounding the Asian American experience. Our focus extends beyond the structural forces that have influenced Asian American lives and emphasizes how individuals within this community negotiate and often resist these forces through political and creative expressions.

Tabletop Games: Define & Design

Instructor: David Riche, david.riche@du.edu

Course Description: Games are as old as human culture, dating back to ancient board games like mancala, senet, and the Royal Game of Ur. While some games have been lost to history, others (like chess) have prospered with time. And while electronic games have transformed modern culture, tabletop (board, card, dice...) games have enjoyed a renaissance all their own, drawing the attention of players, designers, and scholars alike. Nowadays, trading cards, monster manuals, and crowdfunded indie board games are at the heart of a vibrant international subculture. In this course, we will engage this tabletop subculture in four ways. First, we will define games by coming to terms with ludology, the study of play. Second, we will read games by unpacking their histories and themes. Third, we will play games by enacting their rules. Fourth, we will design games by pitching and playtesting original projects. This FSEM will be writing-intensive—you will write critically and creatively.

Paying Attention to Attention

Instructor: Christy Rossi, ping.qiu@du.edu

Course Description: In this course we will work together to understand what attention is, ways in which attention differs across individuals, and how research related to attention connects to every day life. Students will learn to find and read relevant research articles to help build our collective understanding about attention, and activities will focus on communicating about course concepts. Many course topics can be directly applied to challenges faced by first-year university students, such as, "How can I apply my understanding of the limits of attention to better approach my coursework?" and "Is it beneficial to multitask during class so that I can both attend to the lecture AND get my lab report for another course done at the same time?"

Discussing Israel in the United States: Historical and Contemporary Issues

Instructor: Jonathan Sciarcon, jonathan.sciarcon@du.edu

Course Description: Why has the United States historically supported Israel? Why has Israel recently become a hot button issue within the Democratic Party but not the Republican Party? What differences do we see with regard to support for Israel from Americans of different generations? How do religious, ethnic, and racial identities impact support for Israel? How have the events of and since October 7, 2023 impacted how Israel is discussed in the United States? This seminar aims to help students answer these questions, which are often discussed only superficially in the media or by American politicians. In doing so, students will learn not just about foreign policy and American political culture, but also about how constructions of race and gender have influenced perceptions of Jews, Israelis, Arabs, and Palestinians in the United States. This seminar is also organized to allow time, each week, for students to read and discuss topics not related to other course material that the instructor believes is relevant for students in the early phase of their university careers. Finally, this course is also aimed to introduce students to academic culture at the University of Denver and will provide students with the opportunity to earn credit by attending on-campus academic and cultural events outside of the classroom.

STEM Out – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Outreach

Instructor: Mark Siemens, mark.siemens@du.edu

Course Description: Do you love science, engineering, technology, and mathematics? Come share that passion with others! In this service learning first-year seminar, students will create engaging, dynamic, hands-on STEM outreach activities for their classmates and local elementary school students. Students in this seminar will read scholarly and popular articles on the theory of learning and how to maximize STEM outreach impact, and will evaluate STEM experts to learn techniques for effective communication of challenging concepts. We will also learn and practice teaching a basic STEM concept each week – on topics selected by students. The emphasis throughout the course will be on developing effective STEM outreach through clear communication, pedagogy of learning, and building connection with participants.

Language Politics

Instructor: Angela Sowa, angela.sowa@du.edu

Course Description: Think about all the “rules” you’ve learned over the years about the English language. Who decided what should be right or wrong? What effect do these decisions have on how we perceive race, gender, place, and other forms of identity? And what role does language play in our ever-evolving cultures? In this course, we will explore the relationship between language and the public perception of issues, movements, and identities, and we’ll consider the implications language use has in both personal and cultural contexts. By triangulating and critically assessing multiple types of primary and secondary sources, we will not only learn to engage with public conversations about language politics, but to also become critically aware of the power structures inherent in such discourses.

Reading Maps: Literature, Culture, and Cartography

Instructor: Geoffrey Stacks, geoffrey.stacks@du.edu

Course Description: Maps are everywhere. You can find them on your phones, in your car, on TikTok. Cartography is an old technology, but it seems to have flourished in the twenty-first century. We rely on these helpful maps, but they do far more than give us directions. Maps affect how we see the world; they influence our understanding of culture, politics, and even our own identity. In this class, we will read literature and critical essays that explore the ways in which cartography not only describes the world but actually shapes it. Part of the class will focus on critical/philosophical writings about maps. These essays will look at how maps, which seem to be neutral, actually have authors and arguments and can change the way we move through the world, understand data, and think of ourselves. During the second part of our class, we will read a variety of literary works (short stories and poetry) that demonstrate the literary nature of cartography. What can literature and art teach us about becoming careful readers of cartography instead of passive, naïve consumers of a powerful technology?

Who Gets to Speak?: Democracy and Discourse in the Modern Public Square

Instructor: Dheepa Sundaram, dheepa.sundaram@du.edu

Course Description: The modern public square is a fundamental element of civic engagement. This course explores the cultural, social, political, and personal narratives/discourses that comprise the modern public square. By examining the lived practices and discourses through which access and agency is granted within public spaces (analog and virtual), students learn how they are both participants in and makers of these spaces. Site visits are the focal point in the course designed to foster empathetic learning which foregrounds lived experiences. Through diverse information sources, varied writing projects, and interactive assessment, students explore various “publics” in the Denver area and consider questions pertaining to land, language, authenticity, agency, and belonging. The course invites students to question how publics are formed, who has access, and why. Some of the questions we will explore include: Who is permitted to speak? To whom do these spaces “belong” and who “belongs” in these spaces? In

what ways, do language and rhetoric shape identity, community and belief? In what ways, do public spaces negotiate the tension between sacred, Indigenous land and public access? How do these spaces shape discourse? What do we do to engage productively with different narratives in various types of public squares?

Communication & Adoption

Instructor: Elizabeth Suter, elizabeth.suter@du.edu

Course Description: Communication & Adoption explores complexities of adoption in public discourses and private communicative interactions. Course curriculum includes perspectives across the adoption triad—adoptee, birth family, and adoptive family. Issues of race, class, culture, identity, sexual orientation, loss, and ethics are discussed in relation to domestic (US private and foster-care adoptions) and international adoption in transracial, single parent, same-race, two-parent, and gay, lesbian, and queer families. By the end of the course, students are expected to better understand:

- Historical and cultural contexts of adoption
- Issues of racial difference and sexual orientation in relation to adoption
- The interface of adoption and normalizing cultural ideologies about family
- Complexities of adoption-related identities
- Issues of loss and ethics related to adoption

Course curriculum is also designed to help students think in new and more informed ways about their own identities, relationships, and family(ies), as well as family in the United States and abroad. Students can expect to feel empowered to apply course knowledge to positively promote real-world adoption-related experiences and public conversations long after the course ends.

The Great Transition: Co-envisioning a just, sustainable, and desirable future

Instructor: Paul Sutton, Paul.Sutton@du.edu

Course Description: There is growing consensus that human civilization is facing profound challenges to its continued existence. Many of these challenges manifest as the inter-related problems of population growth, economic inequality, resource depletion, climate change, ocean acidification, and the 6th mass extinction in the history of the planet. In this course we will use collaborative games, reading and discussion, and media design and production to develop and communicate a vision for a just, desirable, and sustainable future for human civilization. This course will be taught in the spirit of this quote from Buckminster Fuller: “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” The new model we will work to develop in this course is a vision for a sustainable well-being economy. The well-being economies we may envision will conform to three basic principles: 1) Exist within planetary boundaries (Environmental Sustainability), 2) Fairly distribute resources (Equitable Distribution), and 3) Efficiently allocate resources (Wise Rational Use). Students will use social media and written reports to share and communicate the results of their study, dialogs, and co-creations.

Women's Work

Instructor: Tamara Trafton, tamara.trafton@du.edu

Course Description: What is women's work? What work is counted and what work isn't? Whose work is counted and whose work isn't? How/is that work valued? What affects the amount and type of work women do, and the allocation between work that "counts" and work that doesn't? What affects the amount and type of work that any of us do, and the allocation between work that "counts" and work that doesn't? Drawing from the fields of Labor Economics, Economic History, and Feminist Economics, this course aims to provide students with measurement techniques, theoretical frameworks, and empirical strategies to start to answer these questions – and to consider how we might change the answers to these questions.

Geography & Genealogy

Instructor: Erika Trigoso Rubio, erika.trigoso@du.edu

Course Description: Geography & Genealogy is designed to provide a detailed overview of genealogy in relation to the geographic, religious, economic, political and social processes that shaped the migration choices of our ancestors. The course will be taught under a discussion format with lectures focusing on intensive research of a variety of primary and secondary sources such as Ellis Island records and census records from the U.S. This seminar will explore topics such as ethnic chain migration and great historical events in migration history. It requires weekly assignments and extended papers exploring the family migration history of student in the class. If the U.S. databases are not suited for the student's family, there would be an option to collaborate with a NSM faculty member for family research. This is also a service learning course with a community partnership project (historic housing preservation).

Exploring The Environment Of Higher Education

Instructor: Michele Tyson, michele.tyson@du.edu

Course Description: The course serves as an introduction to understanding the social environments in which the system of higher education exists and the complexities of campus and culture. We will examine the purpose of education and the role college degrees play in society. The first third of the course will be spent investigating the social, historical, political, and economic environments. The second third of the course will focus on the role of the college campus on the "traditional" college experience using an ecological framework that centers and evaluates the physical, human, organizational, and constructed environments of institutions. The final third portion of the course will center the University of Denver and the effects of those environments on the student experience, while offering students strategies to maximize learning and development on campus. In line with Inclusive Excellence, attention will be given to the impact of campus environments on diverse student populations, understanding the differences between how symbols of diversity, equity, and inclusion are identified and experienced in higher education in the United States context, as well as more locally at DU. Theoretical concepts will help explain, describe, and examine the college environments as a system and their impact on students, faculty, and staff.

Ciphers from ancient to modern times

Instructor: Petr Vojtechovsky, petr.vojtechovsky@du.edu

Course Description: The purpose of ciphers is to make communication safe from eavesdropping. Ciphers have appeared around 500 BC, were widely used by medieval times, have been studied systematically since the 1800s and resulted in the modern field of cryptography. Encrypted messages changed the course of history on several occasions. Many aspects of our society depend on secure encryption. It is expected that the importance of cryptography will continue to grow not only in online communication but also in the development of decentralized bookkeeping, currency alternatives and civic aspects of democratic societies.

Playing Beyond the Box: Board Game Creation

Instructor: Bethany Waddington, bethany.waddington@du.edu

Course Description: In this dynamic course, we will embark on a journey exploring the captivating world of board games. From dissecting and critiquing existing games to the exhilarating task of group-based creation, this course ignites creativity and strategic thinking. Research confirms that board games offer diverse benefits beyond entertainment. They enhance cognitive abilities such as strategic thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making. Studies show that engaging with board games improves critical thinking, spatial reasoning, and logical deduction—essential elements integral to this course. We will start by analyzing established board games, unraveling their intricacies. Engaging discussions will build an understanding of game mechanics, thematic integration, and player engagement, setting our groundwork. We will then transition to team-based creation, designing original board games. The focus on reflection prompts thoughtful consideration of design choices and feedback reception. Constructive critiques foster an environment for diverse perspectives, nurturing idea development in the iterative design process. By synthesizing feedback and iterating designs, we will refine our games into immersive experiences. The course culminates in a showcase where we will unveil our inventive board games, showcasing not only our creative prowess but also our adeptness in incorporating feedback—an invaluable skill in the realm of game design and university success.

Networking Italian-Style

Instructor: Rachel Walsh, rachel.walsh@du.edu

Course Description: If you are interested in Italy, and are thinking about a future in Law, Business, Sports History, Communications, Music, Political Science or History, this is your FSEM! Networking and the exchange of personal, cultural and intellectual information has been around for centuries. Europe experienced a giant boom in networking activities in the eighteenth century. Italy in particular witnessed a variety of networks actively planting seeds for eventual political and geographical unification. This seminar explores differing notions of networking Italian-style during the eighteenth century, and it provides you access to the age of information exchange in three arenas: academies, periodical culture and salons. You will explore the universal nature of the period's literature, opera, and political writings and seek to answer why these works are relevant today. The seminar also provides training for Stanford University's web-based platform - Palladio - an innovative, research tool used to visualize complex,

multidimensional data. You will discover and gather data while researching the cultural exchanges and networks of eighteenth-century Italy, and acquire the skills necessary to create visualizations of this research.

Coming of Age: A Personal and Literary Journey

Instructor: Susan Walter, swalter@du.edu

Course Description: This course focuses on both films and literary texts from the 20th century that fit into the Coming of Age genre. These works are from various writers and directors whose identities and life experiences vary widely. In addition to analyzing these cinematic and literary works, we will also dedicate class time to discussing self-identity and reflection as students embark on this exciting journey called college. Throughout the quarter we will weave together reflections regarding what we value as individuals and how we can shape our experiences in the coming years, while we also analyze how characters who lived in other timeframes and/or in different social and political contexts did the same. As we analyze the various texts that comprise the bulk of the course content, we will consider them both as cultural products of a particular historical and political context and as works of art. Some of the themes that we will explore during the quarter include: love and sexuality, mentors and role models, gender norms, cultural and racial backgrounds, and how they all come together to influence identity formation. The negotiation of individual desires and needs with social expectations and norms will also be explored in many of the texts. We will also spend some time exploring personal values, interests and strengths as a way to ground decisions regarding majors and minors as well as imagining what types of careers and work environments could be most fulfilling in the future. Finally, the course will also include some contemplative practices such as meditation, intention setting and reflections. Students will learn about how mindfulness can aid in managing stress and anxiety as well as help us feel more present and focused and thus assist us in getting more out of class discussions, study time and life in general.

Art, Symbols, and Visual Literacy

Instructor: Chinn Wang, chinn.wang@du.edu

Course Description: How do artists use symbols to express their ideas? How does a fluency in symbology assist and/or resist our ability to decode the world around us? How can art create conversations about the past, present, and future simultaneously? In this seminar we will investigate the visual and creative relationships between popular culture and art and how artists interpret and challenge the symbolic world around them. We will consider

artists such as Tsachabalala Self, Dyani White Hawk, Christine Sun Kim, Kehinde Wiley, Ai Weiei, and many more. Using a diverse set of printmaking and collage techniques, students will develop studio projects based on poster design, zine culture, and portraiture, learning how to craft their own unique creative dialogue based on a set of personal symbols. Students will also work to develop their own aesthetic voice by thinking critically about the art we look at and make, all while having fun in the studio and gaining an appreciation for the power of creative thinking. In addition to art and writing assignments, the class will engage in research resulting in

artist presentations, film screenings that will introduce and provide inspiration for studio projects, and field trips focused on exploring Denver's rich artistic community.

The Search for Life in the Universe

Instructor: Tristan Weber, tristan.weber@du.edu

Course Description: In this course, we will investigate the possibility of alien life existing throughout our galaxy. We will discuss the origin and evolution of Life on Earth, the factors that influence a planet's habitability, the ways that we define "life" in our search, our current exploration of nearby planets, the ongoing discovery of exoplanets, the philosophical and humanistic perspectives on searching for alien life, and many other topics. Put simply, we will study the ways that scientists are currently working to answer the question "Are we alone in the universe?".

Astrobiology is by its nature an interdisciplinary subject. This course will expose students to a very wide range of fields: physics, geology, biology, mathematics, engineering, and philosophy, to name a few. Students will develop their skills in proposing scientific inquiries, evaluating the merit of scientific claims, and making difficult order-of-magnitude estimates. The course is framed around filling in the Drake equation - an estimate of the number of alien civilizations that exist in our galaxy -- and students will need to synthesize a wide range of knowledge to make their estimate. We will explore cutting-edge science used in NASA's search for life, and will have several remote interviews with NASA scientists.

Mountains of the Mind

Instructor: Wilfried Wilms, wwilms@du.edu

Course Description: The mountain is an absolute metaphor, a primordial phenomenon like water or light. It is inherently symbolic and has long played a crucial role in the cultural evolution of peoples around the globe. Consequently, mountains are infused with clusters of meaning. To the (modern) Western world, mountains were long considered *loci horribili*: terrible, inhospitable places, unsuitable for cultivation and thus useless. They were merely wilderness, places that housed the forces of evil and in which wild beasts roamed. The cultural importance of mountains increased only gradually during the Middle Ages. The fascination of and interaction with the mountains, e.g. in the form of mountaineering, that we take for granted today is a rather modern phenomenon that has its beginnings during the 18th century Enlightenment. Mountains of the Mind is an interdisciplinary course that traces the role that mountains, both imagined and real, have played in the formation of modern Western self- and national identity since the Enlightenment. We will investigate literary and visual representations and interpretations of mountains and mountaineering, ranging from the scientific to the aesthetic, the geographic to the militaristic in order to understand the fluid roles attributed to something seemingly stable like a mountain.

Food Politics

Instructor: Alena Wolflink, Alena.Wolflink@du.edu

Course Description: Is it possible to keep politics away from the dinner table? This course will look at the politics of food as a means of exploring the intersections of political economy and identity politics. We'll think about a wide array of examples of food politics. For instance, we'll look the mechanisms of global capitalism and inequality by looking at agricultural trade policies, we'll analyze class politics past and present by looking at food availability and scarcity, and we'll think about the politics of race, gender, and sexuality by studying eating disorders and dining aesthetics.

An Introduction to Mathematical Modeling

Instructor: Mei Yin, Mei.Yin@du.edu

Course Description: The purpose of this seminar is to provide samples of important and realistic applications of mathematics to students. The goal is to provide illustrations of how mathematics is employed to solve relevant contemporary problems. No matter how simple a mathematical model is, it involves making choices and calls for creativity. The class will not assume much background in mathematics except high school mathematics.