

First-Year Seminar Course Descriptions
2026-2027

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 20-24, 2026**). 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 21, 2026

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 fiction and non-fiction, 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 develop students' ability to think critically and logically, evaluate arguments, identify fallacies, recognize biases, and make reasoned decisions. Emphasis will be placed on applying critical thinking in academic, professional, and everyday contexts.

Science at the boundary: A look into the nanoworld

Instructor: Maria Calbi, mcalbi@du.edu

Course Description: In 1959, the physicist Richard Feynman anticipated the emergence of nanotechnology in his lecture “There is plenty of room at the bottom”. Our knowledge of the laws of physics was already enough to support this revolution and, as expected, it surely found its way. Today, we can manipulate matter at atomic scale and many devices with applications in fields as diverse as medicine, energy, computing and electronics have been developed thanks to this technological ability. This seminar explores topics related to nanoscience with 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 also explores the complex

intersection between science, philosophy and human experience. In addition to in-class discussions and writing assignments, this seminar includes several hands-on activities and visits to research labs at DU to provide students with a learning experience directly related to the nanoscience topics discussed in the seminar.

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.

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 moves beyond Disney into more taboo readings of the original, darker folk tales, addressing each tale's retelling as historically and culturally bound. It investigates the layers of meaning related to gender and familial relationships, class structure, and sexuality. To do this, we will focus 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 apply theoretical lenses to examine the re-adaptations. We will examine why fairytales have survived the ages and discuss why such stories continue to thrive. Is it because they are "universal"? Is it because they fundamentally mirror societal views? Ultimately, we will ask why fairytales are more than just simple stories and discuss how they represent cultural artifacts that indicate primary social mores.

Bathrooms as Political Spaces

Instructor: Sara Chatfield, sara.chatfield@du.edu

Course Description: Bathrooms have been the site of intense political struggle throughout American history. Americans have clashed over racially segregated bathrooms, equal space for women, a right to rest breaks at work, toilets that are accessible for people with disabilities, and safe access for transgender individuals. In this class, we'll explore how courts, legislatures, and social movements have interacted to shape the politics of the bathroom around various issues, both historical and contemporary. We'll look at politics and policy around the country, but also at how these issues have played out (and are still contested) at the local level in Denver.

Can TikTok Change the World?

Instructor: Lynn Schofield 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 starting point for discussions about popular media practices, media ownership and policies, 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. We discuss young social media influencers who have monetized platforms as a career, and consider behind-the-scenes influencers who have leveraged the same platforms for large-scale misinformation campaigns. We consider TikTok in relation to its sister technologies of Instagram, YouTube, Discord, Douyin, and Twitter, looking at its ownership and the participation of platforms in the reproduction of stereotypes. We 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.

Queer 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 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.

Exploring Front Range Landscapes

Instructor: Mike Daniels, j.michael.daniels@du.edu

Course Description: This seminar puts students into the world to experience it and learn from it. Field excursions to City of Denver Parks, Jefferson County Open Spaces, Denver Botanical Gardens, Chatfield State Park, and other localities will encourage direct interactions with our natural environment. We will examine landforms, flora, fauna, soils, and climate among prairie, foothills, and mountain environments and ecosystems near Denver. We ground this experiential learning component with readings and discussion focused on the works of Susan Fenimore Cooper, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Robin Wall Kimmerer. These authors all recognize a consilience between the human and natural worlds. Through these readings we will examine concepts including cause and effect; space and place; culture and nature; home and abroad; universe and self; cosmos and hearth. We integrate our readings and discussions with our experiential activities throughout the course and conduct writing assignments that encourage our shared humanity and its connectedness to our natural world. Mobile phones, laptops, and other similar devices are not permitted on field excursions.

Poetry and the Public: Off the Page and Into the Streets

Instructor: David Daniels, david.j.daniels@du.edu

Course Description: The idea that a poem is something you need to analyze in school (in a book, no less!) is a fairly recent phenomenon and a pretty limited view of poetry that overlooks its larger social possibilities. This seminar takes poetry 'off the page' and onto the stage, into the streets, inside the prison system, through the mic, against gallery walls, and up on the Internet. For the first half of the quarter, we'll examine poetry from a number of historical and critical angles: spoken word, slam, and hip hop poetry; poetry for social justice; poetry as visual art; poetry on the Internet; and poetry for building community. From there, students will work in teams to create a project, event, or interactive happening, that puts poetry into people's daily lives.

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.

Smartphone Sensors and App Design

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

Course Description: Smartphones are far more than portable computers—they are packed with state-of-the-art sensors that constantly measure our world. These sensors detect location, motion, direction, light, sound, pressure, and magnetic fields—phenomena we rarely notice but rely on every day. In this seminar, students will discover that they already carry a powerful mobile laboratory and app-development platform in their pocket.

The course has two intertwined goals. First, we will explore how these sensors work, what physical principles make them possible, and where their limits lie. Second, using AI tools, students will design and build their own iPhone or Android apps that creatively use sensor data. App development is a major component of the course: students will move from an idea to a working prototype, learning to iterate, test, and troubleshoot. No prior coding experience is needed.

By pairing scientific understanding with hands-on creation, this course invites first-year students into the intellectual world of physics, technology, and innovation. Students will collaborate,

experiment, reflect on privacy and ethics, and experience how curiosity becomes real products and discoveries.

Finding Feminism in the 21st Century

Instructor: Lindsey Feitz, lindsey.feitz@du.edu

Course Description: What does feminism mean when abortion rights have been overturned, when "girl bosses" and "tradwives" coexist on the same TikTok feed, and when the manosphere has moved from fringe forums into mainstream politics? This seminar starts with a deceptively simple question — what is feminism?

We will trace the history of U.S. feminism from the suffrage movement to the present, examining how each generation inherited, rejected, and reimagined feminist politics. Along the way, students will encounter the thinkers, activists, and cultural flashpoints that have shaped feminist thought — and the backlash that has consistently followed. We will sit with the contradictions: between liberation and commodification, between sisterhood and exclusion, between progress and regression. The seminar's research project asks students to investigate feminism as it actually exists — at DU, in Denver, in their own lives.

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.

Graphic Novels and Global Perspectives

Instructor: Keith Gehring, keith.gehring@du.edu

Course Description: This course explores graphic novels as a medium for examining complex global issues, including conflict, identity, migration, human rights, and memory. Through acclaimed works, students will analyze how visual storytelling critiques social and political realities while highlighting perspectives often overlooked in international studies, including Mozambican guest workers in East Germany, refugees in Gorazde during the Bosnian War, and growing up as a young woman in the Ivory Coast.

Each week focuses on thematic or regional perspectives, encouraging comparisons of narratives and artistic styles across cultures. Graphic novels are paired with traditional resources to deepen students’ understanding of the political and social contexts depicted. Students will reflect on their experiences in relation to the authors’, fostering shared understanding.

The course culminates in a final project on a region and topic of the student’s choice, with flexible formats supported to encourage creative expression. While classic authors like Delisle, Halpern, Pekar, Sacco, Satrapi, and Spiegelman feature prominently, the syllabus also includes

lesser-known works by Amir & Khalil, Sattouf, Weyhe, and others. The overarching goal is to offer immersive, accessible content that broadens perspectives and deepens engagement with our complex and diverse world.

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.

Digital Politics and Political Engagement

Instructor: Esteban Gomez, esteban.gomez@du.edu

Course Description: Digital Politics and Political Engagement is organized around the broad question of what people should know about the way digital media are reshaping our daily lives, selfhood, society and political engagement. To answer this question, the course provides a series of foundational readings on the effects of new media on a number of domains of social life, including culture, the economy, political engagement, law and social movements. It is designed to provide students with the knowledge to analyze the development of digital media and its continuing impact in politics and culture.

The course will introduce students to a range of key questions and debates surrounding the intersection of technology and politics with a focus on the consequences of Internet culture and digital communication in our everyday lives. The course texts and interactive media will be designed to tie democracy and democratic participation to information access as we explore the proliferation of digital communication technologies and the broadening of online access. Students will participate in both individual and group projects and engage with digital media research tools and digital ethnographic methods in order to develop a critical approach for thinking about contemporary digital politics and colonial pasts, presents, and futures.

Feminism and Liberatory Politics and Praxis

Instructor: Cassandra Gonzalez, cassandra.gonzalez@du.edu

Course Description: In our contemporary moment, "gender" is a contentious topic from community-level concerns to political commentary. In contrast, multiple studies have

demonstrated that feminism—the praxis through which gender liberation is achieved—is both misunderstood by the general U.S. public, but also maligned as irrelevant or unnecessary in 2026. This course debates feminism's purpose in 2026, with the intention of students learning to engage with difficult topics and respectfully engaging with one another and valuing differing perspectives and opinions. Students will learn the ways that “gender” interacts with civic life in the United States, from shaping political platforms to the impacts on everyday life for all genders. Topics include, but are not limited to: voting restrictions, abortion/health, bodily autonomy, divorce and marriage, gender representation in policies, gender and work, and other topics students may propose. All topics have historically been subject to debate in the U.S. with gender and all required feminist advocacy to be brought into mainstream discussions that continue to shape how people organize, vote, and choose to live their lives. Course includes facilitated discussions from student’s reading questions, exams, and original research based on a topic of interest using peer-reviewed, unbiased published research, and engage in praxis.

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 sexuality.

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, and to practice some key reading, writing, and analytical skills you’ll need for college and beyond.

Why names matter: Discrimination, identity, and the language of exclusion

Instructor: Kathleen Guerra, kathleen.guerra@du.edu

Course Description: Do you have a name nemesis? Can you tell someone’s race and gender just by hearing their voice? Can your name really help you get a job interview? By reflecting on our answers to these questions, we can raise awareness about our language practices and examine the principles of linguistic discrimination: prejudicial treatment based on the characteristics of one’s speech and perceived identities. In this course, we examine where, how, and why certain associations are developed and maintained in proper names, naming practices, and everyday

expressions. By starting with an investigation and reflection on our own names, where they come from and how they represent us, we consider its strong link with our histories and identities. From this point of departure, we examine how other proper names specifically and naming in general can position and negotiate different aspects of identity, privilege, and ideology. Through readings, reflections, and class discussions, we will develop strategies for identifying, examining, and counteracting problematic language practices in names, naming, and expressions of identity, including associations of race, gender, sexual orientation, accents, bodies, abilities, and symbols.

Island Fantasies

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.

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

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

Course Description: Music has often been used as a means 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.

Screening Latin America- Societies in Movement

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

Course Description: 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.

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.

Lose Your Self, or the Ethics of Living Without a Self

Instructor: Andrew Kaplan, andrew.r.kaplan@du.edu

Course Description: This course will explore how to learn and think in a manner that relinquishes the expectation for—and authority of—a coherent/stable “self” through an interdisciplinary engagement with English, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Black Studies. In a historical moment where questions of personal and collective identity formation are at the forefront of our most pressing issues, we will consider the counterintuitive hypothesis of an ethics shaped by the simultaneous critique and embrace of dispossession. More precisely, we will consider the perils and promises of “losing ourselves” in relationship to questions of race, religion, and the modern world—through which we will come to understand how our sense of “individual” subjectivity is a historical construct shaped through racialized and gendered conceptions of “the Human.” We will put this (re)orientation into practice by treating the classroom as a communal space where we will (un)learn together. The primary means of this practice will be through writing, wherein we will develop an understanding of re-vision as (re)writing through the “eyes” of someone other than our-self. We will explore the distinction between an “author” and a “writer” by working through the illusion of a one-to-one

correspondence between our thoughts/intentions and what literally shows up on the page. Paradoxically, when we discover the non-coincidence between our thoughts and our writing, we will become better able to cultivate a sense of singularity in ourselves and others that (potentially) renews itself in every moment. This process will also allow us to develop one-on-one relationships to consider how to best cultivate your singularity by “losing” yourself—again and again—as a model for the (un)learning process. In turn, the rigor and reflexivity of this course will prepare you for the broader expectations of university study as you consider your varying paths and disciplinary contexts.

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; however, 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. To this end, 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 about trash, students will gain an awareness of the environmental and social impact of our collective behaviors around consumption and waste. Throughout the course, students will observe their own habits of trash production and identify how their behaviors, actions, and identities connect to larger social patterns of waste generation. Students will also consider possible solutions to the problems of trash in the DU community, reflecting on and applying what they have learned in a proposal for change.

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 examine 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. 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 our contemporary cultural landscape, we often question: What is the relationship between the increased visibility of sexuality in media culture and our everyday lives? Scholarship suggests that we are experiencing a “sexualization of culture”; a process whereby sexual discourses and images are becoming increasingly public through mediated channels such as film, social media, streaming services, and video games. This course explores these emergent discourses and prompts you to think critically about the impacts of media

messages on sexual knowledge and meaning-making practices. Readings will draw from scholars, journalists, and activists who draw from a range of theoretical frameworks to help you enhance your media literacy skills and explore issues such as the sexualization of girls, queer resilience, sexual scripts, intimacy coordination, algorithmic desire, and pornification. You will have the opportunity to explore these issues in-depth and will be encouraged to develop your own perspectives through active and reflective learning experiences.

Resistance in the African Diaspora

Instructor: Mamadou 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 Immigrants through Culture

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

Course Description: What do films, music, fashion, comics, social media, and visual art reveal about Latinx immigrant experiences in the United States? This First Year Seminar invites students to explore powerful Latinx migrant stories through contemporary popular culture. Many of the texts we study are ones students already encounter in their everyday lives, making the course both engaging and accessible.

Rather than treating identity as fixed, this course examines how Latinx identities are shaped by movement, memory, language, and place. Students will explore themes such as life along the US Mexico border, immigration policies and debates, language controversies, Latinx activism, and the emotional experience of feeling othered. The course also challenges mainstream stereotypes by centering diverse voices, including Latina and Afrolatinx perspectives.

Through discussion, collaborative projects, creative assignments, and reflective writing, students will learn how popular culture serves as a space for storytelling, resistance, and identity formation. The seminar emphasizes curiosity, respectful dialogue, and critical thinking, while helping students build confidence as college level learners. This course is ideal for students interested in culture, storytelling, social justice, and understanding the complex experiences that shape Latinx life in the United States.

Neurodivergence: The Space Between Ability, Disability, and Societal Power

Instructor: Brian Majestic, brian.majestic@du.edu

Course Description: “There are two types of people in this world – those that are disabled and those that will be disabled.” This is a well-known quote in disability circles but, alas, it is incomplete. In this class, we will consider this quote but also become familiar with a group of people it excludes: people that are currently disabled, but where no one (possibly even the

individual) is aware of the disability. Another name for this type of disability is an “invisible disability.” Often informally called neurodivergence, this course will ask students to actively engage and reflect about what it means to be disabled. This discussion-based class may force you to reconsider what you know about able-bodiedness and able-mindedness. Be prepared for open and honest discussions about what it means to be disabled. By deeply considering the implications of being “disabled” in our society, we will directly engage with questions about who has the right to define a person’s disability – is it the disabled individual or structure of society? We will also engage with theories that empower people that society deems as disabled, while also considering how other identities of a person plays a role in how they experience their disability.

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

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

Course Description: 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. The course culminates by analyzing the legacy of this archetype in Martin Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver*.

Design Your DU: Navigating College with Purpose and Intention

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.

The Human Condition: A Survey Course on the Expression of Human Emotion through the Arts

Instructor: Joseph Martin, joseph.martin@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.

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 an academic mentor this year, helping you to navigate and thrive your first year.

Queer of Color Film

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

Course Description: Film has long existed as a medium for exploring social and cultural subject matter. Topics of identity are no exception. As a visual medium, film not only stands to shine a

light on representations of gender and sexuality but also provides unique insights into real-life struggles for liberation.

In this first-year seminar, then, we'll explore the relationships between queerness and race through the lens of cinema. As part of our work in this course, we'll read theory that shapes contemporary understandings of queer politics and life. We'll also watch a lot of movies!: new, old, mainstream, independent, U.S.-produced, international, English-language, multilingual, and more. Together, we'll consider the following questions:

- How can we watch film—and talk and write about film—in a way that's more engaged and rewarding?
- What makes a film “queer”?
- What can film offer us, as a medium, in terms of understanding the political, historical, and cultural aspects of identity?

In engaging these questions and topics together, we'll cultivate more ethical, just, and humane orientations toward our viewing habits and explore how film is shaped by—and continues to shape—queerness and race alike.

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.

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.

Leadership Lessons the Richmond Way

Instructor: Kathie 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.

Meatification & the Ecological Hoofprint

Instructor: Hanson Nyantakyi-Frimpong, hanson.nyantakyi-frimpong@du.edu

Course Description: The average person on Earth today eats twice as much meat as the average person 50 years ago. This dramatic increase in meat consumption has been termed the “meatification” of diets, and has created a large ecological footprint, or “hoofprint,” that places enormous pressure on land, water, energy, and ecosystems. This seminar will examine the environmental, social, and economic consequences of the rapid global expansion of industrial livestock production for increased meat consumption. Special attention will be paid to discussing how modern livestock systems depend heavily on grain and oilseed crops grown in large monocultures, forming what has been called the industrial grain–oilseed–livestock complex (I-GOL Complex). The seminar will focus on unpacking how the I-GOL Complex contributes to food insecurity, deforestation, biodiversity loss, greenhouse gas emissions, and soil and water degradation. The seminar will also highlight global inequalities in the “meatification” process. Through readings, debates, a lab project, and in-class activities, students will appreciate how wealthier countries consume far more animal products, while poorer regions often bear the environmental and economic costs of feed production and agricultural expansion. Ultimately, students will work as a team to recommend a course of action to address problems with “meatification.”

Wealth and Income Inequality: Ideas, History, and Debate

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

Course Description: Why are some people rich while others struggle to get by? How unequal should a society be, and how do we know? Has inequality always existed, or is it a modern problem? This First-Year Seminar explores wealth and income inequality through a lens of history of economic thought, connecting classic ideas to contemporary debates in the United States and around the world. Rather than focusing on technical models or mathematics, the course emphasizes how economists and social thinkers have understood inequality over time—from Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and Karl Marx, through neoclassical and institutionalist approaches, to modern debates sparked by rising inequality since the late 20th century. Students will learn how inequality is measured, how it relates to poverty and economic growth, and why

concern about inequality faded during the Cold War only to re-emerge in recent decades with renewed urgency. The course is discussion-based and designed for students with no prior background in economics. It encourages critical reading, historical thinking, and thoughtful engagement with one of the defining issues of our time.

The Power of Language: How Words Shape Us and the World

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?” (In this case, our identity as DU students), “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 paying close attention to how we use language at DU. Of particular interest will be examining how our identity construction strategies have broader implications for nationhood and globalization. Topics that will be treated include language and belonging, 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.”

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 serial killer docs, 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 become one of the fastest-growing minority populations in the United States, encompassing both immigrants and long-term residents. This course offers a critical lens for examining the Asian American experience: How is the “American dream” imagined, lived, and contested by Asian Americans? How does “Asian American” function as a complex and sometimes contested category of ethnic and national identity? Where do allegiances lie between Asia and America, and how do individuals find a sense of belonging? We will explore a diverse range of scholarly, literary, and filmic texts to understand how immigration and migration, wartime experiences, social movements, and media representation have shaped historical discourses on race, ethnicity, gender, class, and identity. Special emphasis will be placed on multiple ways of knowing, grounding our inquiry in the rich debates, contestations, and conversations that define Asian American experiences. While examining the structural forces that have influenced Asian American lives, we will also focus on how individuals negotiate, resist, and transform these forces through political engagement and creative expression.

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.

Understanding Attention

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

Course Description: We intuitively understand that there are limitations to our attention but don't always know how to apply this idea to our daily functioning. How can we make use of research related to attention to improve our work? In this course we'll discuss these topics, including how they relate to challenges faced by first-year university students. We'll begin by discussing attention as a limited resource - and how to replenish it. Then we'll dig into the science of attention. We'll conclude by focusing on attention at the individual level including a discussion of disorders related to attention.

Understanding Lincoln

Instructor: Susan Schulten, sschulte@du.edu

Course Description: This seminar explores a crucial period in American history through one of its most consequential figures, Abraham Lincoln. After we consider Lincoln's early life, we will study his evolving understanding of Union, his reputation as the "Great Emancipator," his conduct of the war, his influence over the Constitution, and his place our civic memory. Through close reading, discussion, and use of evidence, students will develop critical skills of reading and reasoning.

Language in Society

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.

Do You Like Scary Movies? Contemporary Horror Cinema and Society

Instructor: Emily Sposeto, emily.sposeto@du.edu

Course Description: Do people question your love of horror movies? Have you wondered why the genre is so polarizing? Do you want to explore theories of what makes horror cinema compelling? In Do You Like Scary Movies? Contemporary Horror Cinema and Society we will

explore a history of the genre and its theories, interpret key themes of selected contemporary horror films, and analyze the ways in which films communicate messages and reflect societal issues. Throughout the course we will view, reflect upon and write about films with a critical lens. No background in cinema is required for this course, but please note that it is recommended for students that enjoy horror cinema.

Since this course is also meant to serve as an introduction to University Life, we will discuss campus culture and student expectations at DU through a series of On Campus Survival Scenario thought exercises. Content Warning: In this course we will watch a variety of horror films, which by their nature contain disturbing, upsetting and violent content. This course is recommended for students that enjoy frightening films and have a desire to engage critically with content that may be distressing.

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. We rely on these helpful maps, but they do far more than give us directions. Maps impact 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 philosophical 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 can change the way we move through the world and think of ourselves. We will also read a variety of literary works 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?

Pacific Century -- America, China, and Competition for Global Leadership

Instructor: Jing Sun, jing.sun@du.edu

Course Description: As you begin college, you are also stepping into a world shaped by the evolving interactions between the United States and China -- allegedly the most important bilateral relations in the world. This seminar explores how competition and cooperation between these two powers affect global trade, technology, human rights, environmental protection, Taiwan, and the South China Sea. These issues influence the price of goods you buy, the security of the digital tools you use, the climate future you will inherit, and the risks of war and peace. By learning to analyze this critical relationship, you will sharpen your ability to think globally, evaluate competing narratives, and engage thoughtfully in the defining debates of your generation.

Revolution and Revolutionaries of Latin America

Instructor: Matthew Taylor, m.j.taylor@du.edu

Course Description: Latin America brings to mind images of Emiliano Zapata, the modern Zapatista Rebellion in Mexico, Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution, Guatemalan indigenous women carrying babies and weapons simultaneously, and, on the opposing side from the revolutionaries, we easily imagine military dictators behind dark sunglasses in full military regalia. In bringing these images of revolution and repression to our minds we often fail to

realize that many of Latin America's revolutions resulted from a conflict over access to a resource most Latin Americans hold close to their hearts – land. It is important for us to study revolutionaries because, from the Dominican Republic down to Patagonia, directly or indirectly, guerrillas have shaped, and in many cases transformed, the social, physical, and political landscapes in most Latin American countries over the last few hundred years. A study of Latin American geography and history is incomplete without a deep understanding of the role of revolution and revolutionaries.

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 and American Genealogy

Instructor: Erika Trigoso, etrigoso@du.edu

Course Description: Geography & American 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 pertaining to the United States, such as Ellis Island records and census records. This seminar also includes weekly workshop/research sessions. 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 either the personal family migration history of each student or a case study.

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.

In this course we will follow the historical development of cryptography. We will design ciphers, encrypt and decrypt messages and break ciphers using an online tool developed by the instructor. The required mathematics is accessible and can be explained to any inquisitive first year college student.

Why can't we all get along? Leadership For Peace

Instructor: Joe Walsh, joe.walsh@du.edu

Course Description: Peace leadership is a new and emerging area of leadership studies that sits at the nexus of positive peace and positive relational leadership. Peace leadership is the answer to the question “Leadership for what?” focusing on designing lives of purpose for individuals, collectives, nation states, and humanity. Students in this course will actively engage in dialogue in the classroom while expanding on their understanding of their own passions and purpose as they begin their four-dimensional DU journey.

Peace leadership is the mobilization of action to create a just, equitable, inclusive, and flourishing world. When people are motivated to act individually and organize collectively for the benefit of humanity, and the planet, peace leadership is present and thriving.

The course will begin with a foundation of the two scholarly theories: peace studies, and leadership studies. Then, using the peace leadership development framework, we will explore the dimensions of peace leadership through the I/We/It/Its framework, focusing on one’s inner work and character, deepening knowledge, community wellbeing, and environmental awareness. Lastly, student team’s will facilitate a class dialogue around a particular case study of global peace leadership.

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.

Sci-Phi: Science and Philosophy Through Science Fiction

Instructor: Dacen Waters, dacen.waters@du.edu

Course Description: Science fiction has long served as a testing ground for scientific and philosophical ideas—asking not only “what if?”, but “what would it mean if this were true?” In this course, students will engage with science fiction films, short stories, and television episodes alongside accessible philosophical ideas and concepts from our best physical theories of the world we live in. Topics will include how we know what we know, whether the universe is deterministic or unpredictable, the tension between reductionism and emergence, the nature of space and time, and what modern physics—relativity and quantum mechanics—suggests about reality at its most fundamental level. The course emphasizes discussion, critical thinking, and interpretation rather than technical mathematics or prior scientific training. Students from all majors are welcome. By the end of the seminar, students will be better equipped to analyze complex ideas, draw connections between science and philosophy, and articulate thoughtful perspectives on how scientific worldviews shape human understanding and values.

The Art of Slowness: Living, Thinking, Being

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

Course Description: What if slowing down is the most radical thing a college student can do? The Art of Slowness: Living, Thinking, Being invites first-year students into one of modernity's most urgent questions: what is lost — and what becomes possible — when we resist the cult of speed?

You are about to begin one of the most significant chapters of your life. Before the habits of college set in — before you decide, maybe without even realizing it, how fast to live — this course offers you something rare: the chance to choose deliberately. We'll investigate slowness together through philosophy, intercultural communication, cognitive science, and contemplative practice, drawing on traditions from Japanese concepts of *ma* (purposeful pause) to Nordic philosophies of rest to the global Slow Food movement. You won't just read about slowness.

You'll debate it, practice it, and discover what genuine presence feels like in a classroom, a conversation, a life.

This is a rigorous intellectual seminar that also asks you to show up in your body — a few minutes of stillness, a listening exercise, a moment of genuine attention before we dive into ideas. The advising relationship is woven throughout: attentive, unhurried, and genuinely curious about your becoming. You get to decide what kind of student — and person — you want to be. Start here.

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.