Mission
Every Barnard first-year student is required to take a First-Year Seminar during her first or second semester at Barnard. First-Year Seminars are designed to develop further the essential and prerequisite skills a student brings to Barnard in critical reading and analysis, writing, and effective speaking. First-Year Seminars are intellectually challenging interdisciplinary courses which explore important issues through significant texts ranging across genres and historical periods. Seminars also serve to initiate students into the intellectual community of the college.

Student Learning Outcomes
1. Students in First-Year Seminars will develop their skills in critical reading and analysis, writing, and effective speaking.
2. They will assess and use textual evidence in support of oral and written arguments.
3. Students will explore important issues through significant texts ranging across genres, disciplines, and historical periods.

First-Year Seminars fall into two categories: **Special Topics** and **Reacting to the Past**.

**Special Topics** seminars reflect the variety of faculty interests and expertise, and thus vary in topic from year to year. They offer students and faculty opportunities to explore topics of interest across disciplinary lines, genres, and historical periods. Use the “Courses” tab above to view the full Special Topics offerings; current semester offerings are indicated with schedule details.

**Reacting to the Past** seminars, students participate in role-playing games that enable them to relive important intellectual debates in three separate historical moments.

Courses of Instruction
Every Barnard first-year student is required to take a First-Year Seminar during their first or second semester at Barnard. Transfer students are not required to take First-Year Seminars.

Special Topics
**FYSB BC1105 Language and Power. 3 points.**
This course will address the relationship between language and power from a philosophical perspective. We will investigate questions such as: How does language influence the way we think of gender, race, society, and politics? What are the limits, if any, on free speech? In what ways, if any, can language be used to harm people? Some topics we will discuss include hate speech, trigger warnings, slurs, dog whistles, propaganda, and silencing. Readings will include philosophical papers and recent op-eds.
FYSB BC1107 RACE, SCIENCE, AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE. 4 points.
This course is about reproduction—a biological and social process that is often the target of deep-seated ideas about nation, culture, conflict, and definitions of life. With an emphasis on the reproductive justice movement in the United States, which centers the experiences and leadership of BIPOC women and LGBTQ people, we will explore a variety of literary works, films, journalism, public health studies, and policy/legal texts, all of which differently narrate, debate, script, and theorize about reproduction. Questions we will explore include: what is reproduction—scientifically, culturally, politically, and rhetorically? What is reproductive justice, and how is it distinct from reproductive rights and health? How have recent innovations in medicine and reproductive technologies both empowered and harmed reproductive experiences? And what kind of world does the reproductive justice movement urge us to imagine and create? Please note that the material for this class discusses obstetric violence; this material is important for understanding the relationships between race, science, and reproductive justice. Throughout the semester, we will discuss as a class how to work through this difficult material in respectful and inclusive ways. NOTE: This 4-credit version of First-Year Seminar (FYS)—FYS “Workshop”—is specially designed for students who believe they would benefit from extra support with their critical reading and academic writing skills. In addition to regular seminar meetings twice per week, students are also required to participate in six Friday “writing labs” over the course of the semester. The writing labs for this section will take place on the following Fridays, 11:40am-12:55pm: 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, 2/5, 2/12, and 3/26. These dates are for the Spring 2021 semester only.

FYSB BC1114 Hot Stuff. 3 points.
Long before humans walked the earth; before dinosaurs were wiped out; before any sign of sentient life on earth; volcanoes were a feature of our planet. With the power to help create life, as well as wreak devastation and destruction, volcanoes inspire awe and terror in equal measure. This seminar will explore the science behind volcanoes, their impact on the environment and societies, as well as our enduring fascination with them through the lenses of history, arts, mythology and religion. Where and why do volcanoes erupt? How do they affect nature, climate and society? How has our understanding of these amazing natural phenomena evolved over time? Why do people stay in close proximity to volcanoes, despite the dangers? Can we predict when the next catastrophic eruption will occur? Can we harness the power of volcanic activity as alternative energy source? These are some of the many questions that students will seek to answer and will serve as a starting point for our deeper investigation into the subject throughout the semester. Students will study historical texts, case studies, current data and methods of analysis, as well as depictions of volcanoes in art and film. Group discussion, independent study and individual and group presentations. Students will research case studies and present their finding to the class.

FYSB BC1113 Feminist Futures. 3.00 points.
This course uses feminist and queer anti-racist engagements with science fiction as a starting point for considering speculation as a mode of inquiry and practice more generally. How and why do feminist authors, artists, activists, and theorists invoke the future in order to analyze and contest gendered inequalities and dominations that are experienced in the present? What are the consequences of speculation in the context of platform design and reproductive technologies? What is the role of imagination in dealing with archival documents? By posing these and other questions throughout the semester, we will explore numerous issues about the role of speculation, imagination, and forecasting in the everyday practice of feminist critique. The seminar meetings, readings, and assignments in this class all serve the larger goal of helping students cultivate intersectional approaches to the study of power.
FSYB BC1196 Modernism in the City. 3 points.
In this course, we explore Modernism in literature, art, architecture, music and dance. How do these different disciplines express the explosive and jarring experiences of twentieth-century life? Primary sources will include the cubist paintings of Pablo Picasso, the poetry of T. S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, and Langston Hughes, Bebop and Boogie Woogie jazz, Igor Stravinsky’s classical music “The Rite of Spring,” International Style architecture, and Alvin Ailey’s dance. Our classwork will be enriched by excursions throughout New York City.

FSYB BC1199 Losing Yourself: Absorption in Visual Media. 3 points.
How do we pay attention now: too well, or not well enough? This course aims to clarify the ongoing debate about both the value and the meaning of absorption in visual media. We will begin by comparing contemporary polemics on the decline of attention with writings by a generation of cultural critics writing in Germany in the 1920s and 30s, for whom distraction was both a symptom of and a response to an increasingly commodified culture. Next, we’ll draw on recent theorists to help us consider how three representative works (a painting, a sequence in a video game, and a chapter from a novel) shape the way we attend to them. When we imagine the way we pay attention now, we tend to think of reading, and of the book as a medium in decline. In this course, we will explore various methods for “reading” these objects and paintings. Visits to the Hudson River School will be accompanied by an exploration of the art and science. Readings will include works from Adam Smith, Milton Friedman, Charles Dickens, David Rockefeller and Chris Gardner.

FSYB BC1200 Banned: Dangerous Art. 3 points.
In this course we will engage with various forms of artistic production (literary, cinematic, pictorial, musical) that have been banned or censored by religious authority, governmental institutions, or by public opinion. While discussing these primary texts we will investigate who gets to censor art, to what ends, and according to which criteria. Who is protected from tasteless, subversive, or obscene art? How do these categories change with time, and from culture to culture?
FYSB BC1336 Witches. 3 points.
From ancient Greece to "Wicked," the figure of the witch has fascinated and frightened, compelled and repulsed. In this seminar, we'll analyze written and visual texts from Homer to The Brothers Grimm and beyond to develop a deeper understanding of the witch and the anxieties about gender and power that she represents.

FYSB BC1337 Feminism & Politics of Anger. 3 points.
Of late, much attention has been given to the political role of feminist anger. However, not all feminist anger is received or interpreted in the same way; not all women have had the same freedom to express or represent anger. This course asks us to think critically about expressions and perceptions of anger. How do race, sexuality, gender identity, class, and ethnicity shape who is perceived as "angry" and whose anger is taken seriously? What other affects circulate and interact with anger: from rage and irritation to wonder and joy? We'll begin with the figure of the "feminist killjoy," as theorized by Sara Ahmed and will consider texts by authors including Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, June Jordan, Susan Stryker, and Nella Larsen, alongside manifestos, comics, film, visual art, and zines.

FYSB BC1400 Walking and Looking. 3 points.
Walking and looking are among the most "natural" of human activities. But what really goes on—physiologically, culturally, socially—when we engage in them? And what can we learn if we examine the two practices together, as fundamental parts of how humans explore their world? This course will study how the interacting behaviors of walking and looking have been represented in word and image, from the Bible to Impressionist painters to Hollywood films. Our base texts will be Wanderlust: A History of Walking by Rebecca Solnit (2000) and On Looking: A Walker's Guide to the Art of Observation by Alexandra Horowitz (2013).

FYSB BC1421 Crossing Borders: Americas. 3 points.
This course cuts across the borders between North, South and Central America and the Caribbean, in a search for the ways in which literature illuminates different aspects of American identity. We see the Americas as active historical and aesthetic agents, acting and interacting with each other. We might even say that modernity, in the sense of freedom from tradition, first developed in the Americas; as a result, the literatures of the Americas are characterized by diversity and innovation from their beginning. We will devote particular attention to the roots of Modernism in North and South America at the end of the 19th century, and the development of modernism, post-modernism and post-colonialism in the 20th and early 21st centuries.

FYSB BC1422 Art, AIDS, Activism. 3 points.
This seminar explores the varied ways artists responded to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 90s. As government indifference persisted and deaths soared, artists became radicalized and contemporary art became a vehicle for activism. We will follow different tactics in artwork responding to AIDS including the use of gay desire as a weapon and emblem of the fight for visibility. The work we will view, think about, discuss, and write about is political, often angry, and always tinged with loss. Because AIDS affected marginalized communities, whose histories are still being told, we will examine a range of artists and materials that includes but also moves beyond the gay white male perspective. We will spend time with videos by Juanita Mohammad, visual art by Kia LaBeija, Feliz Gonzalez-Torres, and David Wojnarowicz, plays by Reza Abdoh and Tony Kushner, and the writings of Audre Lorde, Essex Hemphill, and Sarah Schulman. The final project will be an academic/creative hybrid: students will develop and pitch their own activist artwork.

FYSB BC1460 Memory. 3 points.
Memory is arguably the most important faculty that we possess. Not surprisingly, memory has been a ubiquitous topic in poetry, science, fiction, and in the media. Ironically, memory's value is perhaps best understood when it ceases to exist. Indeed, it isn't hard to imagine the devastation that comes with memory loss. In this course, we will survey various components of memory, including its role in writing and history, and its existence in various non-human populations. In addition, we will explore the fragility of memory, including distortions, unusual memories, and basic forgetting. Readings will include poems, theoretical essays, scientific articles, and fiction. Assignments will consist of essays, opinion pieces, and creative stories. Students will also participate in a final in-class debate. Readings will include works from William Blake, James Joyce, Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, Emily Dickinson, Ben Jonson, Mary Carruthers, Francis Yates, Aristotle, William James, Elizabeth Loftus, Spinoza, Luria, J.l. Borges, S. Freud, Oliver Sacks, Truman Capote.

FYSB BC1465 On Dreams and Nightmares. 3 points.
In the dead of night it is not uncommon for even the most socially staid of individuals to fly, to ride an elephant at breakneck speed, to visit the dead, or to expose themselves in public. Ancient Egyptians struggled to understand how and why we dream, as have countless individuals in other times and cultures. Some thinkers, ancient and modern, have dismissed dreams as essentially meaningless byproducts of natural processes. Others have taken dreams seriously as a primary means of access to an ordinarily imperceivable world in which one can commune with spirits and deities and receive from them valuable information about future events or even one's own health. The implications of this belief have led to vigorous theological debates as to whose dreams may be trusted (and, alternatively, whose need to be actively suppressed). From Freud onward, many have felt that dreams offer the key not to other worlds but to the complicated realm of the psyche. Over the course of our semester we'll look at how scientists, philosophers, hypochondriacs, pious pagans and monotheists, opium addicts, psychologists, playwrights, novelists, artists, and film directors have understood dreams and been inspired by them. Authors whose works we'll read include Aristotle, Cicero, Chung Tzu, Freud, Carl Jung, Andre Breton, H.P. Lovecraft, Jorge Borges, Ursula Le Guin, Neil Gaimon, and many others. Special attention will likewise be paid to the phenomenon of lucid dreaming and to the immense influence this practice has had on the creative output of both writers and filmmakers.
FYSB BC1466 Sustainability. 3 points.
Sustainability is being hailed as the solution that is going to link activists, citizens, and corporations to solve the world’s environmental problems. However, there are many ways to define the term and assess the long-term effects of so-called sustainable measures. In this course, we will examine current and historical writings about human interactions with the environment in order to understand and identify our most profound environmental challenges and the most appropriate responses. Responding critically to the ideas of the past, we will also ask how our views have changed over time and what it might take to tackle the current large-scale.

FYSB BC1469 Liberation. 3 points.
Liberation can be defined as freedom from limits on thought or behavior. More specifically, it can be defined as setting someone (or oneself) free from imprisonment, slavery, or oppression. This seminar examines political, philosophical, aesthetic, and theological traditions and movements for liberation, with an emphasis on collective liberation.

Fall 2022: FYSB BC1469

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FYSB BC1474 Think Like A Scientist: From Plato to Hawking. 3 points.
This course will examine the “scientific worldview” throughout the history of the Western world. Key questions will include: how do science and philosophy intersect to influence our views of nature?; how does science help us to understand our place in the world and in the universe?; what happens when objective scientific inquiry clashes with political and societal interests?; how does popular opinion affect the way that science is conducted? In attempting to answer these questions, we will reflect on what it means to use what we have learned (from both science and history) to synthesize new viewpoints that can have a positive impact on our future.

FYSB BC1583 CARIBBEAN DIASPORA LITERATURE IN NEW YORK. 3 points.
Historically, Caribbean cultures have been profoundly affected and shaped by the massive displacement and migration of their populations. In this course, we will examine how this condition of displacement is articulated in the writings of the Caribbean diaspora and how these literary representations of mobility, migration, and intercultural contact reflect current globalizing processes and discourses. Texts will be drawn from the Francophone, Anglophone, and Hispanic Caribbean diaspora. These include the novel The Mimic Men by the recent Nobel-Prize-winning Trinidadian writer V.S. Naipaul; the novel Lucy by the Antiguan writer Jamaica Kincaid; and short stories by Junot Díaz and Edwidge Danticat, writers of Dominican and Haitian descent respectively, the latter a Barnard graduate. These readings will be complemented by essays from critics such as Edouard Glissant, Stuart Hall, and James Clifford.

FYSB BC1597 Taboo and Transgression. 3 points.
This seminar explores taboo and transgression within a range of mythic, scientific, anthropological, psychoanalytical, feminist, and literary work. Topics include the treatment of the corpse during the Paleolithic, the centrality of the incest taboo in kinship studies, and the equation of secular modernity with the successive breaking of taboos.
FYSB BC1709 DRAMA, THEATRE, AND ART. 3.00 points.
Drama, Theatre, and Art will consider the ways in which the performing arts and the visual arts help change the ways we see art and life. Beginning with reimagined classics and Shakespeare's plays, we will move to the 18th-21st centuries and note how views of individual agency, social justice, and collective responsibility have changed over time. We will also ask what the performing arts and visual arts of the past have to say about issues confronted in the arts of the present. This will help us to understand how evolving aesthetic movements such as realism, impressionism, and modernism promote and critique our cultural perspectives and our social values. Plays include Sarah Ruhl's Eurydice, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, Timberlake Wertenbaker's Our Country's Good, Thornton Wilder's Our Town, Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun and Les Blancs, and Yasmina Rez's Art; novels include Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse; musicals include Stephen Sondheim's Sunday in the Park with George and Rachel Chavkin's Hadestown. Art from The Metropolitan Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, and other sites will promote student engagement with visual and verbal interactions and cross disciplinary conversations.
Widow movie option of taking part in a class excursion to see Marvel’s upcoming Black Grant Morrison, among others. Students in this seminar will have the readings will include Gilgamesh, Beowulf, Watchmen, The Dark Knight like Batman? This seminar will seek answers to these questions by throughout history, across cultures and in different forms of media? What accomplishments. What accounts for the enduring appeal of heroes literary works in the world, tells the story of a great hero and his millennia-old phenomena. Gilgamesh, one of the oldest surviving Endgame, Wonder Woman and the Batman franchise attests to our to verbalize and present ideas effectively. Students in this class will develop key fundamental skills, such as active reading and analysis, how to write in different rhetorical modes, and how to verbalize and present ideas effectively.

FYSB BC1729 AMERICA’S SOCIAL DIVIDES. 3.00 points.
This first year seminar explores some of the central cleavages dividing American society today, along such lines as social class, region, race, and political ideology. We will focus how social divisions are constituted, experienced, questioned, and bridged. Most of the assigned material will be based on primary research in the social sciences, along with a small number of documentaries, novels, and/or memoirs. Assigned books may include Arlie Hochschild, Strangers in their Own Land; Eric Klinenberg, Palaces for the People; Barbara Ransby, Making All Black Lives Matter; Rachel Sherman, Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence; and Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj, The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility

FYSB BC1730 THINKING THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: A LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE. 3 points.
What is the origin of the notion of “natural resource”? What is the connection between past and present colonialism and the current ecological crisis in Latin America? And, what is the relation between cultural diversity and a sustainable economy? In this seminar, we will explore these questions (and more) by looking at the history of Latin America through primary and secondary texts, including Latin American Literary, philosophical, aesthetic, legal, political, and economic texts. We will read both canonical and non-canonical writings from the colonial and modern periods as well as indigenous literature. The course will place this tradition in dialogue with the most recent developments of eco-feminism, materialist ontologies, discussions of environmental justice, “deep ecology,” and the rights of non-human nature. Readings will be selected from Domingo Sarmiento, Jose de Acosta, Andres Bello, Domitila Barrios, Ivonne Guevara, Enrique Leff, Luis Sepulveda, Donna Haraway, Jason Moore, McKenzie Wark, Timothy Morton, Naomi Klein, and John Clark. Throughout the course, we will consider how indigenous ideals of solidarity, reciprocity, and emancipation offer an alternative to strategies of domination.

FYSB BC1731 FROM EPIC HERO TO SUPER HERO. 3.00 points.
The enormous box office success of recent moves like Avengers: Endgame, Wonder Woman and the Batman franchise attests to our present societal fascination with heroes. Yet this fascination is a millennia-old phenomena. Gilgamesh, one of the oldest surviving literary works in the world, tells the story of a great hero and his accomplishments. What accounts for the enduring appeal of heroes throughout history, across cultures and in different forms of media? What connects ancient epic heroes like Gilgamesh to modern superheroes like Batman? This seminar will seek answers to these questions by comparatively studying a range of artistic texts depicting heroes. Course readings will include Gilgamesh, Beowulf, Watchmen, The Dark Knight Returns, as well as studies by Marco Arnaudo, Joseph Campbell and Grant Morrison, among others. Students in this seminar will have the option of taking part in a class excursion to see Marvel’s upcoming Black Widow movie

FYSB BC1732 FEMINISM # POLITICS OF ANGER (WKSHOP). 4.00 points.
Of late, much attention has been given to the political role of feminist anger. However, not all feminist anger is received or interpreted in the same way; not all women have had the same freedom to express or represent anger. This course asks us to think critically about expressions and perceptions of anger. How do race, sexuality, gender identity, class, and ethnicity shape who is perceived as “angry” and whose anger is taken seriously? What other affects circulate and interact with anger? from rage and irritation to wonder and joy? We’ll begin with the figure of the “feminist killjoy,” as theorized by Sara Ahmed and will consider texts by authors including Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, June Jordan, Susan Stryker, and Nella Larsen, alongside manifestos, comics, film, visual art, and zines. NOTE: This 4-credit version of First-Year Seminar (FYS)—FYS “Workshop”—is especially designed for students who believe they would benefit from extra support with their critical reading and academic writing skills. In addition to regular seminar meetings twice per week, students are also required to participate in six ‘writing labs’ over the course of the semester. The writing labs for this section will take place on the following Fridays, 11:40 am-12:55 pm: 1/31, 2/14, 2/28, 3/6, 3/27, and 4/3

FYSB BC1733 Women # Comedy. 3.00 points.
“What a language it is, the laughter of women, high-flying and subversive. Long before law and scripture we heard the laughter, we understood freedom.” -Lisel Mueller “I’m not funny, what I am is brave.” - Lucille Ball This course focuses on the intersection between comedy and gender, race, class and sexuality. We will explore laughter as a subversive act and how the identity of a “funny woman” can be both dangerous and liberating. As Margo Jefferson writes, “Given the history of social restriction and sexual regulation, how many women have been in a position to – or been willing to – take these risks?” We will explore how the tools of comedy can be used to make mischief, to transgress the bounds of genre and form and to contest popular ideas about difference and power. How can humor be illuminating? How can humor be feminist? How can humor be intersectional? How can humor help us tell the hard truths? Can we laugh at oppression without laughing it off? At every step, we will put our inquiry into action – trying our hand at satire, sketch and storytelling to explore our own intersections. Readings may include Audre Lorde’s Sister Outsider, Samantha Chasen’s Lydia’s Funeral Video and Patricia Lockwood’s Motherland Fatherland Homelandsexuals

FYSB BC1734 Culture, Identity, & The Self. 3 points.
This First-Year Seminar, we explore how people discover themselves and others in the frameworks of different cultures and times. Our focus is on the idea of the self (who are you?) and the other (who are you not?), and we investigate these concepts as they appear in six great books from Western and Non-Western sources. The texts include: The Epic of Gilgamesh, The Aeneid, The Golden Legend, Austin’s Emma, Satrapi’s Persepolis, and Woolf’s A Room of One’s One. Additionally, we will contrast these with their movie versions and a visit to a museum. Students in this class will develop key fundamental skills, such as active reading and analysis, how to write in different rhetorical modes, and how to verbalize and present ideas effectively.

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FYSB BC1735 IS GOD DEAD?. 3 points.
Friedrich Nietzsche’s 1882 pronouncement that “God is dead” is one of the most notorious and widely-referenced criticisms of the relationship between Theology and Modernity in contemporary thought. But what does it mean to say “God is dead;” in fact? What was Nietzsche talking about? How might this statement be “true”? How might it be inaccurate? In this class, we will use Nietzsche’s statement as a jumping-off point to begin thinking about how modern ideas about the continuities and distinctions between religion and politics developed between the 16th and the 20th centuries in such a way that to say “God is dead” became a meaningful summation of Modernity. In addition to Nietzsche, we will read classical and critical works of political theology from a diverse array of authors such as Jean Bodin, Thomas Hobbes, Benedict de Spinoza, Beatriz Kampa Vita, Carl Schmitt, Max Weber, Zora Neale Hurston, W.E.B. DuBois, and Simone Weil to answer for questions: What does it mean to talk about God? Is God dead? If so, when and how did God die? And if God is not dead, how has God been kept alive — and where can this figure be found today?

FYSB BC1736 TECH & SOCIETY: GOOD, BAD & OTHER. 3 points.
Computing and information technology has improved our lives in many ways, contributing to significant advances in science and medicine; making it easy and efficient to communicate with people across the world; and enabling online business and recreational activities; and more. However, the same technologies can also have negative impacts, such as the move to a surveillance society and surveillance capitalism; major disruptions in the workforce of the future as automation becomes more widespread; and social media contributing to depression in young people and the weaponization of disinformation. This seminar will explore technical, cultural, legal, and economic factors that can impact how computing technology is used, while raising the question of how to encourage and ensure that these technologies are used for good, while eliminating or mitigating the potential negative impacts.

FYSB BC1737 SURVEILLANCE, CONTAGION, AND CARE. 3 points.
Very recent events have forced local, regional, and international communities to once again confront contagion as a globally shared event. This seminar examines some of the historical and contemporary expressions of contagion as moral and ethical experience. We will interrogate the surveillance systems that are utilized by modern governments and economies not only as public health goods and private sector assets, but also legacies of conquest, colonialism, and capitalism. Finally, we explore the role of care within these systems, its inherent power dynamics, and the politics of vulnerability. Texts include (and are not limited to) Katherine Anne Porter’s Pale Horse, Pale Fire; excerpts from Camus, Galeano, Sontag, Foucault; historical and sociological accounts of tuberculosis; anthropological and ethnographic accounts of the global HIV epidemic; feminist philosophers on the politics of care and the sciences (e.g., Sandra Laugier, Annemarie Mol); and written and audio journalism topical to these accounts.

FYSB BC1738 PERFORMING PUBLICS # POLITICAL ACTIVISM. 3.00 points.
This seminar examines how different publics engage in the political process through performance. We start our exploration with the notion of “the publics” as introduced by the twentieth-century German philosopher Jürgen Habermas and then expand our view of this concept to the contemporary political setting. We will look at both how elected representatives use theatrical tropes to shape their public personas, and equally at how popular protests stage large scale public interventions. How might performance as a series of citational strategies allow us to think about the political process? We will draw heavily on the works of feminist performance scholars like Judith Butler, Shannon Jackson and Peggy Phelan, who discuss the different ways in which gendered bodies navigate public space. In this seminar students will be required to draw on their personal experiences of public performances. This may be in the shape of their own activism, politics in their hometowns, their favorite public figures, or memorable live shows they have watched. Writing ethnographically, students will engage with the theorists we read to investigate how performance has shaped their lives. For Fall 2020 we will be focusing on public responses to the COVID-19 crisis. Different populations reacted differently to the global pandemic. From local politicians, medical professionals, frontline workers to everyday citizens, everyone reflected, in different measure, on the loss of the public sphere. We assembled in the digital commons instead. How did we deal with our own isolation from public life while at the same time thinking of keeping the collective body safe from contagion? What are the ways in which we engaged with our community to reaffirm a common humanity?

FYSB BC1739 Dead and Undead (Wkshop). 4.00 points.
What does it mean to be dead? Why the fascination—across time and culture—with conceiving of ways in which the dead can become undead? And how is being undead different than being alive? To investigate and trouble the boundaries between life and death (and un-death), we will analyze works across genres—among them horror, comedy, myth, folklore, and medicine—discussing near-death experiences, beating-heart cadavers, and a range of figures including zombies, ghosts, and other revenants. Readings will include texts and excerpts from Montaigne, Shakespeare, Zora Neale Hurston, Ovid, Toni Morrison, Carmen Maria Machado, Edgar Allen Poe, Nalo Hopkinson, and Mary Shelley, along with Japanese death poems, the Netflix series Russian Doll, and Tim Burton’s Frankenweenie. NOTE: Several of the readings for this class involve references to or representations of violence, sometimes explicit. NOTE: This 4.00-credit version of First-Year Seminar (FYS)—FYS “Workshop”—is specially designed for students who believe they would benefit from extra support with their critical reading and academic writing skills. In addition to regular seminar meetings twice per week, students are also required to participate in six Friday "writing labs" over the course of the semester. The writing labs for this section will take place on the following Fridays, 2:40-3:55pm: 2/12, 2/26, 3/4, 3/11, 3/18, and 3/25. APP REQUIRED BY 11/5 @ 5PM – please fill out this form: https://forms.gle/aPxYrdD3drP8SNoV9
FYSB BC1740 Approaching Trauma. 3.00 points.
Trauma today is evoked in a variety of contexts. But what precisely are we referring to when we use this term? Drawing on psychoanalytic and anthropological approaches, our seminar will interrogate the politics of diagnosing, treating and healing from disturbing past events. We will watch films and read case histories of hysteria, studies of infants, and attempts to integrate mind, brain and body. The course will also examine the rise of PTSD, attend to questions of intergenerational transmission, and learn about responses to national and racial trauma. Featured authors include Sigmund Freud, Beatrice Beebe, Allan Young, Marilyn Ivy and Resmaa Menakem

FYSB BC1741 Science and Society on Screen. 3 points.
When we turn on TV and go to the movies we are typically looking to be entertained. When it comes to science on screen is the purpose for entertainment or education? How do science-related movies and TV reflect but also impact society? Can movies and TV be used to discuss the complex intersection between science and society and how are they received by the public? To discuss these questions and more, we will analyze texts, including Silent Spring and Demon Haunted World and visual media such as Hidden Figures, The Twilight Zone, and Erin Brokovich.

FYSB BC1742 Journeys. 3 points.
The journey is a central motif in narrative writing dating back many thousands of years. The classical example of the journey comes from the experiences of Odysseus in Homer’s The Odyssey but journeys also feature in the narratives of the Hebrew Bible as well as the Buddha. The idea of the journey as a transformative experience has remained relevant and, indeed, become so prevalent that it is arguably the foundation of modern popular culture. This class examines the idea of the journey (and travel in a wider sense) through five primary analytic frameworks. The course begins (framework #1) with the interplay between travel and wonder as epitomized in the classical Islamic literary tradition through the travel accounts of Battuta and the famous story of Sinbad. It then turns to Jonathan Swift’s use of travel as a means for social satire in Gulliver’s Travels (framework #2) before drawing on William James’ psychological framework to consider the journey as a metaphor for conversion (framework #3) through the example of Malcolm X. The course then considers travel writing in the modern period as a performative or confessional act through representative examples from Kerouac, Didion, Krakauer, and Gilbert. This is followed by an engagement with Joseph Campbell’s notion of the monomyth as embodied by the films Star Wars: A New Hope (1977) and Spirited Away (1991). The final reading in the course centers on Octavia Butler’s Kindred which depicts a series of voyages through time that demand a reckoning or confrontation with the past.

FYSB BC1743 Existentialism in Lit # Film. 3.00 points.
This seminar explores literary and cinematic depictions of themes in existential thought. The term “existentialism” was first coined to refer to German and French philosophy from (roughly) 1920 to 1950, but it also applies to writers of the previous century, especially Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche. Moreover, its central subjects – perennial matters of human concern such freedom, anxiety, alienation, faith, the meaning of life -- can be found in fiction and cinema, from Kafka to Martin Scorsese. Authors will also include Camus, Sartre, and Beauvoir, and we will watch and discuss films directed by Carol Reed, Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, and Michelangelo Antonioni.
FYSB BC1750 Literature on Trial. 3 points.
Why are novels so interested in trials? What is the relationship between literary and legal interpretation, and between the role of a reader and that of a juror? How do we interpret “facts” in a literary text versus a legal context? What does justice look like in a literary work? In this course we will look at the idea of illusion through several different discourses including philosophical, religious, scientific, political, and artistic. We will consider skeptical positions on the external world, consciousness and free will; we will look at debates about self-deception and political ideology. We will discuss fantasies and dreams, and consider whether being in love or being a child have illusory dimensions. And throughout we will consider works of art (especially film - texts that range from classical epic (Homer, Virgil) through medieval allegory (Dante, Machaut) to psychoanalysis (Freud and his contemporaries), queer metafiction (Winterson, Sarduy, Lynch), and beyond. We will consider among other topics how dreams raise fundamental questions about being, memory, desire, interpretation, and Utopian politics. Students will practice critical writing and discussion, and also have the opportunity to engage their own dreams and fantasies both analytically and creatively.

FYSB BC1751 Creativity and Inspiration. 3 points.
Where do creative ideas come from? The Muses, according to Plato. The unconscious, according to some later thinkers. One thing both answers share is the thought that creative ideas come from something “other than” or “not controlled by” the creator – or, as we'll put it, that creativity requires inspiration. In this class, we will explore this and related ideas in Western thinking about creativity. In doing so, we'll examine how creative people themselves, from painters to mathematicians, have described their own creative process and experiences. We'll examine approaches to creativity from the Taoist tradition, comparing them with the Western approaches that will be our main focus. At the end of the class, we'll think about whether computer programs can be creative, and what it might mean for claims about inspiration if they can be. Readings will include selections from James Baldwin, Margaret Boden, Chung-yan Chang, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, bell hooks, Immanuel Kant, Henri Poincaré, Flannery O'Connor, Elizabeth Robinson, and others.

FYSB BC1752 Dreamstories. 3.00 points.
The complex relationship between dreaming and narrative storytelling is as contemporary as it is ancient. In this first-year seminar, we will examine Greco-Roman, medieval, modern, and postmodern representations of dreaming in literature, philosophy and film - texts that range from classical epic (Homer, Virgil) through medieval allegory (Dante, Machaut) to psychoanalysis (Freud and his contemporaries), queer metafiction (Winterson, Sarduy, Lynch), and beyond. We will consider among other topics how dreams raise fundamental questions about being, memory, desire, interpretation, and Utopian politics. Students will practice critical writing and discussion, and also have the opportunity to engage their own dreams and fantasies both analytically and creatively.

FYSB BC1753 Illusion. 3.00 points.
How do you know that what you see or sense is real? What if what you thought you knew about the world, other people, and yourself, was wrong? In this course we will look at the idea of illusion through several different discourses including philosophical, religious, scientific, political, and artistic. We will consider skeptical positions on the external world, consciousness and free will; we will look at debates about self-deception and political ideology. We will discuss fantasies and dreams, and consider whether being in love or being a child have illusory dimensions. And throughout we will consider works of art (especially film and photography), and will ask whether art itself is a kind of illusion. We will also consider normative and ethical questions: is it always bad to be taken in by an illusion? Can illusions ever be helpful? Historical authors include: Plato, Vasubandhu, Sextus Empiricus, Descartes, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Baldwin, Butler. Films to be screened include: Imitation of Life and The Last Unicorn.
FYSB BC1754 Border Stories (Wkshop). 4.00 points.
The U.S.-Mexico border delimits more than nations; it is both a political and a social geography, marked by bodies of water, mountains, walls, ideologies, repression, and resistance. The crisis currently taking place at the border is an unfolding story with many narrators. This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to thinking about, and traversing, the constructs of the border. We will study literary texts: fiction, poetry, and memoir written by those who know the border, and borderlands, intimately. We will also engage histories, social movement doctrine, and media coverage to mine the stories they tell. Throughout the semester, participants in this course will track reports from the border from a range of sources, and create an interactive story map. NOTE: This 4-credit version of First-Year Seminar (FYS)—FYS "Workshop"—is specially designed for students who believe they would benefit from extra support with their critical reading and academic writing skills. In addition to regular seminar meetings twice per week, students are also required to participate in six Friday "writing labs" over the course of the semester. The writing labs for this section will take place on the following Fridays, 10:10-11:25am (yes, this is the correct time!): 1/28, 2/11, 2/25, 3/25, 4/8, and 4/22. APP REQUIRED BY 11/5 @ 5PM – please fill out this form: https://forms.gle/aPxYrdD3drP8SNoV9

FYSB BC1755 Race, Science, # Reproductive Justice. 3.00 points.
This course is about reproduction—a biological and social process that is often the target of deep-seated ideas about identity, nation, culture, and definitions of life. With an emphasis on intersectional approaches to reproductive justice, we'll read a variety of literary works, journalism, films and television shows, public health studies, and policy/legal texts, all of which differently narrate, debate, script, and theorize about reproduction. Questions we will explore include: what stories do we tell about reproduction? What role have innovations in reproductive technologies played in this process, from contraceptive uses of medicinal plants, to in-vitro fertilization and so-called "DIY" abortions, to population and development projects all over the world? How do long histories of obstetric violence inform modern definitions of reproductive health, rights, and justice? What kind of world does an intersectional and inclusive reproductive justice movement urge us to create? Please note that some of the material for this course includes references to or descriptions of obstetric violence

FYSB BC1756 Reading Dance. 3.00 points.
Dance as action takes place in a variety of places and by organisms, and is represented in literature, film, the proscenium stage in just as many ways as there are forms of dance. Reading Dance will explore how authors employ movement to enrich narrative, reflect the human condition, view class and gender, experience how choreographers use text to support a silent form of communication and consider choreography itself text. Primary sources will include Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Ntozake Shange, T.S. Eliot, Zadie Smith, Martha Graham, Michael Jackson, and Brian Friel

FYSB BC1757 Change and Climate Change. 3.00 points.
Change and Climate Change explores how we spark, facilitate, and accelerate change - or block, impede, and slow it - on the individual, social, and planetary levels. In the context of the climate emergency and the vast global social and environmental changes it both brings and demands, this course asks: what is change, and how do we do it? Students will identify and characterize different change processes, and analyze strategies for adapting to, mitigating, accelerating, or shaping change. Readings and projects will explore activism, education, research, storytelling, and performances by scientists, artists, indigenous leaders, and activists including Paul Hawken, Ruth DeFries, Janine Benyus, Cynthia Li, Atul Gawande, Octavia Butler, Adrienne Maree Brown, Rosi Braidotti, Ian Hodder, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Elizabeth Kolbert, Naomi Klein, and Suzan-Lori Parks. Student projects will explore how natural and human systems shape and experience change and apply those lessons to the current climate challenge

First-Year Seminar 11
FYSB BC1758 The Secret Life of Stuff. 3.00 points.
"It has a mind of its own," we shriek as the TV channels change without our input or the garage door opens when no one is home. Things can spark joy, grant authority, lead to our demise, and reveal our deepest secrets. They mediate social relationships, define political alliances, and provide economic opportunities. Sometimes it is not the presence of things but their absence – a misplaced phone, an expired passport, a childhood home – that more keenly shapes our reality. While people make objects, objects also make people. This class will investigate the secret life of stuff, from maps to cups and buildings to body parts, to explore how inanimate objects can be seen to have an agency and power of their own. Our discussions will draw on a wide array of authors from a variety of fields, including Bill Brown, Martin Heidigger, Anni Albers, Neel Ahuja, Katherine Ott, Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, and Anna Tsing. To accompany these texts, we will also turn to other, less traditional sources of information, from podcasts to museum exhibits and our own personal histories with things.

Spring 2022: FYSB BC1758
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FYSB 1758 001/00479 T Th 1:10pm - 2:25pm Camilla Sturm 3.00 16/16
306 Milbank Hall

FYSB BC1759 Political Fare: Food # Freedom - Philosophies and Fictions of Food and Freedom. 3.00 points.
In Wretched of the Earth (1961), Franz Fanon famously writes that to "hunger with dignity is preferable to bread eaten in slavery." Taking this provocation as our starting point, this course will chart the function of food in hunger in philosophical and political conceptions of freedom. From Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal” (1729) to the political-promise-turned-fiction of 40 acres and a mule following the U.S. Civil War, we will also examine the legal, historical, and literary representations of food at the heart (and belly) of the human story. Core texts will include Hannah Arendt’s On Revolution (1963), Andrea Stuart’s Sugar in the Blood: A Family’s Story of Slavery and Empire (2016), Paul Selltou’s The Sellout (2015), Vandana Shiva’s Manifestoes on the Future of Food and Seed (2007), Bong Joon-ho’s Okja (2017), and Andreas Johnsen’s Bugs Sellout (2015), Vandana Shiva’s Manifestoes on the Future of Food and Freedom: 1961.

Spring 2022: FYSB BC1759
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FYSB 1759 001/00069 T Th 5:40pm - 6:55pm Melissa Wright 3.00 16/16
L018 Milstein Center

Reacting to the Past
In these seminars, students play complex historical role-playing games informed by classic texts. After an initial set-up phase, class sessions are run by students. These seminars are speaking- and writing-intensive, as students pursue their assigned roles' objectives by convincing classmates of their views. Examples of games played in First-Year Seminar Reacting classes include: 1) The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C. explores a pivotal moment following the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War, when democrats sought to restore democracy while critics, including the supporters of Socrates, proposed alternatives. The key text is Plato’s Republic. 2) Confucianism and the Succession Crisis of the Wanli Emperor examines a dispute between Confucian purists and pragmatists within the Hanlin Academy, the highest echelon of the Ming bureaucracy, taking Analects of Confucius as the central text. 3) The Trial of Anne Hutchinson revisits a conflict that pitted Puritan dissenter Anne Hutchinson and her supporters against Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop and the orthodox ministers of New England. Students work with testimony from Hutchinson’s trial as well as the Bible and other texts. 4) Greenwich Village, 1913: Suffrage, Labor and the New Woman investigates the struggle between radical labor activists and woman suffragists for the hearts and minds of "Bohemians," drawing on foundational works by Marx, Freud, Mary Wollstonecraft, and others.

FYSB BC1601 Reacting to the Past. 3 points.
In these seminars, students play complex historical role-playing games informed by classic texts. After an initial set-up phase, class sessions are run by students. These seminars are speaking- and writing-intensive, as students pursue their assigned roles' objectives by convincing classmates of their views. Examples of games played in First-Year Seminar Reacting class include: 1) The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C. explores a pivotal moment following the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War, when democrats sought to restore democracy while critics, including the supporters of Socrates, proposed alternatives. The key text is Plato’s Republic. 2) Confucianism and the Succession Crisis of the Wanli Emperor examines a dispute between Confucian purists and pragmatists within the Hanlin Academy, the highest echelon of the Ming bureaucracy, taking Analects of Confucius as the central text. 3) The Trial of Anne Hutchinson revisits a conflict that pitted Puritan dissenter Anne Hutchinson and her supporters against Massachusetts Governor John Winthrop and the orthodox ministers of New England. Students work with testimony from Hutchinson’s trial as well as the Bible and other texts. 4) Greenwich Village, 1913: Suffrage, Labor and the New Woman investigates the struggle between radical labor activists and woman suffragists for the hearts and minds of "Bohemians," drawing on foundational works by Marx, Freud, Mary Wollstonecraft, and others.

Spring 2022: FYSB BC1601
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FYSB 1601 001/00200 T Th 11:40am - 12:55pm Daniela Kempf 3 15/16
302 Barnard Hall
FYSB 1601 002/00201 M W 2:40pm - 3:55pm Laurie Postlewate 3 18/18
207 Milbank Hall

Fall 2022: FYSB BC1601
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FYSB 1601 001/00728 M W 2:40pm - 3:55pm Mark Cames 3 0/19
L016 Milstein Center
FYSB 1601 002/00729 T Th 8:40am - 9:55am Kristina Milnor 3 0/17
L016 Milstein Center
FYSB 1601 003/00730 T Th 4:10pm - 5:25pm Jennifer Worth 3 0/18
Room TBA