



First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions

2025-2026

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 21-25, 2025**). 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 July 8, 2025

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, going 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 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, write as green rhetors, and consider how humanity can build a regenerative future for the planet. 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).

Thinking 101

Instructor: Bud Bilanich, Bud.Bilanich@du.edu

Course Description: This course will introduce DU freshman to the essential skills of critical thinking and reasoning. Students will learn how to analyze information, evaluate evidence, construct sound arguments, and identify logical fallacies. The course emphasizes practical applications of critical thinking in academic, personal, and professional contexts, helping students develop the ability to make well-informed decisions and solve problems creatively.

Through engaging discussions, interactive activities, and real-world case studies, students will explore topics such as logical reasoning, ethical decision-making, media literacy, and persuasive communication. By the end of the course, students will have a stronger capacity to think independently, engage in constructive dialogue, and approach complex issues with clarity and confidence.

Science at the boundary: A look into the nanoworld

Instructor: Maria Calbi, mcalbi@du.edu

Course Description: This seminar explores selected topics related to nanoscience and nanotechnology, at the intersection of physics, chemistry and biology, with direct applications in engineering and medicine. Overall, the seminar has two main goals: 1) to emphasize the physics laws behind the unique behavior exhibited by very small systems and their surprising consequences on our everyday lives, and 2) to reflect on how these strange physics laws came to be by looking at the history of the quantum revolution from the broader perspective of human creativity. In this sense, this seminar will also explore the complex connection between science, philosophy and the human experience.

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.

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; considerations 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, 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.

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.

The Art of the Book: the art, the making, the story

Instructor: Catherine Chauvin, Catherine.C Chauvin@du.edu

Course Description: How can we expand our intellect and curiosity through making art?

What are the processes of making you would like to learn as well as the stories you would like to share? We will look at these questions through the lens of artists books and bookmaking.

In this course, we will explore histories and structures of books, conduct and present research into selected book forms and contents and create book structures in a studio based atmosphere. Investigating visual and artistic relationships between creation, process of making and meaning will enrich each project.

As a studio based experience, this course will explore the range of topics artists may cover within a discipline or process. In doing so, students will also work by thinking critically about the world around them, while engaging in the studio and gaining an appreciation for creative thinking and problem solving.

Can TikTok Change the World?

Instructor: Lynn Clark, Lynn.Clark@du.edu

Course Description: Can TikTok change the world? Or perhaps the question is: HOW is TikTok changing the world? And who holds TikTok accountable for its role in contributing to positive or negative change in our world? How is TikTok leveraging artificial intelligence in its operations, content delivery, and user interactions? In this first year seminar course, we utilize TikTok as a platform for discussions about popular media practices, emergent systems of cultural authority, media ownership, and social, cultural, technological, and political change, particularly change that centers young people and youth voice. Students learn about recent research on the role of TikTok in social movement building and in state surveillance and discuss young social media influencers who have monetized this and other platforms as a career even as behind-the-scenes influencers have leveraged the same platforms for large-scale misinformation campaigns. We consider TikTok in relation to its sister technologies of Instagram, YouTube, Discord, and Twitter, look at its ownership and the participation of platforms in the reproduction of stereotypes, and also explore social media predecessors as well as open source and self-hosted social media alternatives. Students will write critical essays about contemporary social media

phenomena they study and will experiment with short form video production for social and public good.

Dystopian Futures: Gender and Religion in Literature and Film

Instructor: Christy Cobb, Christy.Cobb@du.edu

Course Description: In this first-year seminar, we will consider how dystopian fiction imagines oppressive futures shaped by extreme social, political, and religious ideologies. Through reading dystopian novels and watching their adaptation in tv shows and films, students will examine the ways dystopian literature critiques real-world issues, including gender inequality, religious extremism, reproductive control, and government power. With a focus on issues of gender as it relates to religion, we will read and engage short stories, novels, and films based on texts by authors such as Margaret Atwood, Octavia Butler, Naomi Alderman, and Tomi Adeyemi. In addition to literary analysis, students will participate in class discussions, film criticism, and a final project.

Queer Contemporary Literature

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. Through surveying the landscape of contemporary queer literature, with a focus on memoir and graphic novels, this course invites students into a deep contemplation of the entanglements of queerness, gender, conceptions of identity, narrative, the body, and the self.

The world is out there, and you belong in it

Instructor: Mike Daniels, J.Michael.Daniels@du.edu

Course Description: A university education has two main purposes: 1) to promote learning about the world (or universe); 2) to promote learning about oneself. By many standards these represent the same goal. Students in this seminar will go directly into the world to experience it and learn from it. Field excursions to nearby parks and open spaces will provide direct interactions with our natural environment and will encourage careful landscape observation and analysis. We will examine landforms, flora, fauna, and soils among prairie, foothills, and mountain environments and ecosystems. We will ground this experiential learning with readings and discussion focused on the works of Nichiren Daishonin, Baruch Spinoza, Susan Fenimore Cooper, John Dewey, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Robin Wall Kimmerer. These authors all explore the deep connectedness and interdependence of the human and natural world. Through these readings we will examine concepts including cause and effect; space and place; culture and nature; home and abroad; cosmos and hearth; universe and self. We integrate our readings, discussions, and written work with our experiential activities throughout the course.

Poetry and the Public

Instructor: David Daniels, David.J.Daniels@du.edu

Course Description: This seminar examines poetry's role in shaping public life, as a form of political protest, self-expression, and healing. We will consider topics such as hip hop, Slam poetry, the Beats, and second-wave feminism. This seminar also includes a community-engaged component where students work with local arts organizations to bring poetry into the public lives of people.

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 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 and tracing air flows in a room. We will also learn how to program APP with the help of ChatGPT. At the end of the quarter, every student will be able to generate their own APP.

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)

The 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. (Critical inquiry and effective communication)

[Im]migrant Stories: Theirs and Ours

Instructor: Lydia Gil 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.

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.

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 through subcultures and youth activism.

This seminar is designed to be a hands-on exploratory course about youth issues and youth cultures. This means that in addition to reading research studies about youth, we will examine youth issues and perspectives through original data collection. One of our major aims in the course will also be to learn how to engage in productive dialogue, disagreement, and debate about social issues related to youth.

The first-year seminar format is purposefully designed to give students a supportive and rigorous introduction to college through active learning and engagement. In this particular class, we will build our intellectual community through dialogue, deliberation, and debate, at times complicating beliefs we have taken for granted.

Creating a New American State

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

Course Description: This seminar introduces first-year students to the world of state and local politics through an innovative approach: students will create and run their own state government. Rather than just reading about how state and local governments work, students will build a fictional fifty-first state, from the ground up. Students will write its constitution, participate in elections, and tackle real policy challenges in areas like education, criminal justice, and public health. Through this simulation, students will work through pros and cons of institutional designs and see how rules dramatically affect political outcomes and citizens' daily lives. Class discussions and reflective writing assignments will help students connect experiences in the simulation to current events in actual state governments. By the end of the quarter, students should understand not just how state governments function, but how they can effectively engage

with politics and policy in their own communities. This dynamic, collaborative learning environment welcomes students of all backgrounds and prior knowledge levels.

Island Fantasies - from Okinawa to the Pacific, from Legend to Paradise

Instructor: Madoka Hammine, Madoka.Hammine@du.edu

Course Description: Welcome to "Island Fantasies," a critical introduction to the Okinawa and the Pacific Islands, where myth and reality intertwine. In this course, we will journey through the rich history of the Ryukyu island and the Pacific, centering the discussion around Okinawa. Students will learn about island cultures, examining how legends, folklore, and historical narratives shape our understanding of these enchanting landscapes. From the mythical origins of Polynesian navigation to the modern portrayal of "island paradises" in popular media, we will critically delve into the ways these islands have been idealized and romanticized.

Through a combination of literature, film, art, and scholarly texts, we will engage with themes of identity, colonization, environmental challenges and current struggles towards decolonization, uncovering the diverse voices that contribute to the islands' stories. Join us as we celebrate the complexity, and resilience of Okinawa and the Pacific Islands, inviting you to question and redefine what paradise truly means.

The Milky Way in Motion

Instructor: Jennifer Hoffman, Jennifer.Hoffman@du.edu

Course Description: This seminar will introduce students to our cosmic neighborhood, the Milky Way Galaxy, and some of the strange and wonderful things that populate it. We will place particular emphasis on the time-varying nature of celestial phenomena, the cycles and changes we can observe and experience from our own campus, and the importance of our own perspective in understanding large-scale phenomena. We will cover some of the ground of an introductory astronomy course, including basic naked-eye observations, identification and classification of celestial objects, and the structure of our Solar System and Galaxy. However, we will also explore the mathematical, scientific, and technological tools that allow humans to understand our Universe and practice reading, writing, communication, and critical thinking skills in a scientific context. No prior experience with astronomy or physics is necessary; the only prerequisites are curiosity, persistence, and a willingness to apply mathematical tools and quantitative reasoning to astronomical situations. We will use high-school-level algebra, trigonometry, logarithms, and graphs to investigate the relations between physical quantities observed in nature. This will allow us to move beyond simply describing what we observe toward more fully understanding the mechanisms governing the stars, planets, and other denizens of our Galaxy.

Art and Observation in Healthcare

Instructor: Barbekka Hurtt, Barbekka.Hurtt@du.edu

Course Description: Art is everywhere, even in health care, and being observant is a must for understanding art and treating a person. In today's healthcare scene, it is imperative for all

providers from nurses to physicians to dentists to effectively communicate and connect with patients. Such a focus will improve a patient's trust in the provider and of the healthcare system. This means learning how to read body language, discerning the difference between description and interpretation, and being open to identifying one's own biases and perceptions of cultural, ethnicity, age, and gender contexts. Thus, this course focuses on developing observational skills through the appreciation of fine and contemporary art, videos, photography, music, and other elements of art in everyday interactions. We will visit museums, buildings, landscapes, and other artistic venues as well as create our own art. This course will provide students the social and cultural contexts of human health that make up the art of medicine as well as insight about the scientific basis of health care. Through this course, students will learn to employ critical skills and competencies necessary for understanding and evaluating art in multiple forms, explore patient-provider interactions in health care situations, and learn how to observe and interact with others using a diverse, equitable, and inclusive lens.

Screening Latin America- Societies in Movement

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

Course Description: Latin America is one of the most fascinating regions of the world. Throughout its historical evolution, different civilizations came together to create original socio-political and cultural formations. Similarly, Latin America's history has been a story of violence and suffering, but also of great perseverance and self-affirmation. Using a historical perspective, this course seeks to understand how and why the struggle for independence, nation-building, and progress has raged on for so long and where it stands today.

This is an introductory course to the experiences of Latin America primarily aimed at reflecting about the process of formation of present-day Latin American societies, and secondly at motivating students to reflect about the historical evolution of multi-racial, multi-cultural societies in general. The activities for the course are structured around themes dealing with the region's historical evolution and the present-day challenges of building a modern, developed, and egalitarian society. All these themes provide the ingredients for the drama inherent in the histories of the countries of the region, a drama that filmmakers have depicted in a great number of movies treating important issues and events in Latin American history.

One of the main goals of our investigation is to understand how this process of continuity and/or change has been wrought by the multiple social agents within the various parts of region. By watching, analyzing, and analyzing, orally and in writing, collectively and individually a series of films, documentaries, and videos made by Latin American, North American, and European filmmakers, we will both critically analyze the historical development of Latin America as well as the assumptions and biases, which go into the making films about the region. By taking part of this process, students will develop a deeper appreciation for the complexities embodying Latin American societies and the problems the region faces today.

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.

Trash & (Zero) Waste in a Disposable World

Instructor: Megan Kelly, Megan.J.Kelly@du.edu

Course Description: As Anthropologist Robin Nagle notes, trash is an integral part of our daily lives, but the effects of trash on our communities are oftentimes invisible, or at least ignored. One goal of this course is to make trash visible as an object of academic inquiry. This course explores trash from multiple interdisciplinary perspectives — including anthropology, sociology, history, environmental science, marketing, media studies, and education. Through the processes of critical thinking, reading, researching, and writing, we will gain an awareness of the environmental and social impact of our collective behaviors around consumption and waste. Throughout the course, we will observe our own habits of trash production and identify how our behaviors, actions, and identities connect to larger social patterns of waste. In examining the systems and institutions that rely on and profit from our production of waste, we will discuss the rhetorical strategies used to promote mass consumption and disposable culture as clean and convenient, as well as the various implications of these rhetorics. Finally, we will consider possible solutions to the problems of trash in our community, reflecting on and applying what we’ve learned in a proposal for change.

You are what you eat: A course in Food Chemistry

Instructor: Michelle Knowles, Michelle.Knowles@du.edu

Course Description: The goal of this course is to investigate the molecules that we eat, what cooking does to them, and the science upon which we base our decisions. In the past 50 years food has changed substantially and “food science” was invented. We will discuss what we eat, from food molecules to plant genetics, and do laboratory experiments to see what is really in our food. During the course we will cover the main molecules in our food (carbohydrates, protein, fats, water, vitamin/minerals) and the chemistry that occurs during food processing and cooking. During the first 6 weeks, we work in small groups to design, discuss, and perform experiments where we can observe the physical and chemical transitions that occur when preparing food. This course has a significant hands-on “lab” where we work as teams to test kitchen hypotheses so that we can solve mysteries like “Why do avocados brown?” and “Why should I care about protein denaturation?”. In the final weeks, we research a complex food science topic of your own choosing using peer-reviewed literature and other library resources. By the end of the course, you will be able to write scientific papers, perform scientific literary research, and intelligently discuss food chemistry topics.

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

Instructor: Alison Krögel, akroegel@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, students are introduced to the field of comparative literatures of the Américas through 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 throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We will also discuss the ways in which the Fantastic may serve as a tool for critiquing Power under the guise of a simple ‘ghost story’.

Seeing Through Clothes: Topics in Clothing/Dress/Costume/Fashion and Culture

Instructor: Janice Lacek, Janice.Lacek@du.edu

Course Description: Why do we wear clothes? What does our dress SAY about -and for- us? What exactly IS Fashion anyway? How does it work? From studies in cultural and historical dress to contemporary superhero cosplay, Seeing Through Clothes will tackle a “variety-pack” of topics popular among fashion theorists, exploring the evolution of its critique. We will approach from multiple angles how scholars consider the intersections of the body, identity, culture, and clothing, as well as the consumption of fashion since the 15th century. Particular emphasis will be given to contextualizing costume/fashion as contributors to popular culture through the performance arts (film/ tv/theatre, etc.). Through a collection of readings, videos and podcasts and short response essays, a research paper, and final creative hands-on project (Trashion Show 2025), students will engage with some of the most influential and important ideas about fashion, bringing to light the presuppositions involved in the things we think and say about what we wear.

The inner workings of 3D graphics

Instructor: Frederic Latremoliere, Frederic@math.du.edu

Course Description: Computer generated three dimensional graphics can be found all around us, from games to medical imaging. The creation of these graphics relies on interesting mathematics, such as the algebra of matrices. In this hands on course, we will learn the foundations of this field, learning both some of the mathematics and some of the programming behind it. No prior knowledge of programming is required. The course culminate with a small group project creating a small voxel based world.

Constructing Sexualities: Identities, Intersections, and Inequalities

Instructor: Amie Levesque, Amie.Levesque@du.edu

Course Description: Sexuality is a significant part of human identities. In this course, we will create an engaging intellectual community that examines the ways in which sexualities are constructed in our society through three units. First, we will look at the development of sexual identities and the meanings we assign to those identities within our society. As sexuality is a salient topic on college campuses, we will focus on hookup culture as a lens of studying the construction of sexual identities and experiences. Next, we will uncover the complexities of sexual identities as they relate to intersections of race, class, gender, place, and disability, examining the powerful connections between sexuality and our social location. Finally, we will explore sexualities through contexts of inequality, specifically through the narratives of marginalized sexualities and privilege, as well as the policing of sexualities more broadly. Course materials and assignments will draw on the work of scholars who study sexualities, gender, feminism, embodiment, and queer theory.

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, and magazines. 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.

Resistance in the African Diaspora

Instructor: Mamadou Moustapha Ly, Mamadou.Ly@du.edu

Course Description: In one of his memorable political speeches, President Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, one of the most legendary revolutionary leaders of the African Diaspora, forewarns, “We need a convinced people rather than a conquered people. Homeland or death we shall overcome.” This nationalistic message has been a spearhead of the political and literary leadership of the “former” colonies from the early days of decolonization to our current times. In this seminar, we will examine how African and Caribbean writers and artists have, through their work, fought against the oppressive policies that still remain, even after the official abolition of slavery and colonialism. We will analyze a diverse selection of Pan-African films and literary works that respond to racial, ethnic and cultural forms of “othering.”

Exploring Latinx Migrant Stories through Pop 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.

European Masterpieces: “The Alienated Hero: In Search of Self”

Instructor: Polina Maksimovich, Polina.Maksimovich@du.edu

Course Description: Every work of literature is the product of a culture. How is that important to our understanding of a work? How do the cultural assumptions and expectations of the author shape the work that we read? How do the cultural assumptions and expectations of the reader shape their interpretation of that work? How can we balance the historical and cultural specificity of literary works with their treatment of what we take to be universal human concerns?

This seminar offers a survey of Russian 19th-century culture and its major literary genres and generic trends. In this early era, Russia was heavily in dialogue with Western European culture, which introduced Russia to a new genre of writing—the novel. The course provides an introductory encounter with the most celebrated authors of the national canon, including Pushkin, Lermontov, and Dostoevsky, and will draw students into the history, culture, and society that produced those groundbreaking works. We will focus on the figure of the alienated hero who appears to be a constant fixture in Russian society. To pursue our investigation, we will examine several such heroes and trace the pattern of thought and experience that lies behind them, along the way reflecting upon one’s own cultural perspectives to foster global learning.

Design Your DU: A 4D First-Year Seminar

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. Throughout this journey, we will prioritize free expression and open dialogue, recognizing that our diverse perspectives and the ability to voice them enrich our understanding of change and our capacity to navigate it.

As part of the 4D student experience, this FSEM will engage four student dimensions (4D): intellectual growth; lives and careers of purpose; physical, emotional, and financial wellbeing; and personal values and character. As part of the 4D intellectual community, students will map and explore their educational journeys—cultivating relationships, integrating learning across classes, and finding ways to improve their communities. Class activities and projects will engage current research in the four dimensions and ask students to apply these concepts in real-world contexts. Open dialogue and collaborative learning will be essential tools in this process, allowing us to challenge assumptions, deepen our understanding, and grow as a community of learners.

Intro to Graph Theory

Instructor: John McHugh, John.R.Mchugh@du.edu

Course Description: Graphs are mathematical objects that encode "relationships between things." These graphs are different from the "graphs" you may have learned about before, i.e., plots of functions on the x,y coordinate system! Graphs can be used to answer questions like: how many colors do I need in order to color the regions on a map, in such a way that bordering regions are different colors? Graphs are also utilized by search engines like Google, where they are used to determine which webpage should appear first when you conduct a search on their engine. This course examines the basic properties of graphs and the puzzles that arise in their study.

The Psychology of Thriving

Instructor: Daniel McIntosh, Daniel.McIntosh@du.edu

Course Description: In this course, you learn about research on practices aimed at helping you thrive. We take a 4D approach, with the course designed to support your intellectual growth, developing purpose, enhancing well-being, and exploring character. Using scholarship on positive psychology and human flourishing, we focus on psychological and social well-being, with practices relevant to college students. We approach these topics critically, identifying and

discussing merits and weaknesses of the ideas using evidence and analysis to understand the validity of the claims. This involves reading and reflecting on primary research and secondary reports in the area, sharing your experiences and perspectives, and learning from others' experiences and perspectives. You will be an active learner, engaging in activities related to implementing some practices. You will participate in the intellectual community of the University through using your voice, in writing and speaking, and learning, through listening and reflecting. As part of that community, you will be expected to be a creator of knowledge and ideas and to engage respectfully with other members of the community. In addition, to learning about practices that support thriving, the instructor will be your academic advisor this year, helping you to navigate and thrive your first year.

Reading, Writing, Translating, A Triptych

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

Course Description: With the development of new technologies as well as our recent global pandemic experience, our relationship with reading, writing, and translating has changed. These practices are not what they were in their traditional sense anymore, and yet they are still as important, if not more so, in our meaningful engagement with the world. It is through them that we can critically and creatively receive what we are offered in the form of various textual modalities and provide our own responses in individual and collective manners.

Reading, Writing, Translating: A Triptych will be an overview of these practices, using a praxis approach to provide students with an opportunity to (re)visit them with fresh sets of eyes. The hope is that they can move away from taking these activities for granted toward a new impactful relationship with them. The course will help students to ask questions such as: What do these practices mean in our time? Who engages with them and in what ways? How are they in relation with one another? What do they mean to me? How can I benefit from them in a way that best serves my trajectory as a student and a citizen in my personal and professional life?

Leadership Lessons The Richmond Way

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

Course Description: Welcome to "Leadership Lessons the Richmond Way", a dynamic and engaging course designed to help you develop essential leadership competencies by analyzing the beloved characters and scenarios from the hit TV series "Ted Lasso." This course is tailored for first-year college students and aims to help you develop a plan to develop these leadership competencies throughout your college career that will benefit you throughout your academic and professional journey.

Language and Identity

Instructor: Alfred Owusu-Ansah, Alfred.Owusu-Ansah@du.edu

Course Description: Whether spoken, written, or signed, 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?” “Why can't your professor say 'skibidi', 'rizz', or 'sigma'?” 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. 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.

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: What do Ute Indians have in common with plutonium warheads? The Pikes Peak gold rush with the Ku Klux Klan? Ski troopers, fur trappers, and Japanese farmers with sugar beets, desegregation battles, and the Dust Bowl? They’ve all shaped the history of the state you find yourself in. Whether you grew up here or are just now moving here, this FSEM will help you feel more rooted in Colorado, more familiar with its rich history, and more aware of that history’s relevance to our own times. Sweeping from pre-contact Natives to the present, we’ll seek answers to four key questions. How have people imagined or idealized Colorado? What kinds of communities have they created here; whom have they included or excluded, and why? How have Coloradans related to the land and natural environment—exploited, modified, or taken strength from it, shaped and been shaped by it? And how have different groups of Coloradans worked with or against each another to realize their goals, whatever they were? We’ll be guided not just by the writings of other historians, but also by the words of people who themselves made or witnessed Colorado history, and by the marks they left on the landscape.

True Crime Media: Journalism, Justice, or Just Entertainment?

Instructor: Lauren 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.

The 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, Christy.Rossi@du.edu

Course Description: In this course we will work together to understand what attention is, the ways in which attention differs across individuals, and how research related to attention connects to everyday 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?"

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?

Communicating to Connect: The Art and Science of Communication in Relationships

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

Course Description: In today's world, strong social connections are more important than ever for personal well-being and for the health of society. The quality of our relationships directly impacts our happiness, productivity, and success. But building and maintaining meaningful relationships isn't always easy—especially in today's digital age. This course explores the fascinating and complex ways in which we communicate with one another and how those interactions shape the relationships that define our lives. Through engaging discussions and hands-on activities, you'll gain a deeper understanding of the role communication plays in forming, nurturing, and strengthening relationships. You'll explore the challenges and opportunities that modern technology presents and learn practical strategies for improving the quality of your interactions. By the end of the course, you'll be empowered with tools to build better relationships—not only in your personal life but also in your academic and professional pursuits. Expect a dynamic, interactive learning experience where you'll apply what you learn to real-world scenarios, leaving you with a solid foundation for fostering a culture of connection in all areas of your life. Get ready to dive into the exciting academic study of communication and relationships—an essential resource for thriving in today's world!

Revolution and Revolutionaries in Latin America

Instructor: Matthew Taylor, Matthew.Taylor@du.edu

Course Description: In this class we will examine the life and times of several 20th and 21st century revolutionary leaders. We ask, then, who was Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Carlos Fonseca, Mario Payeras? How did they live, how did they become revolutionaries? Were they successful? We will read accounts of revolution written by guerrilla leaders, teachers, United

States Government agents, and academics from the North and South in an attempt to understand revolution and the fight for land from multiple perspectives. We will also discuss current land distribution and political climates in Latin America. Hopefully our understanding and analysis will allow us to make meaningful conclusions and/or create scenarios for the potential for future unrest in the region.

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.

Writing Across Media

Instructor: Nicole Turnipseed, Nicole.Turnipseed@du.edu

Course Description: How do you "read" an image? Have you ever "heard" an author's voice in their writing? What avenues for persuasion and inquiry are afforded by your word processor? ...by the camera lens on your cell phone? ...by a graffiti stencil?

In Writing Across Media, we'll explore how we can utilize and create tools for understanding and communicating beyond the alphabetic. Our end goal will be to thoughtfully compose a set of multimodal texts that work together to spark change on an issue you find personally meaningful. To get there, we'll begin by first cultivating our self-understanding and genuine curiosity about our worlds. Using theoretically grounded practices, we'll test the affordances and limitations of a range of modes (linguistic, visual...), media (alphabet, photograph...), and technologies (pencils, Snapchat...).

Our class time together will hinge on discussion and workshopping; we'll work together to speak back to utilize and build on theory, while also serving as interested and generative audiences for one another in the process of composing. Along the way, we'll develop a malleable toolkit for understanding and composing multimedia products while attempting to identify, and just as importantly challenge, implicit assumptions about media.

Exploring Higher Education Environments

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

Course Description: This course serves as an introduction to understanding the social environments in which the system of higher education exists and the complexities of individual campus and culture. The purpose of this course is to familiarize students with today's higher

education landscape, the purpose of education and the role a college degree plays in society. Specifically, we will investigate the social, historical, political, and economic environments in which higher education exists. Using an ecological framework that centers and evaluates the physical, human, organizational, and constructed environments of a college campus we will explore the “traditional” college experience, with a focus on the University of Denver with an emphasis on the individual student experience as well as the collective student body. 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. Theoretical concepts will help explain, describe, and examine the college environments as a system and their impact on students, faculty, and staff.

Gaming for Change: Strategy, Inclusion, and Critical Thinking

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

Course Description: What makes a game meaningful beyond just winning or losing? In this course, you will explore board games as more than entertainment—examining how they reflect culture, strategy, and social dynamics. Through critical analysis, discussion, and research, you will investigate how game mechanics shape player experiences, influence who gets to participate, and reflect broader societal themes. This course will challenge you to consider how storytelling, design choices, and accessibility impact different audiences. Along the way, you will develop essential skills in critical thinking, collaboration, and academic research, gaining new perspectives on how games connect to broader cultural and intellectual themes. Whether you are an avid gamer or simply curious, this course will encourage you to think more deeply about the power of play.

Coming of Age: a Personal and Literary Journey

Instructor: Susan Walter, Susan.Walter@du.edu

Course Description: This course analyzes and explores films and literary texts of the Coming of Age genre. These works are from various writers and directors whose identities and life experiences vary widely. In addition to studying 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 in different social and political contexts did the same. As we analyze the short stories, novels and films that comprise the bulk of the course content, we will consider the texts studied 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 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 Weiwei, 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.

Musical Theft

Instructor: Aleysia Whitmore, Aleysia.Whitmore@du.edu

Course Description: This course asks, what happens when people engage with music that is not their own? How do we determine who owns music? A piece? A tradition? What is the difference between theft, appropriation, and appreciation? We will explore these questions through diverse case studies examining popular, classical, and traditional musics from around the world. We will examine Paul Simon's engagement with South African musicians during apartheid, rap's overwhelming popularity among young white men in the United States, and Congolese musicians' embrace of Cuban music. We will parse out what kinds of cross-cultural musical engagements occur, their impacts, and the responsibilities of individuals, governments, and international organizations in different contexts.

The Art of Slowness: Living, Thinking, Being First-Year Seminar

Instructor: Kate Willink, Kate.Willink@du.edu

Course Description: This course explores the philosophy, practice, and potential of slowness in contemporary life. In an era defined by acceleration, digital connectivity, and the relentless pursuit of productivity, students are invited to critically examine alternative temporal perspectives and practices. The course engages with writers, artists, and thinkers who challenge

the cult of speed, investigating how different societies approach rest, contemplation, and the rhythms of daily life. The course combines theoretical frameworks with practical applications, allowing students to develop their own relationship with slowness while analyzing its broader societal implications.

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 history, we'll analyze class politics past and present by looking at food norms, 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 make available for students samples of important and realistic applications of mathematics. 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.

Stuff Matters: What makes up our world, how did it get that way, and why do we care?

Instructor: Barry Zink, Barry.Zink@du.edu

Course Description: What is all this "stuff?" Really, what is in the things that make up our world, how does this "stuff" get there, and why is it important? The answers to these seemingly simple questions are complex, and reveal many connections between people across the globe, across disciplines, and through history. The answers also touch on some of the most pressing challenges of our day, ranging from how we produce and consume energy, to how we tackle problems like prevention of disease and protection from climate change. This seminar will seek to explore this "stuff" with a special focus on these connections and grand challenges. Each week we will focus on a different substance, and will work together to understand how "stuff" as familiar as water, as valuable as gold, and as exotic as plutonium impacts our lives everyday.