

XIDS 2002 First Year Seminar Seminar Descriptions - Fall 2018

What is First-Year Seminar (XIDS 2002):

College can take your passion for learning to the next level, and first-year seminars are a great place to start! Designed to introduce you to the academic life of the university, first-year seminars focus on intellectually engaging topics that reflect our faculty's commitment to helping you learn how to succeed in college. First-Year Seminar (XIDS 2002) is a 2-credit hour course. It is restricted to first-year students, and it counts in Area B.2 of the core, so it helps you complete a required core area.

Fall Semester 2018 First-Year Seminar Topics:

WDYKA Ye Olden Tymes

Professor Meg Pearson

What was so great about things “back in the day”? Why do we keep getting assigned poems by dead white guys? How can an artifact 1000 years old matter to our lives now? Let's look at the pop culture of the past to find out: its art, music, writing, ethnicities, laws, cuisine, education, sex, and violence. Together we'll dig up the extraordinary past of regular people from around the world.

WDYKA Sport Movies and their Impact

Professor Robert Morris

What's your favorite sports movie, and why? Sports related movies have played a significant role in our lives, often giving us insights into athletic events and those who participate. Given today's emphasis on sports and the high profile of athletes in today's world, it's little wonder that much of our daily lives revolve around sports. This course will analyze, discuss and critique sport movies from the 1930's to today, and should appeal to sport enthusiasts as well as movie critics.

WDYKA Terrorism: Who, Why, How

Professor Kathie Barrett

Do you really know anything about terrorist groups such as ISIS or Al Qaeda? What do they want? How do they recruit members? By analyzing sources including news reports, literature, and videos, we will explore how terrorists use propaganda and what governments are doing to win the “war against terrorism.” We will discuss the logic behind suicide bombing, why symbols are important, and why some “terrorist” groups are now running governments.

WDYKA Time Travel

Professor Leah Haught

Modern technologies have fundamentally changed the ways that we interact with each other in the present, and many of these changes have made our lives “easier” if not “better.” The resulting presentism can also be overwhelming, however. If you could escape to an alternative time period, where would you go and why? In this class, we'll consider films, short stories, essays, and other cultural artifacts that explore the practical and ethical implications of travelling through time.

WDYKA Making Decisions

Professors James Dillon and Jessica Belcher (2 different sections)

What will I major in? What do I want my career to be? What do I believe is true? What do I want in a romantic partner? Whom should I vote for? The college years are a time when we make many important decisions. We will learn about these crucial turning points in life, discuss the process of decision making, and listen to others teach us about how they have made important decisions in their life.

WDYKA You Are What You Eat

Professor Emily Hipchen

You are built of Oreos and fluffernutter, or collards and chitlins, or fois gras and brioche. “You are what you eat”—but what does that really mean? We'll look at food ads, memes, blogs, recipe videos, social media, government brochures, essays, poetry, songs, and other cultural artifacts that present food as a way to “be” someone, to express who you are, to belong (to a nation, an ethnicity, an era, a social class, a place).

WDYKA Fame and Celebrity Culture

Professor Julia Farmer

What is fame, and why do so many people seem to be after it? What are the consequences of achieving fame? Is it a worthy goal? In this course, we will look at fame and celebrity culture in a variety of contexts, from discussions of reality television, celebrity magazines, social media, and current events to explorations of literary texts and films that portray the complexities of lives lived in pursuit of fame.

WDYKA The Death Penalty

Professor Gavin Lee

In this course, we will discuss perhaps one of the most controversial practices in the US Criminal Justice Systems. In this seminar, we will also discuss the pros and cons of the death penalty, how the death penalty is administered throughout the United States, and the future of the death penalty. In this seminar, we will also be discussing the methods of execution, cost of the death penalty, racial issues regarding capital punishment, and wrongful convictions.

WDYKA UWG Campus History

Professor Shanee Yvette Murrain

Rat Week? May Day? The McIntosh Stone? Haunted Recital Rooms? National Championship Athletics and Debate Teams? In this seminar, we will explore University of West Georgia history, from its founding as the Fourth Congressional District A&M School until present. Together, we will learn the skills necessary to research Special Collections and use primary and secondary source materials in the Ingram Library to create a social media campaign featuring the personalities, events, and imagery associated with UWG's treasured traditions.

WDYKA The Boxer Rebellion

Professors Ihor Pidhainy and Tim Schroer

What is truth? How do we use evidence to find it? How does it resonate in different cultures? We will examine these questions in our team-taught course on the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) and its reverberations. We will explore competing narratives regarding the uprising from historical accounts, fiction, graphic novels, and film. Students will address the challenges of critically and empathetically evaluating conflicting evidence.

WDYKA Walt Disney and the American Century

Professor Clint Samples

Do you have a favorite Disney movie? Do you have a favorite ride at Disneyland or Disney World? Did you ever wonder where it all originated? This class will explore the life of Walt Disney and his impact on American culture in the 20th Century. We will examine the life of Disney as a historical figure, creative visionary and his impact on animation, architecture, culture, leisure, and entertainment.

WDYKA First-Generation College Students

Professor Jennifer Edelman

This seminar will focus on "first-generation" as a label of empowerment. First-generation students (whose parents have not earned a four-year degree) overcome unique challenges by drawing upon distinct strengths. We will explore topics such as cultural capital, hidden curriculum, imposter syndrome, mindsets, and motivation related to persistence in reaching a goal (in this case, earning a bachelor's degree). Through shared readings, class discussions, and a culminating makerspace project, you will identify your strengths and begin creating your own identity as a successful college student.

WDYKA the USians and their Government

Professor S. Tijan Drammeh

Because of their skepticism and/or naiveté, the decision to make a trip to the U. S. rests heavily on the depth of their knowledge about USians and their government. As a result, in this seminar, our goal will be to educate/inform our U.S.-bound Martian friends on the USians and their government. However, the question that is begged to be asked is, how informed/educated are we about the Usians and their government?

WDYKA *The Hunger Games* and the Politics of Food

Professor Pam Murphy

What can food in the districts of *The Hunger Games* teach us about ourselves and our culture? How does class contribute to ideas about what counts as "food" and what makes certain foods more or less desirable? Our exploration will dive into the origins of fast food, take us aboard the *Snowpiercer* where a class system emerges on a train that circles the globe, and help us investigate and blog about the role diet plays in understanding and forming our identities.

WDYKA Sources of Energy

Professor Farooq A. Khan

This seminar course will utilize reliable current media (e.g., New York Times, PBS and NPR) to discuss modern sources of energy that include fossil fuels, solar energy, wind energy and nuclear power. Topics include: Sources of energy (locally, in the U.S., and world-wide); geo-political considerations for fossil fuels; impact of energy usage on the environment, including climate change and its impact in the United States; current political discourse in the U.S. on fossil fuels, renewable energy, climate change and the Paris Accord. Efforts on sustainability on UWG's campus will also be explored.

WDYKA Folklore

Professor Jonathan Mark Hendrix

Folklore surrounds and permeates the fabric of American culture – from Sasquatch to Slenderman, John Henry to the Jersey Devil, and reaching into the legends of Rip Van Winkle, the Lost Colony of Roanoke, and the 1947 UFO Incident in Roswell, New Mexico. But why do we tell these stories, and what do we know about the purposes and function of folklore? This course focuses on the reasons for and design of folklore, including the storytelling traditions of urban legends, “ghost stories,” and “old wives’ tales.”

WDYKA the Mathematics Behind Voting

Professor Xiaofeng Gu

In many decision making situations, voters need to make a decision between several options. This happens in everyday life; it happens in business; and it happens in politics, etc. The main goal of voting is to reflect the preferences of voters in the fairest way possible. This seminar aims to introduce mathematical theory of voting, including voting methods and fairness criteria, as well as some other contemporary mathematical applications.

WDYKA You

Professor Jeffrey Peterson

Do you really know yourself? With assistance from author Brene Brown, we’ll discover the power of affirmations, authenticity, and “showing up to the arena.” Many people, like us, were all on the edge once, i.e. starting/ending a relationship or struggling with an ailment like stress and anxiety, but how did we survive? Our main text, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, will provide tools to face internal naysayers, as well as public ones, so we find our most sincere and true self.

WDYKA Superheroes and Intersectionality

Professors Amy Ellison and Amber Spratlin (2 different sections)

This course examines superheroes—those mythic legends of our modern creation—and intersectionality: how multiple social categories (such as race, religion, gender, and sexuality) exist within an individual. We will study our own human identities, explore how we recognize “self” from “other,” and examine the dilemma of attempting representation of any group, particularly if the creators are not part of the group of focus. This course uses the films *Black Panther* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*; the first seasons of the Netflix series *Jessica Jones* and *Luke Cage*; and other texts chosen by students (BYOSuperhero!).

WDYKA Poetry and Song Lyrics

Professor Gregory Fraser

Have you ever fallen in love with the words of song and said to yourself, “This is poetry!” Our course will study poetry and song lyrics that have, over time, helped to define artistic quality, worked to fight injustice, and shaped the ways in which individuals understand their selves and places in the world. We will also try our hands at writing poems and songs that reach beyond cliché and make powerful artistic expressions.

WDYKA Your Identity through American Cinema

Professor Duane Theobald

Have you ever watched a film and found that it speaks to you? Filmmakers often create movies that allow viewers to learn more about who they are through the experiences of others. In this seminar, we will examine what it means to construct identity & how we craft our identities—initially through readings in various disciplines. Then, through a broad range of films (such as *The Godfather*, *Boyz n the Hood*, and *The Hunger Games*), we’ll consider how who we are can be found in American cinema and why that matters.

WDYKA The World of Higher Education

Professor Kate Theobald

What makes a college experience? Why is college so expensive? How can you transition well from high school to college? Just as you are encouraged to know about and be involved in your community, government, and world, you should also understand the system of Higher Education you’ve just entered into. From history and law to student activism and your own experience, this course offers a broad look at what it means to be a student today.

WDYKA Sexuality and Gender in French Cinema

Professor Lynn Anderson

In this era of #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, issues of gender, race and privilege resonate with new urgency. Taught in English with English-subtitled films, this course explores how French cinema foregrounds these issues to combat sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, compulsory heterosexuality and toxic masculinity. Through genres such as comedy, drama, social realism and documentary, we’ll discuss how these films point to new possibilities for individual freedom and social change.

WDYKA Taming Your Brain

Professors Erin Lee Mock and Alison Umminger (2 different sections)

Would it surprise you to learn that, according to *Science* magazine, many people prefer self-administered electric shocks to a few minutes alone with their thoughts? In this class, we will investigate how the constant stimulus of media and technology affects our thinking and behavior. We will also explore alternatives, including various contemplative/wisdom traditions, and consider how practices of silence, contemplation, and compassionate listening might make us better learners and human beings.

WDYKA Singing for Social Change?

Professor Emily Hunt

Who's *gon' be alright*? What does it mean to *get in formation*? Why do they say they *want a revolution*? Have you ever listened to the lyrics of a song and wondered if there was a deeper meaning behind the words? In this seminar we will listen to an assortment of music and explore the variety of roles that the music and the musicians have played in twentieth- and twenty-first century social movements.

WDYKA The Wisdom of Wolves?

Professor Anne Merrem

Werewolves! The Big Bad Wolf! What is so amazing about wolves? How do they behave, learn, and hunt? Why do they live in a pack, or as "lone wolves"? By exploring the "pack" mentality, leadership principles, learning and survival strategies of wolves, we will find how we might learn from wolves. Film, art, literature, and movement help us discover the wisdom of wolves and show how their skills and strategies might transfer to humans.

WDYKA Dr. Sheldon Cooper, the Eccentric Genius of the Sitcom "*The Big Bang Theory*"

Professor Christi Fain

Students will explore the character of Dr. Sheldon Cooper of the sitcom "*The Big Bang Theory*" and take an in-depth look at Asperger's syndrome and other related disorders of socialization. This seminar is intended to provide both an overview of the topic and draw upon the show's fundamental sociological and educational principles connected to socialization and disability. The show is rated one of the number-one comedies for viewers ages 18-49 in the United States.

WDYKA Livin' in the South

Professor Jenna Harte

Hold onto your britches, y'all! For all its *hospitality*, the American South is an eccentric space fixed in its own regionalized discussions of politics, race, and gender – and all the other uncomfortable things you can't say at your beauty parlor. As such, this class will discuss the origin and politics of phrases such as "bless your heart" and "ain't don't never," along with investigating southern literature, movies, and food. You can look forward to a down home semester drinkin' sweet tea and learning about the Southern Gothic. Come sit a spell, take yer shoes off, and learn a thing or two about your roots.

WDYKA A Different World

Professor Manica Pierrette

It's a different world than where you come from! The college experience is one that takes you from what you have known the last two decades of your life and tests your spirit, your drive, your wellness and values. Most people make it out with having made decisions that will impact the rest of your life. In this class, we will discuss and explore the classic 80s show "A Different World" and the new generational show "Grownish." We will dissect the decisions made by the characters ranging from making new friends, unhealthy relationships, stress management, love, violence, conflict, and ultimately growth.

WDYKA Understanding Politics through Movies

Professor Mikhail Beznosov

This course examines politics through movies. Movies provide an interesting perspective on how we view political, economic, social, and cultural issues. Class time will be devoted to lecture and discussion, where we will explore such questions as: What does the movie teach us about politics, society, and culture of the times? Is the film still relevant today? Do movies shape the way we view politics or does politics shape the way we view films?

WDYKA Succeeding in College

Professor Melissa Tarrant

Are you a little worried about doing well in college? Are you the first in your family to go to college and are unsure about how college works? This class is for you! We will explore what it takes to succeed in college in today's world. We'll talk about the role of higher education in the Civil Rights movement, social justice, social mobility, gender equity, athletics, and other themes. We will also learn about how we learn, and how to be a successful student. You will learn different strategies for academic success that you can apply throughout your college years to fulfill your academic potential.

WDYKA Witches, Fairies, and Sorcerers (oh my!)

Professor Kathleen Skott-Myhre

Voodoo, Fairies, sorcerers, and witches in a college class? This seminar will explore the way that women lived and practiced “magic” in worlds that have been left behind but not lost. We will examine the wisdom found in the traditions practiced by our mothers and grandmothers and consider how it shows up in our everyday lives. In this class, we will look at films, short stories, videos and other sources to see how our past resides in our present.

WDYKA Atlanta’s New Stadiums and the Economic Geography of Sports

Professor Andy Walter

Why did all of Atlanta’s major professional sports teams recently “need” new stadiums? What was wrong with their not-so-old ones? In this course we will seek answers to these questions by studying the economic geographies of the sports industry and how the game is played beyond the field.

WDYKA Worlds of Music

Professors Elizabeth Kramer and John Williams

What kinds of music do you listen to? How is it that you share musical tastes with some people but not others? How do individuals learn to appreciate (and sometimes even like) music that is new to them? Is it possible for “your” music to become “mine”? In this seminar, we’ll seek to better understand our own musics and explore other musics from around the world through attending to ways in which we conceptualize music and its meanings for individuals, communities, and cultures.

WDYKA Leadership in Star Wars

Professor Jason Bretch

Do you love Star Wars? The adventure, the action, the story, the leadership? We will spend our time together exploring a different aspect of the cinematic treasure. We will follow Luke turn from being a weak farmer into the hero, Han who starts out as a rogue smuggler to a respectable leader, Princess Leia as she follows her path from princess to general. We will also look into the dark side of the leadership, following the empire rise and fall and how their failures can help guide us in our roles as leaders.

WDYKA Harry Potter, Politics, and Activism

Professor Anne Hunter

In the *Harry Potter* books, Hermione Granger helps found two social movements - SPEW to abolish slavery, and Dumbledore's Army to teach self-defense. One movement fails, while the other is a success. Why? In this class, we'll look at historical examples of anti-slavery and student movements, we'll think about how to lead and participate in protest effectively, and we'll try to understand why some activism fails and some activism changes the world.

WDYKA Shangri-La and Ideas of Utopia

Professor Emily McKendry-Smith

The 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* popularized the idea of “Shangri-La” as a utopia, an earthly paradise in the mountains of Nepal and Tibet. What would it be like to live in a real utopia? What does it mean that so many people imagine utopia to be hidden somewhere in the East? In this course, we’ll examine novels, poetry, “cults,” and communes to explore the idea of “utopia” and what happens when people try to build real ones.

WDYKA Speaking a Dialect

Professor Micheal Crafton

Every wonder why you speak perfectly, but people from other areas speak funny? Learn all about that here. In this first-year seminar, we will explore the science of language—or linguistics—and what it can tell us about why we speak the way we do. We will investigate language from many angles: historical, sociological, political, and educational. We will look at the evolution of American and British dialects of English, the role other languages play in shaping the way we speak, and finally work on a final project that describes our own dialect and where it comes from. It's like Me 23 for language!

WDYKA American Surveillance and Post-9/11 Citizenship

Professor Josh Masters

Who's watching you? Who's listening to you? Who's monitoring what you write and what you say? And most of all, WHY? This First-Year Seminar will try to answer these questions, especially as they pertain to our daily lives in the post-9/11 era. We will examine the various forms of actual surveillance and monitoring that American citizens--and also non-citizens--are subjected to and why. We will also explore the spectacle of surveillance in popular culture, from films and novels to video games and television shows. Our final project will focus on our experiences as citizens under surveillance. Big Brother, look out!

WDYKA Protest and Resistance Movements

Professor Denise Overfield

Social movements challenge our values, beliefs, social relationships, and ideas about justice and power and may frighten us as we see images and participate in discussions about them. Movement leaders may not look like us or use language that we think is offensive or inappropriate. Other movement leaders may look "normal"—however we define that. The purpose of this course is to introduce students the interdisciplinary components of social and protest moments by examining the linguistic and visual strategies and tools that movements use to frame their cause, thus taking control of the way we perceive the issues that they address. Readings and assignments that address these movements from historical, sociological, linguistic, and visual/communications perspectives will be included.

WDYKA How Advertising Exploits Your Fears?

Professor Rod McRae

Ads are begging for your attention all the time. This seminar explores how advertising tries to grab you by the eyeballs and change how you shop, how you think, and worse, how you view yourself. Some try to stroke your ego—while others try to stoke insecurities. We'll consider advertising through different lenses: art, business, economics, literature, politics, and psychology. By talking about how ads try to exploit our fears, we'll take our power back!

Michael WDYKA Friendship and Dating in College

Professor Ryan Bronkema

This seminar will be focused on three topics, making friends in college, dating in college, and sexual health (and the intersections of the three). Each unit builds on the last, with hopes that students leave the seminar with a greater understanding of the relationships they might encounter throughout their life, within, and beyond college. If you are a person that likes to think about your relationships with people (or other folk's relationships with each other) this seminar might be a great fit for you!

WDYKA Sports, Society and Culture

Professor Markesha Henderson

Let's Go Wolves! Whether you are an athlete or a fan, sports play an integral part in our society. Students will think critically about the significance of local, national, and global sports culture and their own identity and experiences. Guest speakers, projects, and discussions will guide students in their exploration. Students will also learn about UWG sports culture and traditions and discover how engagement can contribute to their collegiate experience.

WDYKA Games as Storytelling

Professor Kelley M. Frank

Grab your dice bag and your console! Everyone loves games, but did you know they one way we learn to understand ourselves, conceive of potential threats, then explore potential solutions?. Beginning with the Tarot as a narrative, we'll explore how *Dungeons and Dragons* is a bigger part of *Stranger Things* than just defining The Upside-Down, then examine the many ways we create narratives in RPGs and MMOs. Whether you enjoy LARPing, tabletop games, first-person shooters, or mobile games, we'll explore the different ways we use those games to better understand the world around us.

WDYKA Science and the Art of Water

Professors Ryan Lamfers and Christopher Tabit

This seminar taught from the perspectives of the sciences and the arts will explore the science of a water—its physical, chemical, and biological properties; its significance to life; and our anthropogenic impact on water—while also exploring how artists create visual interpretations of water issues important to the region, state, and world. The goal for this course is to create a learning environment that uses science as the catalyst for creative discovery in conjunction with the arts. Join us as we explore how science and art can work together to explore, learn, and solve problems.

WDYKA Fake News

Professor Amanda Shoemake

What is Truth? How is it different from Fact? People in suits are tossing around terms like 'Fake News' and 'Alternative Facts', but what do these terms even mean and why is everyone so mad?! In this seminar, we will examine what media is and how media in all forms, from the Beyoncé Effect to Presidential Twitter feuds, influences us and our daily decisions.