Shared Passages

The Shared Passages Program is a curricular thread that integrates features of the K-Plan. Required in the first, sophomore, and senior years, Shared Passages courses provide a developmental, pedagogical, and intellectual arc to the liberal arts experience and create a "backbone" to an effective, flexible liberal arts education in which the whole is greater than the sum of its component parts.

First-Year Seminars

First-Year Seminars constitute the gateway to the K-Plan and to college life for entering students and serve as the foundation of the Shared Passages Program. Offered in the fall quarter, these Seminars are designed to orient students to college-level learning practices, with particular emphasis on critical thinking, writing, speaking, information literacy, and intercultural engagement.

First-Year seminars

SEMN 101 FYS: Dissent: Sites of Protest and Resistance
Dissent, in its different forms, has shaped history and continues to claim ground for theory and action, in increasingly urgent ways, in the digital age. New technologies of surveillance, discrimination, and oppression emerge and digitally enabled injustices and forms of violence and inequality, (re-) appear often continuing past legacies of colonialism and exploitation. At the same time, new sites and platforms for subversive voices and practices are created and imagined in response. In this course, we will map these forms and spaces of oppression, violence, and inequality, but also the emerging sites of protest, resistance, and disobedience. In doing so we will think about the condition - as both a mode of thinking and praxis- of being a dissident and its new dangers and possibilities in our globalized world. From the Arab Spring to the Black Lives Matter movement and from Standing Rock to refugee camps in Europe we will explore different sites and case studies to talk about, among other things, data, software and surveillance, hashtags and digital protest, new forms of activism, solidarity and mobilization, the "digital subaltern", feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonial technologies and indigenous media, or alternative, counter-cartographies of neighborhoods and cities. We will engage with theoretical texts but also experiment with digital tools as a means of exploring critical concepts but also their real-life complexities and implications. By the end of the class, we will reach a deeper understanding of different forms of dissent and disobedience and a good basis from which to think critically about digital spaces and cultures. No prior knowledge or experience with coding, software or digital tools is required.

SEMN 102 FYS: From Playstation 4 to Plato
The past does not exist. That is to say, in most cases, the past is not stable, and our ideas about it change. The goal of this class is to examine the modern media that attempt to define and transmit the ancient past and to put them in dialogue with sources from the ancient world itself. Think of any book, film, or video game about the past - does it transmit the authoritative version of what it depicts? Are you sure? Why did this particular version of the past come to be? How is the past made and by whom? Our objective is to investigate how the past is made and remade, particularly the history, culture, and mythology of ancient Greece. We will explore how the Greek world is currently being imagined across a wide variety of media (e.g. video games, film, music) and put these media into dialogue with the ancient sources that generated them. We will focus on concepts that ignited the imaginations of the ancient Greeks as well as those of modern artists, particularly mythology, epic poetry, and the life and times of the philosopher Socrates. We will discover that many of these ancient accounts are also in conflict with one another, and that modern accounts are no closer to "the truth" than their ancient ancestors. Examples of texts to be discussed include: Assassin's Creed: Odyssey, Homer's Iliad, Hades (by Supergiant Games), the musical Hadestown, and a modern role-playing game inspired by the Iliad. Please note that while video games will form a part of the syllabus, you will only be required to play short parts of them. They will be made available to you on one of the computers in the K College Library.

SEMN 103 FYS: The Art of Play
"A person only plays when they are in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and they are only fully a human being when they play." Ever since Schiller's famous declaration about the playful essence of humankind, the notion of play has occupied a central place within the modern Western literary and critical traditions. Play-a notoriously difficult concept to define-has been variously touted as a possible key to understanding art, regarded as an action capable of prefiguring and
enacting political change, and considered a crucial component in children, and adults, learning how to engage with the world. In this course, we will examine literary and critical texts, visual artworks, and popular games that challenge us to take play seriously. Key themes include: the revolutionary potential of "free play"; the crisis of language and accompanying interest in nonsense and wordplay in modernist literature and art; the social and cultural importance of toys and games; and the essential link between play and the imagination.

SEMN 104 FYS: Migration, Community, and Self
Going to college and immigrating to a new country have much in common. Moving to a new place presents many challenges. Yet, a new environment also offers opportunities for personal growth that force immigrants to reconcile "Old" with "New." Through reading, writing, and discussion, students will seek to relate a specific episode of migration—the mass movement of over 2 million Jews from Eastern Europe to the United States between 1881 and 1914—to their own "immigration" to Kalamazoo. Along the way, the class will explore many of the universal questions raised by relocation. Why does migration occur? What motivates people to pick up their lives and move to a new place, and what happens to them when they arrive? How does the migration experience shape their view of the world they left behind and their view of their new environment? How do immigrants reconstruct communities for themselves where none may have previously existed? Finally, how does moving to a new place shape one's sense of self?

SEMN 105 FYS: Music and Freedom
This course will interrogate the complex yet tantalizing relationship between music and freedom. What does freedom in music mean? Is liberation found in lyrics that express a challenge to oppression? Can transcendence be summoned from sound and improvisation? Are independent artists emancipated when they follow their own voice at the expense of profit and even their own fans? Has freedom been extinguished from music and replaced with a cheap illusion, as Theodor Adorno believed? On our search for answers, we'll talk about protest, politics, aesthetics, film, identity, spirituality, and other topics as we seek a richer, more critical understanding of the sounds and songs that allow us to feel free.

SEMN 106 Reinvented: Urban Space, Capitalism, Art
The historical processes of urbanization and industrialization forever altered modernity's cityscapes; however, the effects of capitalism-consumerism, leisure time, publicness, and spectacle—also worked to reshape experiences of everyday life. This course examines the relationship between urban space, capital, social relations, and works of art that try to negotiate these rapidly changing sites of modernity. Taking late-nineteenth-century Paris as our case study, we ask questions about how Impressionist artists attempted to "picture" the anonymity and ennui of modern boulevard life—its rapidity and relentless newness—and how their radical pictorial vocabularies mediated the uncertain gender, sex, and class relations in Paris, "the capital of the nineteenth century." As we consider works of art that challenge capitalism and its bourgeois morality, we will study paintings by Manet, Degas, Cassatt, Caillebotte, Monet, and Lautrec, among others and ask difficult questions about the imbalances of power in modernity's urban playground. Along the way, we will reflect on how representations of urban life and space itself can become sites of living memory. Finally, the course will ask students to rethink their own spatial and social experiences in urban geographies under late capitalism and urban renewal. How do we re-member and attempt to "fix" or "picture" the fluctuations of our everyday lives in digital representations and social media?

SEMN 108 FYS: Plato to Playdoh: Great Math Ideas
The ancient Greeks established some of the foundations of mathematics. In particular, their contributions to the field of geometry are quite well-known—who hasn't heard of the Pythagorean Theorem?! But mathematics didn't stop evolving then (and no, it hasn't stopped evolving yet!). It is a dynamic subject and the great ideas of geometry morphed into a branch of mathematics called topology. Enter playdoh. While protractors and compasses may be the tools of geometry, playdoh is a more appropriate tool for studying topology. Of course, there have been many fascinating developments in mathematics since the ancient Greeks, and we'll be exploring several of them with an eye towards establishing some of the themes that make mathematics universal. Note: In addition to talking about math, we'll be doing math. You don't have to be good at the subject to take this course, but you should like it.

SEMN 112 FYS: Make It Stick: How Learning Works
How do people learn? Perhaps more importantly, how do you learn? The fact that you are now a K student indicates that you are able to learn and retain (at least for some time) a vast amount of information. But are you learning in the most efficient way? Are you able to remember what you learn for a long time? Are you able to transfer your learning to new situations? Are there ways to identify principles that guide such deep learning? If so, can we use these principles to become "better" learners? In our search for answers to all these questions we will study different theories of learning, the brain, instructional design, and how other cultures teach and learn. The course will use activities, experiments, discussions, and personal reflections to explore these issues, with the ultimate goal for you to become a more "effective" learner (and hence a more successful K student).

SEMN 113 FYS: Don Quixote as 'Player One'
What did virtual reality look like before modern technology? What makes a virtual world feel just as 'real'—or more real—than real life? Cervantes' masterpiece, Don Quixote, is considered by many to be the first truly modern novel, but its historical and cultural context (Seventeenth-Century Spain) can seem very distant indeed. In this course, students will use
contemporary theories from video game studies in order to explore this work with fresh eyes. Concepts like epic space, flow, medievalism, migration, virtual economies and simulation will allow us to connect with this iconic literary figure. This course is perfect for those students interested in literature, Medieval and Early Modern history or the appeal of video games today. Familiarity with Spanish is not required.

SEMN 114 FYS: History & Future of Doing Nothing
What does nothing mean? What does one do when one is doing nothing? How can we make sense of a word or category (nothing) that in itself is a denial of thing-ness? Does nothing look different through different cultural lenses? And what could humans learn from thinking about nothing? This seminar will explore different views on the subject of nothingness as it has been imagined and discussed by artists, social theorists, philosophers, and other thinkers. We will discuss the content of nothing as a category and consider what or who can be contained within, or excluded from it. Together, we will engage with the theory and practice of nothing in order to detect what its expressions, tensions, and contradictions might be, as well as what counts as a thing or as nothing.

SEMN 115 FYS: Harry Potter Goes to College
The magical world of Harry Potter has become a cultural phenomenon, resonating with readers of all ages around the world. One reason for its wide appeal is its relatable characters and accurate portrayal of human behavior and psychology. In this course, we will apply Psychological principles to understand and analyze the behavior of the characters in the first book in the series, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. Throughout the course, we will draw parallels between Harry's experiences as he enters the magical world of Hogwarts and our own experiences as we enter college. This is a class about Harry Potter for grown-ups-perfect for those who already have familiarity (and better yet, love!) for the Harry Potter series. It is also a class about Psychology that addresses fundamental questions about human nature, how to overcome adversity, how to interact with others despite our differences, and how to be successful in college and beyond.

SEMN 116 FYS: Whose Homer? Contemporary Odysseys
Why have a host of contemporary writers and artists chosen Homer's Odyssey-one of the oldest "European" writings we have-as the basis of novels, plays and art designed to challenge societal injustice and spark social change? The transformation of older artistic forms into new can also spark controversy: what does it mean to take words of the Ancient Greeks and harness them for change? Can it even be done? We'll explore these questions first by reading a new and controversial translation of the Odyssey, and then by looking at a variety of ways that the Odyssey has been transformed by African-American, Asian-American, Latinx and queer artists and writers to highlight the refugee crisis, systemic racism, and sex/gender discrimination. We'll think about the differences between reception, adaptation and appropriation, and whether these acts are ethical. In the process, we'll witness how the power of this story of departure, abandonment and return inspires artists from Beyoncé to Junot Díaz to Romare Bearden to Alison Bechdel and beyond.

SEMN 117 FYS: Romance and Revolutions: The Life And Times of Pablo Neruda
Was he a Romantic visionary, or a Marxist populist? Was he a love poet, a surrealist, a diplomat? Did he die of cancer or was he poisoned? Was his name even Pablo Neruda? Questions linger regarding the life, art, and death of this multilingual man who was twice in life exiled, and once in death exhumed. Born in the Chilean backwoods in 1904 as Ricardo Eliécer Nefial&iacute; Reyes Bosoalto, he began to write poetry at age 13, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971, and in 1973, died just days after a coup d'&acutetatat that overthrew the government of Salvador Allende, to whom the poet was a close advisor. A humanitarian, Neruda believed in the poet's obligation to the social good, and his name became synonymous with freedom. Who was Pablo Neruda? What can he teach us about our own life and times? We will read a biography and selected poems in translation to try to understand the man, the poet, and the politician who captured the world's imagination and his government's ire. Along the way, we will practice strategies for writing, revising, and researching, to help prepare you for future scholarship.

SEMN 118 FYS: There and Back Again
Humans have been writing about journeys and returns for nearly as long as we have been writing down our own stories. Though such tales are found in nearly every time period and culture, it's curious the way that many deal with similar kinds of questions: Why do we think about leaving home as an adventure? Why do we often romanticize "home"? Why is coming back home sometimes so hard? We'll begin our own journey by reading Homer's Odyssey, using it as a model for our exploration of these questions. Through a series of readings, films and songs (and conversations with modern-day heroes) we'll work to understand why tales of homecoming have such resonance and why we keep telling them.

SEMN 119 FYS: Holy War
In a world where conflict seems apocalyptic and struggles between religious groups over contested territory appear constant, the only hope is to travel through time. This course examines the crusading and jihadist movements of the middle ages so that students can better understand how religious change and social anxiety culminated in massive and complicated movements to contest territories of major cultural significance. The first half of the course will survey the history of the crusade and jihadist movements of the long twelfth century (c.1050-1250), culminating in an independent research project. The second half of the course utilizes a (prototype) student-driven role-playing exercise to engage with the lived realities of crusaders at a pivotal period in the history of crusading.
SEMN 121 FYS: Unraveling DNA
Despite being discovered nearly six decades ago, DNA research continues to have profound impacts on all of our lives and promises to become even more important in the future. We will examine the history of DNA and attempt to answer the following questions: How was DNA discovered? Who deserves credit for the discovery? What tools were needed? What information is stored in DNA? What is DNA fingerprinting? How should it be used? How can we use DNA to explore ancestry, especially for groups with no other means to do so? Do your genes determine who you’ll become? What is genetic testing? How do we handle unintended consequences such as sex determination of embryos or employment discrimination based on your genes? We will begin by retracing the events that lead to the publication of the seminal paper “A Structure for Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid” by Watson and Crick. We will learn about the roles that Rosalind Franklin, Maurice Wilkins, James Watson, Francis Crick and Linus Pauling played in the discovery of the structure of DNA and the complex story surrounding it through reading their biographies and public interviews. We will examine how gender affects our perception of science and scientists. We will also learn about the tools used to discover DNA, and what modern approaches are used today. Warning we will discuss several deeply sensitive topics in this course, including sex selection and genetic disorders.

SEMN 122 FYS: Environmental (In)justice
In this course we will explore the intersection between environmental and social justice. We have entered a new geological era - the Anthropocene - marked by unprecedented impacts of the burgeoning human population on the Earth's physical and biological systems. At the same time, global inequality has deepened: most of the world's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small fraction of its people. Communities have unequal access to environmental benefits (clean air, water, greenspace), and different exposure to environmental harms (toxic waste dumps, air pollution, fossil fuel extractive industries). Recent examples in the news include the Keystone XL pipeline being routed through Native American lands without their permission, and the Flint, MI, water crisis that disproportionately affected poor, black residents of that city when lead leached into drinking water. Our study of environmental "haves and have nots” will not be limited to the United States; we will explore a diverse array of writers and genres - novels, poetry, essays, memoirs - that focus on themes of environmental justice and equity in the U.S. and around the world.

SEMN 123 FYS: Theatre and the Other
This course uses works by playwrights from around the world to study issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and intercultural communication, with a particular emphasis on the voices of the subaltern, those who have been silenced by the power structures they lived (or live) in. We will read works from Amiri Baraka, Cherie Moraga, Marie Clements, Velina Hasu Houston, and Lucienne Guédès Fahrer. While reading these plays, we will discuss ways in which theatre can help bring voices to the voiceless but also talk about how to overcome obstacles we face in the theatre creation process that inhibit our voices and those of others we try to represent.

SEMN 124 FYS: Journeys to the West
Why do people all over the world embark on journeys? What does it mean to be on a journey? Where does a journey begin and where or how does it end? And how do we overcome the obstacles we encounter when we go on a journey, and what do we learn about ourselves and the world through the process of overcoming those obstacles? These are some of the questions we will explore in this course through a focus on Monkey's adventures in the great Chinese novel, Journey to the West. The story of Monkey, based on the monk Xuanzang's historical journey to India in search of Buddhist scriptures, enjoyed widespread popularity in premodern East Asia and has continued to fascinate readers worldwide down to the present day. Together we will investigate multiple layers of meaning in Monkey's tale. We will do this by relating its message about personal transformation to its religious, literary, and cultural contexts in China's past, as well as to our experiences in the present. Additionally, we will examine a diverse range of creative forms inspired by Journey to the West, including its classical Chinese fantasy "sequel,” the modern Chinese animation Havoc in Heaven, Jeffrey Lau's A Chinese Odyssey film adaptations, Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel American Born Chinese, and more. These various approaches to Monkey's story attest not only to its deep cultural significance in China and East Asia, but also to the ways in which it can have significance for different people of all different cultural backgrounds. All readings will be in English. No previous knowledge of Chinese language is necessary.

SEMN 125 FYS: Telling Queer Stories
This course analyzes the history of various queer social movements and the stories that people have constructed about them. More specifically, the class interrogates a number of queer movements that have taken shape in the last fifty years, and compares how documentary filmmakers and literary authors have sought to represent these struggles for justice and greater equality. The course begins by looking at the rebellions at the Stonewall Inn and Compton's Cafeteria in the 1960s, and looks at how these uprisings paved the path for the modern LGBT movement in the United States. We will then move on to the queer activism that arose in response AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s and then look at the same-sex marriage movement of the early twenty-first century, asking how the radicalism of the former transformed into the assimilationist politics of the latter. Finally, we will end with the emphatically intersectional approach undertaken by Black Lives Matter movement and its queer-identified founders. Throughout our course discussion and across several writing assignments, we will use these movements and the various texts that have narratively represented them to learn about the history of queer people and to
envision our own roles in making a more just future.

**SEMN 126 FYS: Political Education and Student Activism**
This course is designed to hone students' analysis of unjust systems of power by introducing them to political concepts and philosophies aimed at freeing human beings from oppression and exploitation. We will also be looking at how to apply these concepts to the worlds in which we live.

**SEMN 127 FYS: Thinking With Rivers: Getting to Know the Kalamazoo**
This course introduces students to river studies and offers an opportunity to investigate the Kalamazoo. Multidisciplinary readings acquaint students with an assortment of rivers from around the world, familiarize students with various methods for analyzing rivers, and demonstrate how rivers shape interactions between humans and nature. Classroom discussions encourage students to analyze rivers comparatively and conceptualize rivers in new ways—e.g., as living entities with anatomies, lifespans, volitions, and legal rights. Research papers ask students to get to know the Kalamazoo River. Our goal, by the end of the semester, is to be able to think with rivers, not just about them.

**SEMN 132 FYS: Radical Belonging**
In this class we will wrestle with what it means to truly belong. Belonging is defined as an emotional need to be an accepted member of a group. However, many factors shape our experience of true belonging. The intrinsic human need to belong is profoundly influenced by our sense of safety which is shaped by our experiences with race, gender, class, neighborhoods, schools, cities, institutions and social policies. To begin, we will explore the evolutionary foundations of group acceptance and the ways our biology is shaped in response to social threat. Next, we will look at the psychological and health science on connection and social inclusion to help us interrogate the impacts impaired belonging on health and learning. In addition, we will investigate the ways in which oppression shapes belongingness, while exploring our own racial identities. Finally, we will explore more local experiences of belonging by working with collected oral histories of the local residents in the HoTop community and the Kalamazoo; a community of people experiencing homelessness. This class will utilize reflective prompts and experiential activities to explore the questions of what it takes to radically belong in community with one another.

**SEMN 135 FYS: The Hands that Feed Us: Food and Farming Justice in a Time of Pandemic**
In this time of pandemic, we've had to scrutinize more carefully and critically where our food comes from and who feeds us, whether through heightened awareness of the essentialness of grocery store employees, farmers, farmworkers, and restaurant workers; the necessity of cooking at home; increased visibility of the conditions for workers in meat processing plants; or a growing fascination with home gardening and seed saving. What does this moment teach us about the flaws and dangers of the industrial food system? What does it mean to value the many hands that feed us? We'll start the quarter with a consideration of our own family and community food traditions and how those traditions—shared with us by the hands of our kin—nourish our bodies and spirits. We'll work to understand the industrial food system within the US, learning about how and why farmworkers and food workers lack visibility, power, and protection within the food system. We'll ask in what ways local/decentralized food systems can redress exploitation of workers and the land and promote their health, looking closely at the Kalamazoo food system. We'll learn about food sovereignty—a people's right to healthy and culturally-appropriate food, and to define their own food and agricultural systems—and study the ways Black and Indigenous communities are fighting for food sovereignty as part of their fight against the virus. As we do this work, we will engage with organizations within the Kalamazoo community like Farmworker Legal Services and PFC (People's Food Co-op), who advocate for food and farming justice, completing a project that supports their efforts. Academic service-learning combines classroom study with real-world experience, allowing students to apply what they are learning to everyday life in a way that addresses community-identified needs.

**SEMN 136 FYS: Crossing Borders: Autism and Other Ways of Knowing**
In the past two decades, the diagnosis of and attention to autism has grown exponentially. More public awareness and debate, however, does not guarantee a more complex understanding. In this class, we will explore autobiographies, essays, clinical studies, and films about or by those with autism in order to gain an informed understanding of this widely-diagnosed spectrum disorder. We will move outside the borders of the class to see students within AI (autistic-impaired) classrooms and participate in service-learning work in the Kalamazoo community. For this work, groups of students will be matched and spend time with a person on the spectrum and his or her family. In an effort to understand this way of knowing, we will consider how expectations about communication and social relationships "impair" and/or enhance an ability to live in a "neurodiverse" world. If you have a reason for wishing to take this seminar (i.e., if you are committed to developing peer-to-peer relationships across cognitive difference (whether on or off the spectrum), if you have a sibling or friend with autism, etc.), please contact Bruce Mills at bmills@kzoo.edu as soon as possible. This contact will enable me to consider specific interests or circumstances more closely and thus whether to reserve a space for you in the class. Academic service-learning combines classroom study with real-world experience, allowing students to apply what they are learning to everyday life in a way that addresses community-identified needs.

**SEMN 137 FYS: Co-Authoring Your Life: Writing Your Self in the Context of Others**
The autonomous, self-made individual is a powerful American myth. But no person is entirely self-made; all of us are embedded in various families and communities and ideologies, and we also find ourselves marked by cultural conditions...
such as our race, class, religion, gender and sexual orientation, all of which influence who we are in various ways. The clash between the desire for autonomy and the shaping power of these social conditions makes the process of coming up with an identity extremely difficult and complex. How can we maintain a sense of autonomy while acknowledging influences? How can we be ourselves while learning from others? How do we write our own lives when so many other hands seem to hold, or to want to hold, the pen with us? Through novels, stories, autobiographies, essays and films, this course will explore different situations in which people struggle to form identities under intense "co-authoring" pressures. You will write analytical essays about the texts of others and personal essays about yourself.

SEMN 138 FYS: Lol, Lmfao: Laughter in a Time of Covid?
Laughter is serious business. While humor is certainly contextual, laughing itself is versatile and universal, and it has often been held up as a balm for discomfort and pain. Why would anyone ever suggest that we "laugh it off"? In this seminar, we will examine funny and, at times, less-funny storytelling in the form of short fiction, graphic memoir, and standup comedy, and we may even try our hand at laughter meditation. Is it true that we never laugh at our own jokes? Why did the laugh track come and go on TV sitcoms? We will consider the cultural and often gendered imbalance in who makes jokes and who laughs at them, as well as how we communicate laughter through our various technologies.

SEMN 139 FYS: Shakes-Teen
In this course we'll be focusing on how the United States has reworked Shakespeare into the teen movies of the 90's, rock and rap music across the decades, and vlogs like "Jules and Monty." In exploring how Shakespeare has been adapted to these radically different contexts, we'll also be exploring the difficult issues these adaptations focus on--race, gender, sexuality, colonialism and class. What a culture does with Shakespeare's plays can tell you a lot about that culture; so we'll be asking a number of questions: Why is Shakespeare so popular in the United States today? What does he mean to us? What are we doing with his plays and why? What do our adaptations of his work tell us about our own views about racism or sexism in America, for example?

SEMN 142 FYS (un)doing It for the 'gram- Social Media, Tech, and Data
Social media, algorithms, surveillance technology, and investment capital are reshaping our digital and material world. Dystopian films now look like potential futures, while the ability to craft our own digital reality expands with the power of a smartphone. The consequences of these transformations exert themselves unequally across race, orientation, gender, ability, status, class, and other lines of difference. The goal of this course is to critically analyze our technology, media, and data environments with a focus on how these tools can threaten and endanger but also how we can harness, remix, or nullify them toward agency and liberation. In addition, we will explore how these issues are relevant to education.

SEMN 143 FYS: Design Intelligence
Design can make a difference. Imagine Apple without the iPhone, the iPad, or the MacBook. Could IKEA succeed selling Chippendale knock-offs? How does Facebook differ from Instagram? Is suburban life sterile by design? This course will look at the role of design in the world around us. Our emphasis will be on features, feel and function rather than on the aesthetics of design. We will consider why some designs work well and others work poorly. We will think about how and why things are designed in particular ways. Design choices have economic and business implications. We will analyze the impact of design on retailers, marketing, land use, packages, and websites. Observing and understanding design can help us better understand the world.

SEMN 144 FYS: Truth, Lies & Politics
Are truth and politics friends or foes? Does your answer differ depending on the kind of truth in question? In political matters, is it always wrong to lie? Political thinkers have been asking such questions for millennia, but in an era of echo chambers, "fake news," and conflicting accounts of what's true, they have presented themselves with renewed urgency. In this course, we will examine the relationship between truth and politics within the political theory tradition as well as in the contemporary context. We will focus in particular on strategies for navigating the bewildering terrain of our so-called "post-fact" context, in which it seems as though politics has become a contest over reality itself.

SEMN 145 FYS: Creativity: Inspiration and Beyond
The psychology of creativity is as complex and mysterious as it is intriguing. Whether brushing paint on a canvas, composing a poem or piece of music, launching a new advertising campaign, or making a breakthrough at the frontiers of science, some form of creative thinking is involved. In this seminar, we examine how creativity is expressed in domains such as art, music, film, literature, science, business, technology, and invention. We also explore inclusive design, and the importance of empowering and enabling designers and users of all abilities. Classic and contemporary theories and research findings will provide the materials for discussions, essays, and projects. Students will also apply their imagination and creative problem-solving skills to a variety of puzzles and exercises. This seminar will challenge your basic assumptions about the nature of creativity and expand your horizons, to encompass the richness and diversity of creative expression in its many forms.

SEMN 147 Hello World: Geography, Identity, and The Internet
We are living in the era of the "digital native," a phrase meant to describe those who have grown up using and having their
lives mediated by digital technologies--technologies like, for instance, the Internet. But what do we really know about the Internet, and the digital world to which we're supposedly "native"? Many have touted the Internet as a place where we can transcend our different real-life circumstances. But is life as a "digital native" really as universal and equalizing as all that? In this course, we'll be taking a different tack as we examine our relationship to the Internet and the digital lives we live. We will explore the ways the Internet is very much a part of "real life" in the material world, by examining the geographies that support and make the Internet as we know it possible, such as the placement and environmental footprint of server farms; the rapidly gentrifying cities of the Silicon Valley; and the factories where high-speed cable filaments are manufactured. We will also consider the ways geography impacts access to the Internet's "universal" space, from the surprising proportion of the United States that exists in Internet deadzones to the ways nations and other borderlands shape what the Internet looks like.

In turn, we will consider the ways the Internet has shaped nations and borderlands, such as the role of Twitter in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Even within digital space, however, our experience of the Internet is embodied, and it turns out that websites aren't one-size-fits all: We will also learn about the ways even digital experiences are mediated by our bodies and the identities we hold. We will examine what claiming to be "native" to digital space means when access is unequal, and indigenous cultures and activism are often wrongly presumed to be incompatible with digital technology--and indeed, the 21st century writ large. Ultimately, this course seeks to soften the conceptual divide between our "real" and digital lives, and to imagine the Internet as a site of critical social, political, and environmental examination.

SEMN 148 FYS: "I've Heard It Both Ways": Reading Race in the United States
You've heard it before: This story is about family, and this one's about revenge. That one's about race. But what does it even mean for a text to be "about" race? Is a story about race if it features racialized characters? If it's focused on defining a racial identity? If it speaks out against racism? Can you tell a story about race without explicitly mentioning race at all? In this class, we'll develop a practice of close reading texts in order to see that no text is about just one thing: What we see in a text has to do with the way we interpret textual clues, and how we connect these clues to our historical and cultural contexts. The texts that we explore will span a variety of time periods, genres, and media, from short stories and novels to documentaries and TV series; the one thing they'll have in common is that each is "about race" in the United States. As we hone our close reading skills and learn how to develop specific arguments about the texts we read, we'll also probe what it means for a story to be "about race," and the multitude of ways race in the United States gets represented, talked about, and sometimes even weaponized. To be "about race" means nothing and everything: The goal of this course is to be able to interpret texts and talk about race in specific terms, highlighting the ways race (and ideas about it) are foundational to the ways the United States structures and understands itself, as well as the way narratives of race also intersect with narratives around class, gender, and sexuality.

SEMN 149 FYS: Contested Spaces in the Urban Environment
Somewhere around 2007, an important shift occurred: for the first time ever, more people lived in urban areas than rural areas. After a century of rapid urbanization, living in cities is now the norm for the majority of humans. This radical shift in the way that we as people live has brought with it many points of conflict and contention. This course will examine some of these battles as they occur around such issues as use of space, how cities are lived in and experienced, how cities come to shape identity, and what the city's role in the greater society is.

SEMN 150 FYS: Epic Epics
The term "epic," from the Greek epikos and the Latin epicus, is often used to describe very long narrative poems about heroic warriors and colossal battles such as the Iliad, the Aeneid, the Ramayana, and Beowulf. But today we also see the term epic being applied to television shows, video games, and feature films. What makes something an epic? It's length? It's content? It's format? In this class, we will explore ten different epics: Raya and the Last Dragon, the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Mahabharata, the Odyssey, the Cilappatikaram, the Shahnameh, the Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost, the Odyssey of Star Wars, and Game of Thrones. Throughout this course, we will engage with the following questions: How have epics changed over time? How have epics traveled across regions? What role does religion play in epics? What can epics tell us about gender, ethnicity, and power now and in the past?

SEMN 151 Frozen in Time: the Ancient City of Pompeii
Since its discovery in the 1700s, Pompeii has captured our imagination as a city frozen in time, perfectly preserved at the precise moment of its death. Centuries of nearly uninterrupted excavation and study have presented us with a more complicated picture, however: we know simultaneously very much and very little about ancient life there. In this class, we will work towards gaining a nuanced understanding of life in Pompeii in all its richness and complexity. We will examine the lifecycle of the city from its "birth" in the 8th century BCE to its "afterlife" in modern times. We will pay special attention to the many different kinds of people who lived there, from slave to aristocrat, child to elder, and actor to public official. We will learn how to reconstruct and interpret their histories and identities using material, visual and textual remains. We will enhance our understanding of these topics by considering their connection to current debates on cultural identity, ethnic diversity and social inequality.

SEMN 152 FYS: Roots in the Earth
Even in the most developed and densely populated of cities, we are connected to nature. As essayist John Burroughs wrote,
"we are rooted to the air through our lungs and to the soil through our stomachs." In this seminar we'll examine our relationships with and beliefs about the natural world. What belief systems have influenced human interactions with nature throughout history and across cultures? Is our current relationship to nature serving us as individuals and members of a global community? Are there connections we can make between environmental and social justice issues that might help us envision more sustainable, satisfying, and even joyful relationships with nature AND with people? We'll grapple with how the answers to these questions affect our responses to problems such as climate change, pollution, and dwindling biodiversity. Readings include Bill McKibben's American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau and Robin Wall Kimmerer's Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants. This course will ask students to reflect on their own experiences with nature as they engage in a service learning project in collaboration with Kalamazoo College's Lillian Anderson Arboretum.

SEMN 153 FYS: Home Is Where the Haunt Is
In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic caused many state leaders to issue emergency stay-at-home measures, we isolated ourselves in our homes, for the overall safety and health of ourselves and our larger community. These stay-at-home decrees invoked a common belief: that our homes are sites of safety, wherein we can seek refuge and protection from a danger that looms outside. Except, what happens when your home is not, in fact, a protective sanctuary, but a place besieged by ghosts, supernatural forces, or otherworldly spirits? In these instances, homes become the very locus of danger, and we, the unwitting occupants, must contend with a threat from which there is no safe refuge. In this seminar, we will consider a wide variety of haunted house narratives in order to explore the degree to which houses become an enduring symbol for larger sociocultural fears, anxieties, and/or trauma. We will study and reflect on the varied ways that haunted houses represent our biggest fears, both societally and individually. Ultimately, our undertaking in this seminar is to analyze the way these narratives make such fears tangible, as well as how they allow us to interrogate, understand, and contend with the things that frighten us.

SEMN 154 FYS: Who Are the Samurai?
On a dark, chilly night in the city of Edo, Japan in 1703, 46 men broke into the home of a government official and murdered him. The story of these men, best known as the 47 Ronin (and yes, you read the number correctly), has been retold countless times since that night. Outlaws to some and heroes to many, the 47 Ronin have often been lauded as exemplars of true samurai. But what exactly is a "true samurai"? When you think of the samurai, what do you imagine? Is the image you have in mind the product of fact or fiction, or perhaps a little of both? Did you know, for instance, that the samurai included both women and children? Since most people are not familiar with the history of Japan's famous warriors, in this seminar we will begin by drawing from a variety of sources to explore how this warrior class--men, women, and children--lived, and how they have been viewed both within and outside Japan. We will combine our historical examinations of the emergence, evolution, demise, and reinvention of the samurai with analyses of representations of "samurai" in literature, film, sports, and business in order to gain a better sense of who the samurai are, how they have been portrayed, and why the samurai--and especially the 47 Ronin--have become such an enduring and popular symbol of Japan.

SEMN 155 FYS: The New World Order
The seminar will study recent analyses of the New World Order in the context of theories of "globalization," focusing on causes of social strife and debates about what makes for a just society. It will examine the culture of the investment bankers who are the New Order's main architects, the ideology of "neoliberalism" that is its blueprint, the fate of American workers whose jobs are disappearing, and the New World as lived by some of the two billion people in shantytowns, bidonvilles, and favelas. Students will write brief review-style essays and a case study of a city or region.

SEMN 157 FYS: Writings From the Heart: Knowledge Production and Social Justice
In this course, we will explore dreams, storytelling, poetry, art activism, memoir, and personal/collective narrative as sources of knowledge and social change. We take a look into cultural writings to examine traditional and non-traditional genres. We will begin the journey through reading from testimonies among Indigenous peoples in Mexico and Central America, moving into choreographic or embodied practices in dance activism in Turkey, and concluding with poetry and art in social movements in the US. We approach writing by embodying writing practices in daily entries in our journals and poetry through in-class workshops, attending guest speakers in topics related to art activism, interviewing members of our communities to write their testimonials, and producing our artwork as memory devices or “sacred boxes.” With these hands-on activities, we will examine how multiple communities around the world produce knowledge. The goal is to understand topics of identity, culture, tradition, and activism.

SEMN 162 FYS: Kissing the Witch: Fairytale and Folklore Derived Contemporary Literature
For centuries audiences have been captivated by tales of pure-hearted princesses, brave princes, and of course, wicked witches. Why do we keep returning to these archetypes? What do they tell us about our own identities and relationships? In this course, we will look at how short stories, novels and poetry have interacted with fairytales and folklore in recent years. What ancient themes get disrupted, heightened and complicated through each retelling? How have contemporary authors used fairytale and folklore to navigate current discussions of race, gender, and sexuality? In our discussions and our own creative writing we will engage these questions and, by the end of the course, we will have the tools needed to start our own
mythmaking.

**SEMN 163 FYS: Storytelling: The Power Of Oral History**
We entertain through story. We teach through story. In private and communal rituals, we establish and sustain our bonds to family, friends, and communities through storytelling. In this way, we save memories and shape histories, personal and collective. This oral storytelling reveals an enduring human truth: if we fail to preserve our stories, we are one generation away from losing a record of what keeps us together and understanding what keeps us apart. Sometimes we are the tellers of stories. At other times, we are the keepers of them, the ones who listen, document, and archive. We give back to our communities in this way. To save the stories and to make them available to others offers the possibility of change. The increasing attention to oral histories speaks to the sense that good can come of engaging in the discipline of listening. We create the possibility of social change in this work. This class will consider the power of storytelling in the form of oral histories. We will not only attend to the practice and scholarship of oral history but to the art of listening in ways that invite a richer storytelling. We will learn by interviewing each other as well as conducting a class oral history project. In addition to enhancing our writing skills through reflection on and analysis of what we read and hear, we will be creating an archive of oral stories and, in the process, striving to bridge difference through collective storytelling.

**SEMN 165 FYS: Stalin & the Art of Fear**
From the 1920s until his death in 1953, Joseph Stalin wielded an extraordinary amount of control over the newly-created Soviet state. He interpreted the proper implementation of Socialist economic policy, he silenced his critics with unimaginable savagery, and he took an especially keen interest in dictating the terms by which art should be made. To whom does art belong? What was it like to create art in an atmosphere of censorship? Could artists -- like poet Anna Akhmatova or composer Dmitri Shostakovich, for example -- navigate these treacherous waters without sacrificing their creativity and artistic integrity? We will examine these and related questions through reading memoir, fiction, and historical accounts of the time; watching films; and closely listening to the music that spoke to and reflected this tumultuous time.

**SEMN 166 FYS: Let Freedom Swing! Jazz Music, Social Identity and American**
The history and development of jazz music in American culture is arguably one of the most revolutionary aspect for African Americans. Many perceive jazz music as central to the construction of democratic practices and principles; namely civic participation, exercise of freedom, finding one's voice, improvisation, and group collaboration. In short it is imperative to preserve black culture and identity. Embedded within jazz music is the impulse which is not only a musical device that jazz musicians employ, but it can also be considered a human response of feeling and attitude to an adverse social condition. In this course, we will explore the complexities of the black experience such as race, stereotypes, and injustices as presented by black musicians and singers as they have tried to overcome, resist and call attention to the hypocrisy of democracy in America. We will examine musical compositions, song lyrics, cities, and aesthetic movements through a combination of lively discussions and thoughtful analysis of songs, literature, film, art and other media documentation. We will examine the relationship between race and music and the contribution to the expression of American music by African Americans. This course will provide students the opportunity to discuss, compare, and analyze a range of musical compositions and genres within the history of jazz music. This seminar is intended to help each student's writing improve and to provide all students with the knowledge, tools, and practices that will serve them in college-level writing. By the conclusion of this course, students will develop critical thinking and writing skills by analyzing and critiquing key elements in the history of jazz music. They will also develop an appreciation for, and understanding of the characteristics of jazz music and the ways in which people of African descent have contributed to the development of American music over time. Open to all music lovers.

**SEMN 167 FYS: Global Refugees and Immigrants**
People often say they are either for or against greater levels of immigration. But immigration is a broad concept. In simply saying "yay" or "nay" we neglect to address a lot of important, nuanced questions. This course examines some of these questions. What is the difference between a so-called "economic" immigrant versus an asylum seeker or refugee? If we can make such a distinction, do we owe different kinds of treatment to individuals in these categories? What happens when someone is attempting to reach another country's territory but is stopped en route (e.g. in international waters)? How do concerns about the internal political equality between current citizens or about the preservation of public political culture impact immigration? Is it permissible for wealthy countries to encourage the immigration of doctors and nurses from poor countries—even though this will lead to a shortfall of skilled healthcare workers in poorer countries? What tensions are created by the conflict between social and global justice as applied to immigration? We will investigate these questions and many more through readings, documentaries and discussion. This class will primarily focus on non-US contexts.

**SEMN 168 FYS: Salem Possessed: the Salem Witch Trials and Their Legacies**
In 1692, the people of Salem, Massachusetts grew terrified when a small group of girls accused an enslaved woman, an impoverished woman, and a scandalous woman of bewitching them. Ultimately, twenty men and women were hung or pressed to death with stones and over a hundred others found themselves imprisoned. Historians have long considered the Salem Witch Trials a pivotal moment in American history. Countless works have offered countless reasons for the strange happenings in Salem, trying to explain why a small community in Colonial America would succumb to witchcraft hysteria long after it had died down in Europe. The Salem Witch Trials have haunted American culture. Starting in the nineteenth
century and continuing into the present, writers and artists have grappled with the various meanings of the witch hunts and the persecution of innocent persons, seeing connections between "the furies of fanaticism and paranoia" of 1692 and their own time. Most famously, Arthur Miller in *The Crucible* used the trials to examine the persecution of alleged Communists in the 1950s. This course will examine and seek to understand the events of 1692 and the subsequent legacies of the trials in American culture through the actual documents from the trials, the writings of historians, and the imaginative works of novelists, playwrights, poets, and film makers.

**SEMN 169 FYS: Coping and Caring: A Kaleidoscope Of Grief**
Grief is a natural response to loss. Grief may occur in many facets of life from the current pandemic to a wide range of experiences like the loss of a loved one, a relationship, significant life events or transitions, and systemic oppression, to name a few. Grief is complex and unique-expressed in diverse ways with a kaleidoscope of emotions. We will examine theories of grief, learn about creative arts therapy-based methods to process grief and loss, view case examples of bereaved individuals using art therapy to heal, and investigate personal and cultural approaches to the subject. Students will critically analyze how race, religion, ethnicity, gender and other constructs shape one's response to grief. And discover how loss finds a voice in poetry, art, music, drama and other creative forms. Finally, students will engage in experiential exercises to foster expression and gain an understanding of using creativity as a source for healing.

**SEMN 170 FYS: Resilience**
The concept of resilience has gained popularity in the past decade, especially among educators and mental health professionals who work with young adults. In this seminar, we will examine the concept of resilience, broadly defined as the capacity to adapt successfully to challenges. How is the term defined and used in different contexts? What factors contribute to successful coping in the face of adversity? How do cultural factors influence how we think about resilience? How does an emphasis on resilience as a personal characteristic influence how we think about solutions to social problems? In what ways are cultural institutions and systems nurturing the development of resilience for some groups while creating obstacles to its development for others? In addition to these questions, we will explore strategies we can use to enhance our own personal resilience and to strengthen the resilience of our communities.

**SEMN 172 FYS: Life with Two Languages**
Almost half of the world's population uses two or more languages as they go about their daily lives. In this seminar, we will explore what it means to be a bilingual or multilingual person - how this affects our brains, our ways of communicating, and our perspective on the world. We will also investigate how different societies organize life with two or more languages. Finally, we will reflect on attitudes of bilingual and monolingual speakers towards bilingualism. Yookoso -Bienvenido- Bienvenue- Hwan-yung-hahm-ni-da - Chào m?ng This course is designed for international students whose first language is not English.

**SEMN 173 FYS: Migration, Community, & Self**
Going to college and immigrating to a new country have much in common. Moving to a new place presents many challenges. The immigrant (or first-year student) can experience loneliness and displacement, a yearning for home, and bewilderment at his/her new surroundings. Yet, a new environment also offers opportunities for personal growth that force immigrants to reconcile "Old" with "New." Through reading, writing, and discussion, students will seek to relate their own "migration" to Kalamazoo College to the experiences of European Jews moving to the United States. Along the way, the class will explore many of the universal questions raised by relocation. What motivates people to pick up their lives and move to a new place, and what happens to them when they arrive? How does the migration experience shape their view of the world they left behind and their view of their new environment? How do immigrants construct communities for themselves? Do women and men experience migration in similar or different ways? Finally, how does moving to a new place shape one's sense of self? We will explore these questions using historical and cultural sources, fiction, and film.

**SEMN 175 FYS: The Complex Legacy of Christopher Columbus**
This seminar will examine the legacy of Spain's empire in the Americas through the lens of one of its most enduring and controversial figures, Christopher Columbus. We will read a variety of contemporary sources over the course of the term as we explore how the explorer's image has been used to legitimize, vilify, celebrate, and understand the expansion of Western hegemony. How did an Italian explorer sailing under a Spanish flag become a symbol of American exceptionalism? How did Europeans manage to "discover" and lay claim to lands already home to prosperous civilizations and peoples? Why are banks and post offices in the United States closed on some seemingly inexplicable day around the middle of October each year? What is meant by Indigenous Peoples' Day and why do we recognize it on the same day? These are some of the questions we will engage as we consider how the dramatic impact of the rise of European global empires altered societies, ecologies, geopolitics, commerce, food ways, science, people's understanding of the nature of humanity, and more.

**SEMN 177 FYS: Exploring Cultural Diversity Through Storytelling**
This course is an investigation into storytelling and an analysis of various mediums and texts created by scholars and artists working within an interconnected world. While examining and creating performances of self-discovery, students will explore how we, as part of a global community, embody/perform stories that speak to inequities across marginalized groups. The classroom community will explore what it means to take part in cross-culture encounters, conversations, and stories in a
world where the socially constructed boundaries between culture, community, and country are becoming less visible.

**SEMN 178 FYS: Controversies in Sports: Where Is the Line?**
In this course we will examine the world of youth and college sports from a variety of perspectives. Students will improve their analytical, discussion, research and writing skills as they explore topics in ethics, equity and the science of athletic performance. Course readings and viewings are gathered from a variety of disciplines, including biology, chemistry, kinesiology, psychology, the law, journalism and popular culture. Current controversies surrounding the treatment of athletes from marginalized groups, performance enhancement, and hyper-competitiveness in youth and college athletics will also be discussed and debated. Students will be invited to reflect on the role of athletics and competition in their own lives as college students. This course is open to all students and will be of particular interest to student-athletes.

**SEMN 179 FYS: It's a beautiful day in the Neighborhood: Innovative Economic Growth In Kalamazoo**
The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted stark inequalities and deep-rooted inadequacies within our society. Answers to these issues require innovative solutions to achieve widespread prosperity. Fortunately, we are lucky to be in Kalamazoo, an excellent laboratory for exploring strategies for communities to create inclusive and vibrant local economies. This course will provide a problem-focused introduction to issues faced by local communities and Kalamazoo in particular. Together, we will explore the field by examining and debating cases of real-world public problems such as housing, education, and the creation of good jobs. Students will be asked to reflect on important local civic issues, choose one of interest, and conduct an analysis critically evaluating how the resources of our community could best be leveraged to solve the problem. The course readings and lectures will prepare you by examining the current ideological debate around the role of local governments in public life and the tools the public sector uses to tackle issues. Overall, this course will help provide you with a grounding in your local community and how you can become a thoughtful, engaged citizen.

**SEMN 181 FYS: The Paradox of Human Desire: Philosophy and Psychoanalysis**
In this course, we examine the way in which Friedrich Nietzsche's genealogy and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis severely challenge traditional conceptions of the rational self. Traditional "Enlightenment" or rationalist models of subjectivity assume that a person is conscious of feelings and desires, rational in planning and executing actions, and responsible, both to oneself and to others, for explaining and justifying one's conduct. In short, rationalists uphold the ideal of rational agency as a comic pretense, naiveté illusion, or, worse, dangerous animal. In this course, we will explore Nietzsche's and Freud's views on the paradoxical nature of the human experience of desire, action, and self-understanding. Such "dark thinkers of Enlightenment" unmask the ideal of rational agency as a comic pretense, naiveté illusion, or, worse, dangerous animal. In this course, we will examine how subsequent figures such as Lacan and Merleau-Ponty have identified four famous paradoxes of human life: the paradoxical fact that we understand something only when it's over (time); the paradoxical fact that we only come to know our prior intentions through our future deeds (action); and the paradoxical fact that our desires are the source of our worst nightmares (desire); and the paradoxical fact that what is closest and most familiar to us, our body, is often what is most distant, alien, and perplexing (body). More specifically, we will examine how subsequent figures such as Lacan and Merleau-Ponty have identified four famous paradoxes of human life: the paradoxical fact that we understand something only when it's over (time); the paradoxical fact that we only come to know our prior intentions through our future deeds (action); and the paradoxical fact that our desires are the source of our worst nightmares (desire); and the paradoxical fact that what is closest and most familiar to us, our body, is often what is most distant, alien, and perplexing (body). Readings from Nietzsche, Freud, Lacan, Merleau-Ponty, Carr, Habermas, Fink, and Lloyd. Movies such as Memento, Angle Heart, Apocalypse Now, Lost Highway, and The Pervert's Guide to Cinema will be shown.

**SEMN 184 FYS: Slang: A Discussion of Informal English**
This course is designed for students whose native language is not English. Permission required. Slang is the ever-changing use of informal language that is reflective of culture and society. Though slang is most common in spoken language, modern dictionaries have long embraced slang and recorded its usage. Notable examples include the Oxford English Dictionary new entries of 'vape,' 'selfie,' and 'GIF.' In this class, we will discuss, research, and write about the informal use of slang and its role in social interactions as well as what slang represents in the lives of English speakers. We will identify the purpose of slang in a community of speakers, and how language is used to create relationships. An important distinction will be made regarding the environment of informal and formal language and how English speakers navigate the cultural requirements of spoken and written language in academic settings. Through readings, videos, discussion, and writing, we will explore the fun and function of slang.

**SEMN 188 FYS: Imagining Possible Worlds**
Which story is more likely to occur in the real world: Star Wars or The Lord of the Rings? According to Scottish philosopher David Hume, "nothing we [can] imagine is absolutely impossible." So, since science fiction and fantasy stories seem equally imaginable, maybe they are equally possible. However, the great sci-fi writer Isaac Asimov once said, "science fiction, given its grounding in science, is possible; fantasy, which has no grounding in reality, is not." So, maybe sci-fi stories are more possible than fantasy stories after all. This suggests a deeper, underlying question: "what does it even mean to say that something is possible?" In this course, we will explore that question-"what is possibility?"-from a philosophical point-of-view by using science fiction and fantasy stories as our guide. To do this, we will read such notable contemporary writers as Margaret Atwood, Stephen King, Michael Chabon, Ursula K. Le Guin, and T. C. Boyle. We will also watch three very weird movies and even a few episodes of Star Trek. We will use these experiences as the foundation for our philosophical study of possibility, which will include thinking hard about such topics as science, freedom, knowledge, God, evil, and zombies.
YES, that's right! ZOMBIES!!

SEMN 190 FYS: Science and Society
This course is designed for those who are curious about the natural world. We aim to engage and enhance that curiosity by exploring science in the world around us. We will observe with wonder, thoughtfully hypothesize, methodically test, and conclude with deeper knowledge and more questions. We will discover roles we can take to contribute to building scientific knowledge. We will work to understand developing science. We will design and carry out experiments, read about scientific discovery, and join others on citizen-science projects. This course is intended for anyone who is excited about understanding the natural world, no science background is needed.

SEMN 191 FYS: It's Only Rock and Roll
Mick Jagger said the song "It's Only Rock 'n Roll (But I Like it)" was a response to the pressure he and the band felt to continually exceed their past accomplishments. Who could have imagined how rock and roll (and all of its children) would succeed, exceed and change the world? Who could have imagined what rock and roll has accomplished and what the world has accomplished because of rock and roll? In this seminar we will explore some of the fascinating relationships between current events, social, cultural and political developments, and rock music, as expressed through the music, lyrics, art, philosophy and fashion of rock and roll. Through generous listennings, viewings, readings, discussions, and, most importantly, through our writings, we will gain a well-rounded view of the history of rock music and a deeper appreciation for the complex and evolving part rock and roll and has played and continues to play in the social, cultural, political and, of course, musical evolution of our lives and the world.

SEMN 193 FYS Banned: Censorship & Art Politics
Art is a ubiquitous part of our society, but how exactly do we define the word "art" and what do we expect from it? Some might say art is solely for aesthetic enjoyment and to make us feel good, but what happens when art becomes part of the culture wars? What social conditions drive controversy around art? This course will explore art's seemingly unparalleled ability to outrage and offend. We will discuss and dissect a wide variety of historical cases where art has been deemed dangerous and/or objectionable. Through a variety of readings and discussions we will explore such topics as: Is censorship ever okay? What can controversies surrounding art tell us about those who are offended? And, what does being offended mean in a democratic society? In this course we will learn how to unpack the context of controversial art and self-examine our personal values and what it means to have those values challenged.

SEMN 195 FYS: Bad Religion
In this course, we explore communities and practices that have been considered "loud," "superstitious," "weird," "unorthodox," and purportedly "satanic." To outsiders, bad religion is religion that seems to straddle the lines of magic and witchcraft, and religion that does not stay in its sphere but seems to embroil itself in public space, business, and politics. This class does not argue that there is such a thing as "bad religion" but explores contestations over what constitutes "appropriate" religious practice, community, authority, and belief in 20th century and contemporary America. We will explore groups from Scientologists, the Peoples Temple (known for the Jonestown suicides) to apocalyptic Catholics, Latinx devotions and Afro-Caribbean religions-groups that have drawn the ire of neighbors, established churches, media, and governmental authorities. We will explore how understandings of immigration, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality structured these communities and shaped the controversies that surrounded them. We will interrogate the construction of religious norms and ideas of "acceptable" religious practice across different moments in American history. Students will critically analyze primary sources and media representations-from crime television shows to documentaries-to explore how media and pop culture are operative in constructing the religious mainstream and margin in America.

SEMN 196 FYS: Memories, Secrets & Lies
Why do we love to read "confessions," watch makeover shows, read blogs, and take selfies? How do we shape the stories we tell about ourselves, and the image of self we present to the world? Is there such a thing as a "true" or "authentic" self? In this seminar you will work with memoirs, letters, a TV series, a graphic novel, diaries, and scrapbooks to explore how individuals present themselves and how they tell their life stories. We will start with the genre of confessions, looking at how writers draw in their audiences by claiming to tell secrets, and "nothing but the truth." We will discuss memory, its failures, and the ways we retrieve "lost time" in narrative. Other topics include performance and identity, censorship and autobiographical scandals surrounding authors who "broke the rules" of memoir. One week we visit the Kalamazoo College Archives and work with diaries, letters, and scrapbooks from college students 100 years ago-examining how their experiences may parallel or differ from your own. We will also visit the Kalamazoo Institute of Art to view works of self-portraiture.

SEMN 197 FYS: Byzantium The Real Game of Thrones
The Roman Empire never fell--it just turned Greek. Istanbul used to be Constantinople. It's completely normal to cut out your brother's tongue to keep him from becoming Emperor instead of you. A world of assassinations, tax fraud, and adultery existed in a city that had stadiums that held more than 100,000 screaming fans and gave its citizens free lunches. Fortune favors the bold. The bold are born for Constantinople.

SEMN/PHIL 295 Special Topic: Philosophy of Religion
An examination of the most important philosophical questions regarding religion, including questions such as the following: can the existence of God be proven or disproven; is religious faith rational; does morality require a divine moral lawgiver; should we hope for a life after death; and what is the appropriate response to religious diversity. We will ask and attempt to answer such questions by examining our own beliefs and the beliefs of others as well as by looking to the examples provided by the major world religions and the various personal, social, and political values and goals expressed by these traditions.

**SEMN 495 Poetics of Love**

From the romantic, the sacred, the familial, and the platonic, we will examine how the love poem form is used to make sense of self, violence, and death. Specifically, we will look at how poets from marginalized communities are commandeering this form. Jericho Brown writes, “When I say I love you, I mean for you to understand that I exist in relation to you.” Through poetry, we will process the relationships we've made at K and prepare for new relationships post-graduation. We will cultivate a place for love in our lives and understand that as anti-fascist work. Poetry novices encouraged!

**SEMN 498 Independent Study**

**Sophomore Seminars**

The sophomore seminar is the second component of the Shared Passages and comes at a critical moment of challenge and opportunity in students' journeys through the K Plan. They provide a vital link between students' entry to the K experience and their other landmark K experiences - advanced work in the major, study abroad, and a SIP.

**Sophomore seminars**

**SEMN/ARTX 206 Ceramics: World Pottery**

World Pottery is a hands-on studio course with significant research and reflection components. Class time will be used to introduce students to a variety of clay bodies and clay-forming techniques from historical and regional perspectives (wheel-throwing will not be taught). Creative assignments ask students to consider and critique the role of cultural exchange and image appropriation within historical ceramics and in their own creative work. Projects will also investigate the roles of different types of pottery within contemporary American society, as a point of reference and departure. Each student will propose, execute, and present a research project. Lectures, critiques, and discussions will focus on individual and societal assumptions about pottery. This course is a Shared Passages Sophomore Seminar.

*Prerequisite: Sophomores Only*

**SEMN 207 Infection: Global Health & Social Justice**

This course is first and foremost a Shared Passage Seminar. As a sophomore level writing class, it will build upon the First-Year Seminar goals. Through readings and discussions, the class will explore the world of infectious agents and the use of antibiotics as they affect global health. By studying current and historical cases of infections, we will try to address the spread, containment and eradication of select infectious agents. With each of the cases we study, we will discuss race, genes, and human history, through the lens of social justice.

*Prerequisite: Sophomores Only*

**SEMN/ENGL 208 Food and Travel Writing**

Through reading, writing, and studying various media in the realm of journalism and creative nonfiction, we will explore identity, history, and culture—our own, and that of others—through food and place, and artfully write and workshop nonfiction writing about lived experience. This Shared Passages Sophomore Seminar includes faculty-led travel to Costa Rica the first week of winter break, wherein we will actively apply theory through hands-on experience. A passport and additional fees for travel will be required, though need-based financial assistance will be available to make the trip accessible for all students.

**SEMN/PHIL 209 Philosophy of Science**

The course sets out three tasks. Our first task is to acquire and develop distinctly philosophical skills: e.g. reading persuasive essays, analyzing concepts, understanding arguments, criticizing our own views and the views of others, and writing persuasively in a clear and concise manner. Our second task is to examine the most important philosophical questions asked about science: e.g. What is science (as opposed to art, religion, or myth)? What is a scientific theory, and how does theory function in science? What is a scientific explanation, and what is the function of explanation in science? Should we believe in the reality of objects referred to in scientific theories (like quarks and bosons)? Our third task is to critically evaluate science as a distinctive type of culture - a culture of self-critical knowledge formation - that demands participants to move from mere consumers of knowledge to being producers and developers of knowledge: e.g. How does scientific culture demarcate itself from other types of culture? How does it progress historically? What type of discipline does it demand from its adherents? How does it interconnect theory and community practices? What are its values and goals?

**SEMN 210/MUSC 207 Listening Across Cultures**
What does it mean to be a knowledgeable music listener? An expert listener? A native listener? Hip hop has its "heads," French opera had claqueurs, and Syrian tarab has the sammi'a (expert listeners), but is the act of listening the same across cultures, or is there something to the local perception of music that goes beyond style and genre? Questioning the adage that "Music is the universal language," this course will examine how people assign meaning and power to music. Analyzing music from around the world, we will attune our ears to the ways in which people across cultural borders conceptualize music, sound and the act of listening. No music reading or basic theory knowledge is required.

Prerequisite: Sophomores only

SEMN 211 Seed Stories, Sovereignty, & Stewardship
The story of agriculture is, in large part, a story about seeds. Or rather, many stories about seeds and the people who developed co-evolutionary partnerships with plants through the practice of seed stewardship. In this Sophomore Seminar, we will listen to the stories of seedkeepers and learn how their relationships with seeds embody their cultural values and cosmogenealogies. We'll examine the role that seeds have played in campaigns of colonization, investigate how the global seed industry has shaped contemporary agricultural systems, and learn how activists and traditional seedkeepers are working to address social and environmental injustices by practicing seed sovereignty.

Prerequisite: Sophomores only.

SEMN/CLAS 212 Ancient Humans & Other Animals
Humans tend either to think of themselves as separate from animals or as the top of the animal heap. We tell ourselves that we are different, and this affects how we treat and interact with animals, which might be different if we treated them as "same." In this class we will look at how ancient Greeks and Romans thought about, used, treated and interacted with animals. In this way, every day we will step into another, lost world where people held different beliefs about the animal kingdom. At the same time, we will also use their ideas and experiences to interrogate our own beliefs and practices concerning other animals.

Prerequisite: Sophomores only.

SEMN/RELG 213 Christianity & the Family
This course critically addresses contemporary debates about the centrality of the family in Christian teaching through a historical and cross-cultural survey. What is the relationship between Christianity and the various approaches to kinship and family in different cultures in different historical contexts? Where did our contemporary ideas about the family come from and what are Christians saying about new forms of kinship? From the Bible to present day debates about divorce, sex, and same sex marriage, Christians have never embraced a single understanding of the family, but rather have been influenced by broader cultural shifts in how kinship is done.

Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

SEMN/ARTX 214 Framing Difference
This course will combine research and studio components, split more or less evenly. The research topic, broadly painted, will be fine art documentary practices, grounded with an entry-level hands-on studio component (using film or digital photography). There are two motivations for this course: to give students creative control of photographic tools (technical, formal, conceptual) prior to their leaving for study away, but also to explore the issues and ethics of photographic documentary practice. While the broad research topic is documentary practice (theory/tradition), this course will place particular emphasis on the ethics of photographing outside of one's own group. This course is a Shared Passages Sophomore Seminar.

Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

SEMN/PHIL 215 Human Rights & International Law
People often invoke human rights and international law in the course of debate. However, these are highly contested concepts. This course introduces some theoretical clarity with respect to their conceptual grounding, history and contemporary practice. Our primary focus will be on different philosophical theories of human rights, with secondary attention to international human rights law. We start with an orientation on human rights practice and try to move past some of the so-called "challenges" to human rights. This is followed by a look at the main contemporary approaches for conceptualizing human rights: the basic human-interest approach, the capabilities approach and the newer "political" approach (among others). We will spend a few weeks on various debates within the human rights literature as well: Whether there is such a thing as "group rights", whether and how there is a distinction between civil and political human rights on the one hand versus social and economic human rights on the other, when human rights violations might trigger external, international intervention, etc.

Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

SEMN/ENGL 217 World Indigenous Literatures: The People and the Land
A selective study of the literary traditions and contemporary texts of indigenous peoples around the world, focusing on indigenous communities in regions where Kalamazoo College students study and with a particular emphasis on texts that explore the complex relationships between indigenous communities and the land they claim as their own. This course is a Shared Passages Sophomore Seminar.

Prerequisite: Sophomores Only
SEMN/ENGL 219 Magical Realism
Magical realism is a genre that combines elements of the fantastic with realism often in order to imagine utopias or resist restrictive aspects of society. This course will examine the genre, interrogate its relationship to other genres of fantasy, and consider the relationship between the aesthetic patterns of the genre and its potential for social advocacy. This course is a Shared Passages Sophomore Seminar.
Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

SEMN/MUSC 221 Social Justice Through the Arts
From Hamilton to Woodstock, how have the arts stimulated and informed social transformation in America over the last 100 years? This interdisciplinary course will involve readings, listening sessions, discussion, and research as the basis for an original social practice creation incorporating at least TWO mediums (e.g. spoken word, song, dance, visual art, theatre) to express the students' view on a given social issue. Designed to accommodate students who enjoy creative activity in a variety of disciplines.
Prerequisite: Only Sophomores may register.

SEMN 223 The Inward Journey: the Science, Practice, and History of Meditation
This seminar will explore the meditative experience from historical, experiential, and biological perspectives. Meditation—the cultivation of a state of thoughtless awareness that can generate profound peace and inner transformation—has deep historical roots and plays a role in many cultures and religions. Modern neuroscience has made great strides in understanding the meditative experience and documenting the physical and neurochemical changes that result from meditation. Students in this course will undertake a personal journey of active practice of meditation, primarily from Buddhist perspectives. This experience will be underpinned with study of the neuroscience and practical health benefits of meditation. Finally students will delve into the historical, cultural, and religious dimensions of meditation.
Prerequisite: Sophomores Only.

SEMN/HIST 224 Exceptional America?
The idea of American exceptionalism has a long and complex history. What does it mean now and what did it mean in the past to describe America as exceptional? Who has used the language of American exceptionalism over time? Who has challenged it? How has the idea of American exceptionalism served to define what and who is and is not American? How has it shaped the ways that Americans, in and out of government, have viewed and interacted with other peoples and governments? To answer these questions, this course will take a historical approach to the idea of American exceptionalism, tracing it from the earliest period of colonial settlement to the recent present.
Prerequisite: Sophomores only

SEMN/ANSO 226 Theory in Action: Context, Positionality And Practical Application
Theories have been described in different ways across social movements. They have been defined as integral to liberation, as ancestral legacies, as weapons, and/or as inhabiting our bodies and dictating our actions and knowledges. However, prominent ideas remain that describe theory as abstract and disconnected from reality, considering it an elite and privileged process while divorcing it from form action. Nevertheless, all social movements are informed by theories that dictate an understanding of a problem and possible solutions. This course, through an examination of praxis, social movements, and intersectional literature, invites students to consider the ways theory served a key role in social justice projects like the Civil Rights Movement, Black Lives Matter, Mothers of East L.A., and tuition equity for undocumented migrants. Students will be exposed to hopeful and flexible theory that foregrounds the possibility of social change. Specifically, they will reflect on their own positionality as an entry point to understanding social problems and endeavor to put theory into practice, or as Aida Hurtado explains, deconstructing while reconstructing.
Prerequisite: Sophomores only

SEMN/ENGL 227 (un)making the British Empire
This course will investigate the expansion of the British empire in the nineteenth century and the forms of indigenous resistance that grew in response to it. Texts will be drawn from across Britain's colonial holdings. Throughout, we will examine British imperial and settler colonial ideologies in ways that center indigenous perspectives and voices. This course will be especially useful for those studying abroad in India, Australia, Botswana, or Thailand. This course is a Shared Passages Sophomore seminar. For the Historical and Cultural Breadth requirement, this course counts as a 19th-Century course, or it fulfills the minoritarian, diasporic or transnational requirement.
Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

SEMN/HIST 231 The Plague
This course explores the bubonic plague caused by the bacteria Yersinia pestis during the medieval period. Treating plague pandemics as both human and biological events, this course will explore the diverse cultural reactions to this devastating disease, its effects on labor and economic structures, its impacts on religion and community, its influences on public health policies and medicine, and its connections to modern epidemiology.
Prerequisite: Only Sophomores may register.

SEMN 233/POLS 231 Politics of Immigration
According to the UN Charter of Fundamental Rights, one has a fundamental right to leave one's country of origin (1948, Article 13), yet there is no corresponding right to enter another country. This sophomore seminar considers the consequence of this tension with attention to normative questions of who should be allowed entry to and citizenship within (other) states. In addition, we explore the empirical complexities that inform and result from these judgments. This seminar privileges states, laws (domestic and international) and actual policy over the last sixty years, with particular attention to North America and Western Europe – key destinations for migrants and thus crucial laboratories to investigate the myths, realities, policies and consequences of immigration. At a time when there are growing pressures for increased immigration in Western Europe (e.g., most recently the Arab Spring), we conclude by noting recent developments within the European Union to harmonize asylum and immigration policies. We ask - what are the ethical challenges and what might the future look like?

Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

SEMN/PSYC 238 Culture and Psychology of Arab-Muslim Societies
This course provides an introduction to Arab-Muslim societies and cultures. It draws on readings from multiple disciplines to cover social structure and family organization in tribal, village, and urban communities, core value systems associated with the etiquettes of honor-and-modesty and with the beliefs and practices of Islam, and influences on psychological development through the life-span. It also will examine the processes of “modernization” and “underdevelopment,” the conflict between Westernization and authentic “tradition,” the “Islamic revival,” and the crisis of identity experienced by youth.

Prerequisite: PSYC-101; Sophomores Only

SEMN/GERM 239 Cold War Kids
This course examines the various shapes and impacts of youth rebellion in the GDR (= East Germany) and looks at how the state reacted to these rebellions with attempts at indoctrination and control. The course examines these topics through readings, film, and music that offer a wide variety of perspectives on the topic and allow the students to develop analytic skill and improve their understanding of cultures beyond their own experience.

SEMN/ECON 240 Economics for Global Travelers
This Sophomore Seminar examines how economics can contribute to a better understanding of the world and our place in it. We will look at differences, similarities, and linkages among the economics of various nations. We will study flows of money, products, people, technologies, and ideas across national borders. The approach will be non-technical with an emphasis on understanding economic ideas. We will spend more time writing and discussing than on models or equations. Does not count toward economics or business major.

Prerequisite: Sophomores only. Cross-listed with ECON-240.

SEMN 241 Teaching for a Lifetime
This course is designed to help students develop skills that will enable them to deliver effective lessons for any audience, imagining the teacher in a variety of community roles from graduate school lab instructor to a candidate for local office. Participants will divide their time between both student and teacher classroom perspectives. The student perspective will be preparation for active, hands-on classroom teaching experiences off campus. Students will observe and work as novice teachers in Kalamazoo and build connections that highlight the relationship between the classroom and the community.

SEMN/ANSO 255 You Are What You Eat: Food and Identity In a Global Perspective
The goal of this course is to examine the social, symbolic, and political-economic roles of what and how we eat. While eating is essential to our survival, we rarely pay attention to what we eat and why. We will look at the significance of food and eating with particular attention to how people define themselves differently through their foodways. We will also study food's role in maintaining economic and social relations, cultural conceptions of health, and religion. Finally, the class examines the complex economic and political changes in food systems and the persistence of food's role as an expression of identity, social and ethnic markers. This course is a Shared Passages Sophomore Seminar.

SEMN 256/MUSC 205 Music and Identity
Music serves multiple roles: a force for social transformation, a flag of resistance, a proclamation of cultural identity, a catalyst for expressing emotion, an avenue to experiencing the sacred. Students will look at identity through the lens of contemporary and traditional American music and will consider how race, ethnicity, age, gender, national identity, and other factors express themselves in and are shaped by music. The ability to read music or understand basic music theory is not required; a love of music and an interest in American culture are essential. This course is a Shared Passages Sophomore Seminar.

Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

SEMN 257/HIST 256 Refugees and Migrants in Modern Europe
The course explores the history of migration from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day, focusing on people moving from, within, and to Europe.

Prerequisite: Sophomores only. Cross-listed with HIST-256

SEMN/ANSO 262 Real and Imagined Cities
This course explores the city as an idea, as material reality and the interconnections between the two. As an interdisciplinary field, urban geography draws from theories and frameworks in urban planning, anthropology, sociology and economics. This course introduces students to that field. Because the field is broad, the course has been structured into themes that we will explore each week.

Prerequisite: ANSO-103; Sophomores only

SEMN/ENGL 264 Global Shakespeares
Shakespeare is the most translated, adapted, performed, and published Western Author. Just what this means to Western and non-Western cultures is at the heart of this course. What does it mean to think of Shakespeare as a colonizing force? What additional ways are there to see the influence of his works? Many cultures have written back to Shakespeare, addressing race, sexuality, gender, and religion from their own cultural perspectives. What do exchanges between differently empowered cultures produce and reproduce? We'll tackle such questions as we read works by Shakespeare and literary/film adaptations from around the globe. This course is a Shared Passages Sophomore Seminar.

Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

SEMN/THEA 265 First Theatres
This sophomore seminar will survey the "first theatres" of many different areas of the pre-modern world -- including the Abydos Passion Play of ancient Egypt, Yoruba ritual, ancient Greek & Rome, Japanese Noh Theatre, early Chinese music drama, Sanskrit theatre of India, and European Medieval theatre. Through research, discussion, and critical thinking exercises, students will be encouraged to view performance as an intercultural and continually developing phenomenon in both art and daily life. This course is a Shared Passages Sophomore Seminar.

Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

SEMN/HIST/RELG 268 Jews on Film
It will examine themes in Jewish history and culture as expressed through the medium of film. Through readings, lectures, and class discussions, students will explore issues such as assimilation and acculturation, anti-Semitism, group cohesion, interfaith relations, Zionism, and the Holocaust. We will consider questions, such as: How are Jewish characters portrayed on film? Which elements of these portrayals change over time, and which remain constant? How do these cultural statements speak to the historical contexts that produced them? What choices do filmmakers make regarding the depiction of Jewish life, and how do those choices influence perceptions of Jews in particular, or minorities generally?

Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

SEMN/HIST/ ASIA 275 African Christianity
This course explores the complex and disparate trends of Christianity in Africa since the first century C. E. It highlights Africa's role in the development and growth of Christianity as a global religion.

Prerequisite: Sophomores Only

SEMN/HIST 287 What If: Alternate Pasts
This is a class about what might have been. Taking history itself as an object of analysis, this seminar will ask us to reconsider how we understand the past by thinking and acting in counterfactual ways. We will explore debates for and against counterfactualism and examine diverse counterfactual writings. We will also experience counterfactualism by participating in two role-playing activities, one set in a critical moment of reform in 19th century Korea, and the other set in Japan in the months before Pearl Harbor. As we seek to achieve the goals associated with specific roles, we will gain insights on the contingent, complex, and often messy reality of the past.

Prerequisite: Sophomores only

SEMN/ANSO 292 Development and Dispossession
This course takes a critical approach to the study of development, focusing particular attention on the displacement and dispossession of local populations. Using contemporary case studies, we examine how neoliberal policies and practices play out in various development sectors, including agriculture, infrastructure, and the extractive industry, in both rural and urban spaces in the U.S. and around the world.

Prerequisite: Sophomores only

SEMN/CHIN 295 Memory in Chinese Lit, Art, & Beyond
This course surveys the theme of memory in Chinese culture. By surveying pre-modern and modern Chinese literature, art, and beyond, students will observe how remembrance of the past has played significant roles in Chinese cultural history. While showing that the past has always played powerful roles in Chinese civilization, the seminar will also urge students to reflect on their own cultures by understanding that both private memories and cultural artifacts have been an inescapable part of the present: they offer models for present behaviors, and at the same time also recall what has been lost.

SEMN/JAPN 295 Visions of Utopia, Dystopia, and Apocalypse
From anarchism to Akira, from Buddhism to the bomb, modern Japanese culture has continually produced visions of a world perfected through its own utter devastation. This class explores visions of utopia, dystopia, and apocalypse that reveal volumes about the societies from which they arise, even as they point to the future. Topics include the use of utopic or
apocalyptic visions in political discourse, human impact on the natural world and its flourishing or destruction, and the potential of technology to improve human life or to destroy it entirely. Primary readings range from radical Japanese feminism of the early 1900s to the 1954 film Godzilla. Critical readings will introduce ecocritical and post-human approaches to the world in which we live.

**Prerequisite: Sophomores only**

**SEMN/THEA 295 Live Media, Virtual Performance**

For the last century, an ongoing argument over the value of live performance has dominated the discourse about the conflict between live theatre and other forms of mediated performance. In this course, we will talk about these various forms of performances and their differing degrees of liveness, from theatre and film to TV and radio to Twitch and social media. In doing so, we will see the intersections between digital culture and high culture across virtual and real boundaries.

**Prerequisite: Sophomores only**

**SEMN 295 Combat, Conflict and International News**

This course will examine the history, impact and practice of international news coverage, especially reporting from war zones and conflict areas. Classic accounts of war reportage; real-time reporting from a variety of news outlets across all platforms; journalism's impact on policy and public perception; interviews with veteran working journalists; journalism's ethical standards, best practices and most worrisome failures; the dangers of censorship, confirmation bias, PTSD and attacks on journalists; career opportunities in journalism, international aid work and the diplomatic corps --- all these will be areas of study in this course.

**Prerequisite: Sophomores only**

**SEMN 295 Poetry As Survival**

What happens when crisis, trauma and grief is translated into language? In this class we will read poetry written from "those who were never meant to survive". We will study how people in extremity (such as the AIDS epidemic, the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, racism in America, climate change, suicide and mental illness) use poetry as a means of survival. Through our critical readings and class discussion, we will investigate how poetry not only describes the world, but creates and transforms it. This course rests on the conviction that poetry belongs to all of us. In our class we will work hard to destabilize the myth that poetry is an inscrutable mystery. Through studying both the craft of poetry itself and critical poetic theory, we will develop the language and frameworks needed to discuss (and enjoy!) poetry.

**Prerequisite: Sophomores only**

**SEMN/GERM 295 Marx and the Arts**

What role does art play in the struggle to combat different forms of social, economic, and racial injustice? From the moment Karl Marx wrote his first reflections on this topic, this question has continued to preoccupy philosophers and artists from different schools of the Marxist tradition. In this course, we will examine the highly contested relation between art and politics within the legacy of Marxist thought. Focusing on key artists and thinkers concerned with the revolutionary potential of art, we will continually seek to explore the relevance of historical and theoretical debates to our current historical moment.

**SEMN 295 Nutrition: Societal to Physiological Outcomes**

This sophomore seminar will begin by delving into the societal and environmental aspects (Macro-level) of food and nutrition. These topics could include: mass production, food preservation and waste, food access/insecurity in urban areas as well as other possible themes. The latter half of the course will examine the (micro-level) individual health outcomes (obesity, diabetes, cancer) attributed to nutritional choices and also include content on personalized nutrition for healthy individuals and/or high-performance athletes. Students will become adept to diets of various cultures and make interpretations on the benefits and potential risks with consuming certain foods in habitual fashion.

**SEMN 295 Island Time: Pacific Lit**

Islands: Perhaps the word conjures images of white sand, blue water, warm weather. From the perspective of the mainland, the Pacific Islands are often paradoxically imagined as exotic escapes, but also as sacrifice zones to military testing and sea level rise. Though tourism and militarism might seem like opposite sides of the spectrum when it comes to imagining space, how can we trace histories of colonization in the Pacific to understand how these imaginations are intertwined? How do the Indigenous peoples of these islands define and express their own histories, cultures, and futurities? We will explore these questions through novels, short stories, poetry, and film.

**Prerequisite: Sophomores only**

**SEMN/HIST 295 US-Africa Relations Since WW2**

Course examines the long history of US involvement with Africa since WW2. We will move beyond stereotypes and mythology to a more complete understanding of the reality and possibilities of US-Africa relations. To do so, we will address question such as: -Under what circumstances have various Americans identified with Africa? -How have Americans sought influence or profits in Africa? To what effects? -Under what circumstances have various African countries identified with the US? Rather than being a study of individual African countries, the course will approach these questions through different topics and within specific countries’ contexts, including Zimbabwe.

**SEMN 295 Plants and Human Health**
Plants have pep! This course explores the essential role that plants play in human health. We will look through time and across continents to unfold the importance and variable usage of plants as medicine. Why do some plants have medicinal power? Can you safely navigate the herbal supplement aisle? Should you? We spend most of our time writing and discussing how plants affect our health from a personal and global perspective. Plants highlighted in the course play a significant role in history and the future of the human health pathway. Importantly, you can choose to dive into the plant or ailment that is important to you!

**Senior Seminars**

Senior Seminars are the culmination of the Shared Passages Program. Disciplinary senior seminars integrate students’ experiences inside and outside a particular major, while the interdisciplinary senior seminars listed below provide a liberal arts capstone experience, allowing students from a variety of majors to apply diverse aspects of their Kalamazoo College education to an interesting topic or problem.

**Senior seminars**

**SEMN 407 The Quest for Happiness: Living the Good and Gracious Life**

This course will draw on Psychological principles to explore how people can make their lives more fulfilling and meaningful. The course will focus on discussion and development of important life skills, including gratitude, resilience, and optimism, that are important for emotional well-being. Course assignments and discussions will emphasize reflection about one's own experiences at K as well as one's own goals for life post-graduation.

*Prerequisite: Seniors Only*

**SEMN 408 Slow Farming: Resilient, Just, and Joyful Agriculture**

In this interdisciplinary Senior Capstone, students will critically examine recent movements in organic, local, and sustainable agriculture and explore how we might engage in transforming our individual, institutional, community, and political relationships with food and farming. This course includes a weekly practicum at the K College hoophouse and gardens. Contact Amy Newday for an advance copy of the course syllabus. There are required on-campus components for this course.

*Prerequisite: Seniors Only*

**SEMN 432 Steal Like an Artist**

The aim of this senior capstone is to create a space in which artists across disciplines may collaboratively and individually prepare for life beyond the balance of safety and creative tension embodied in the studio, rehearsal space, and workshops central to their K education. What happens to the artist's creative life once set free from the structure and discipline of apprenticeship? Through self-designed projects, service-learning partnerships with local makers, lively discussion and reflective writing, we'll thoughtfully consider, define, and begin practicing what is required to sustain a joyful creative life beyond K.

*Prerequisite: Seniors only*

**SEMN 490 College: Backwards and Forwards**

This course will ask you look back at your college career and forward to your next steps. To help you look back on your college career, we'll be reading memoirs and other texts about how different individuals felt that they belonged or didn't belong to their college's culture. In that part of the course, we'll learn about The Kalamazoo Promise's goals for the community and its students and think about what has been successful and what still needs work and community involvement. That part of the course will also ask you to design and implement a project with Promise Scholars at K and/or Promise Students in the community as you help them think about entering and successfully completing college. This course will also ask that you look ahead (even if you're not sure what's next). We'll work with writing our own texts that narrate our experiences in college and writing the types of letters and statements that work to explain that experience to future employers or graduate schools. We'll have guests from the CCPD, the community activists who study the Promise, Promise scholars at K, historians of K's past, etc. as we look backwards and forwards at the college experience for students of different classes, races, ethnicities, and first generation students. In that light, I hope to have a very diverse class (including majors from across the campus) so that we can learn from each other in every way possible. We will be thinking about ourselves in wider contexts, including the world beyond K.

**SEMN/ENGL 491 Building the Archive: Baldwin & His Legacy**

In November of 1960, James Baldwin delivered an address, "In Search of a Majority," at Stetson Chapel which was later published in his book Nobody Knows My Name. This seminar will approach this visit (and Baldwin's work) as a site of analysis. As an actual event, the occasion left artifacts (publicity, newspaper accounts, published essay). It also can be read within the legacy of other Civil Rights era visitors to the college, including Charles V. Hamilton (co-author of Black Power: The Politics of Liberation). Moreover, as a writer who addressed national and international identity, racial politics (personal
and cultural), and sexuality, Baldwin's writings remain relevant. Through close attention to Baldwin and his milieu, this course will invite students to bring their own experiences and disciplinary knowledge to the reading, writing, and archival research. We will consider an archive of oral histories from those in the community who participated in or were influenced by the civil rights movement. This is a Shared Passages Senior Seminar and fulfills the Advanced Literary Study requirement.

**Prerequisite:** Seniors Only

**SEMN 492/ENGL 435 American Indian Literature & Law**

"American Indian Literature and the Law" is an interdisciplinary examination of the relationship between literary and legal texts that uses Critical Race Theory as a lens. Our goal is to uncover and analyze the complicated relationship between United States law and the creative productions of Indigenous nations of North America. At heart, this senior seminar asks you to reflect deeply on the power of storytelling and the relationship between "the text" and "the world." Our course is thus necessarily interdisciplinary, and we will conduct research on government documents relating to Indigenous peoples in addition to researching literary and cultural criticism on our texts, using these skills to develop final projects that reflect the interests of each student. This is a Shared Passages Senior Seminar and fulfills the Advanced Literary Study requirement.

**Prerequisite:** Seniors Only

**SEMN 495 Exploring Stigma: Verbal & Visual Narration**

Social stigma exists. It may be associated with perceptions of mental illness, socioeconomic status, race, religion, gender, identity, body image, HIV/AIDS, to name a few. Engaging their own experiences and disciplinary knowledge, students will be invited to explore the existence of stigma. Reading works of psychology, art therapy, and sociology; viewing multimedia artwork; and interacting with community members, students will examine the existence of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, and explore how narratives play a role in social justice and eliminating stigma.

**Prerequisite:** Seniors only

**SEMN 495 Law and the Legal Profession**

This course is designed to prepare seniors for entering law school and starting on their path toward a legal career. The class will begin by providing a brief overview of the legal system. We will then transition to discussing the structure of law school and the specific skills needed to succeed in that setting. To practice these skills, the class will spend four weeks simulating a typical law school course unit using torts, one of the standard topics covered in a law student's first year. This simulated unit will culminate in the students using case briefs and outlines they have prepared to take a fact pattern-based mid-term exam, like those that they will see in law school. Finally, we will explore the legal profession, covering the many options that exist for both traditional and non-traditional legal careers, with assignments that will help students make decisions about the direction they want to take their legal education and career. Our exploration will include hearing from guest speakers who currently work in some of the most common sectors of the legal profession. Students will conclude this section of the course with an informational interview with a legal professional working in a field that interests them. Throughout the course, students will be writing structured reflections about these professional interactions and about what they have learned about the law more generally.

**Prerequisite:** Seniors only

**SEMN 495 Vocational Calling in Healthcare**

This senior seminar is open to all senior students contemplating careers in healthcare, public health, global justice and humanitarian aid. This course will review the knowledge gained about the mind and body, as well as the traditions/practices of various cultures or religions in the human race. Course discussions will provide applicable scenarios to provider care. Further, a variety of guest speakers to provide unique lens and perspectives to examine current trends in healthcare and community outreach to foster meaningful discussion/solution generation. Finally, each student will craft a vocational discernment narrative which will inform their future approaches to displaying appropriate empathy, exemplifying intercultural competence and avoiding burnout in their chosen field.

**SEMN 495 Real World: K-College**

Kalamazoo College provides students ample opportunities to engage academically, experientially, globally, and intellectually. How do you connect those experiences to your plans for life after K? Through intentional self-assessment and reflection, practical career preparation activities, and projects with local and national employers, this course will help you reinforce your professional presence, enact a viable postgraduation strategy, and strengthen your network.

**SEMN 499 Special Topic Senior Capstone**

Senior Shared Passages Capstone special topics course. Topics will vary from course to course. SEMN-499 courses may be added to the curriculum throughout the year.

**Prerequisite:** Seniors Only

**SEMN 499 Being...**

While acknowledging the magnitude of the task, over time and across cultures, participants in this Senior Capstone will explore many endings to the title of the course and the means by which those ends can be attained. Though not limited to a short list of possible endings (and ends?) - such as aware, human, responsible, in transition, of use, green, a community, present, or good enough - explorations will be prescribed by time available and who is participating in the course. And, being
situated at a threshold, this course will include the Janus-like endeavors of reflecting on experiences and anticipating possible futures that will become part of narratives explored.

**Prerequisite: Seniors Only**

**SEMN 499 Historical Reading on Ferguson**
This course draws students into a critical engagement with police violence in the United States and the mounting resistance to it. Sparked by killings in Ferguson Missouri, many people are questioning how, why and to what extent such violence occurs. While the professor suggests readings, students will select texts, articles and blogs for the class and will lead discussions. Students will do reflections on how their liberal arts education at K has prepared them to take on this topic and how their education and this seminar might impact their life choices after graduation. Among other assignments, students will also write their own booklet on “a contemporary history of the police.” The areas of research for this project will be decided upon, framed, developed and written by the students.

**Prerequisite: Seniors Only**

**SEMN 499 Crafting a Life: Living the Liberal Arts**
This course is based on the liberal arts idea of educating the whole person. It will help students define and refine a contextual understanding of their own identity, a direction based on values, purpose and passion, and a personal philosophy upon which they can build a life. It will seek to explore and support integration of students' social, emotional, physical, cultural and ethical development and consider psychological well-being, the value of a rich and thoughtful interior life, articulated core beliefs, social engagement and openness to the unexpected as elements of a well-considered life plan.

**Prerequisite: Seniors Only**

**SEMN 499 Digital Passages: Personal & Public Narratives**
Digital storytelling stands out for its directness of emotional expression and voice. In this course, students will help bring to life the reality of their individual experiences-past, present, and conceivable future-through digital storytelling of various means. Students will reflect on their lives prior to college as well as what they've experienced while in school. They will look inward, but also outward, since students at Kalamazoo College have developed strong interests in a field of study and/or causes of social justice. We will look to see how their personal experiences have coalesced to influence their deep interest in a discipline-possibly interwoven with a practice of a being a socially constructive human being. Stories will begin with personal, factual evidence that grows outward-from the specific to the universal. Students then will make small pieces that relate their story using image and text or video and sound (utilizing easily accessible tools). The works may range from straight reportage to the experimental, from non-fiction to the allegorical. Their creative works will be designed primarily for, and dissemination through, social media. By imparting their story to an audience, it is hoped they will make meaningful connections between themselves and others.

**Prerequisite: Seniors only.**

**SEMN 499F Crafting a Life - Fall**
This course will help students define life goals and a direction based on values, purpose and passion, interests, identities, and a personal philosophy upon which they can build a life. Reflective practice is partnered with core practical life skills such as budgeting, public speaking, and interviewing, among others. This course requires students to begin imagining and preparing for the immediate next stages of life as well as the necessary work of designing a well-considered life plan.

**Prerequisite: Seniors Only**

**SEMN 499W Crafting a Life - Winter**
This course will help students define life goals and a direction based on values, purpose and passion, interests, identities, and a personal philosophy upon which they can build a life. Reflective practice is partnered with core practical life skills such as budgeting, public speaking, and interviewing, among others. This course requires students to begin imagining and preparing for the immediate next stages of life as well as the necessary work of designing a well-considered life plan.

**Prerequisite: SEMN-499F and Senior Standing**

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