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.

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

In The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C., students draw on Plato's Republic as well as excerpts from Thucydides, Xenophon, and other contemporary sources to debate the prospects for Athenian democracy in the wake of the Peloponnesian War.

In Confucianism and the Succession Crisis of the Wanli Emperor, students study The Analects of Confucius and apply Confucian thought to issues of governance during the Ming dynasty. The final semester’s final game varies by section. Some sections explore seventeenth-century Massachusetts, drawing on the Bible, Calvin’s Institutes, and colonial trial testimony to participate in The Trial of Anne Hutchinson. Other sections draw on texts by Marx, Freud, and Wollstonecraft to explore the contest between women's suffrage advocates and labor activists for the hearts and minds of "Bohemian" Greenwich Village in the spring of 1913.

This program is supervised by the First-Year Experience Committee led by the First-Year Seminar
Co-Directors: Pamela Cobrin (Senior Lecturer in English) and Laurie Postlewate (Senior Lecturer in French); Director of First-Year Writing: Wendy Schor-Haïm (Senior Lecturer in English); Director of First-Year Writing Workshop: Cecelia Lie-Spahn (Lecturer in English)

Instruction in the First-Year Seminar Program is provided by the following faculty members:

Professors: Taylor Carman (Philosophy), Mark Carnes (History), Lisa Son (Psychology), Najam Haider (Religion), Debra Minkoff (Sociology), Rebecca Wright (Computer Science)

Associate Professors: Orlando Bentancor (Spanish), Severin Fowles (Anthropology), Horn (Spanish), Ellen Morris (Classics)

Assistant Professors: Nicholas Bartlett (Asian and Middle Eastern Cultures), Logan Brenner (Environmental Science), Gregory Bryda (Art History), Michael Campbell (Chemistry), Erica Drennan (Slavic), Gina Jae (Anthropology), Manu Karuka (American Studies), Karen Lewis (Philosophy), Emily Ng (Asian and Middle Eastern Cultures), Eugene Petracca (English), Francey Russell (Philosophy), Nathanael Shelley (Asian and Middle Eastern Cultures), Camilla Sturm (Anthropology), Timothy Vasko (Religion)

Professors of Professional Practice: Sandra Goldman (Theatre), Alice Reagan (Theatre)

Lecturers, Senior Lecturers and Other Faculty:
Stephanie Beardman (Philosophy), Meredith Benjamin (English), Benjamin Breyer (English), Kristi-Lynn Cassaro (English), Monica Cohen (English), Kristin Carter (English), Pamela Cobrin (English), Patricia Denison (English), Margaret Ellsberg (English), Katie Glasner (Dance), Quincy Jones (English), Daniela Kempf (English), Cecelia Lie-Spahn (English), Andrew Lynn (English), Linn Cary Mehta (English), Shayoni Mitra (Theatre), Francesca Ochoa (English), John Pagano (English), Sonia Pereira (Economics), Alexander Pittman (Center for Engaged Pedagogy), Laurie Postlewate (French), Sedelia Rodriguez (Environmental Science), Jennifer Rosenthal (English), Karen Santos da Silva (French), Wendy Schor-Haïm (English), Nina Sharma (English), Timea Szell (English), Duygu Ula (English), Penelope Usher (English), Margaret Vandenburg (English), Jennifer Worth (Reacting to the Past)

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

FY9B 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 do recent innovations in medicine and reproductive technologies both empower and harm reproductive experiences? And what kind of world does the reproductive justice movement urge us to imagine and create? Please note that the material for our 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 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 domination 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.

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 findings to the class.

FYSB BC1189 Enchanted Imagination. 3 points.
A survey of fantasy works that examines the transformative role of the imagination in aesthetic and creative experience, challenges accepted boundaries between the imagined and the real, and celebrates Otherness and Magicality in a disenchanted world. Readings will be selected from fairy tales, Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Tempest*; Romantic poetry by Blake, Coleridge, Keats, and Dickinson; Romantic art by Friedrich, Waterhouse, and Dore; Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* books, Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*, Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings; Magical Realist works by Borges, Garcia Marquez, and Allende; Sondheim & Lapine’s *Into the Woods*, Rushdie’s *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*.

FYSB 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.
FYSB 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 ourselves as not reading, and of the book as a medium in decline. In the second half of the class, we’ll therefore turn our attention to the late eighteenth century, when it was widespread reading that seemed strange and new. Together, we’ll focus on two mixed forms from the period – the epistolary novel and the ballad collection – that helped make reading itself at once troublingly distracting and dangerously absorbing.

FYSB 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 BC1286 Culture, Ethics and Economics. 3 points.
What if humans were only capable of caring for their own interests? What kind of economic world could we expect to find? One in which the common good would be attained by market forces, or one in which many would be left behind? This course uses a diversity of sources to examine the interplay of culture, ethics and economics. The starting point is Adam Smith’s work. Economists and policy makers have focused on one side of Adam Smith’s work represented by self-regarding behavior and the supremacy of the invisible hand in market functioning. However, Adam Smith also pointed out that one of humans’ central emotions is “sympathy”, a natural tendency to care about the well-being of others. In light of the recent events as well as research this other side of Adam Smith’s work appears now more relevant. We analyze evidence of cooperative versus self-regarding behaviors and its relationship with the economy, human evolution and cultural values in a variety of settings. Readings include works from Adam Smith, Milton Freedman, Charles Dickens, David Rockefeller and Chris Gardner.

FYSB BC1294 Art, Sex and American Culture. 3 points.
Sex is the ultimate forbidden public topic and yet from the New England Puritans’ sermons to Bill Clinton’s (in)famous affair, sex has often been publicly staged in dramatic, literary, religious, political, legal and social forums. In this seminar, we will explore how issues of sex and sexuality have insinuated themselves into the formation of American identity. We will examine texts from the seventeenth century to the present with a particular emphasis on the arts, politics and sex. Texts include Puritan sermons, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter, Tennessee Williams’s Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Suzan-Lori Parks’s Venus, photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe, literature from Margaret Sanger’s birth control movement, and theoretical works by Michel Foucault, Laura Mulvey and Judith Butler.

FYSB BC1296 The Hudson: America’s River. 3 points.
Called “America’s River” the Hudson not only runs right behind our campus, but right through American history. Throughout American history the Hudson River has been a complex social and cultural entity, simultaneously a commercial conduit, a historic place at the center of the American Revolution, an industrial resource, and a privileged site for aesthetic experiences and the as birthplace of modern environmentalism. In this course you will explore the Hudson in relationship to the varied historical communities which have made meaning with it, identifying its contributions to discourses of nation and nature, but also race, gender, art and science. Readings will include literary works by Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper as well as essays and poems on subjects from fairies to trees to architecture to railroad travel. Close analysis of works of architecture, landscape design, and the iconic paintings of the Hudson River School will be accompanied by an exploration of the various methods for "reading" these objects and paintings. Visits to Museum collections and to sites along the river will be an important part of the curriculum.

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.

Spring 2021: FYSB BC1337
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
FYSB 1337  001/00329  M W 11:40am - 12:55pm Room TBA  Meredith Benjamin  3  16/16

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 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 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 other. We might even say that modernity, in the sense of freedom from

Spring 2021: FYSB BC1421
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
FYSB 1421  001/00331  M W 7:40pm - 8:55pm  Lj017 Milstein Center  Linn Mehta  3  10/14

Fall 2021: FYSB BC1422
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
FYSB 1422  001/00717  M W 10:10am - 11:25am Room TBA  Alice Reagan  3  16/16

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 with 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 rigorous 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, André 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.

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 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 BC1598 Building Utopia. 3 points.
Building Utopia examines the rich tradition of utopian thinking in literature, social philosophy, architecture, and the visual arts. Here, utopia is explored in its modern form: as a call to transform the world through human planning and ingenuity. Aside from an important excursus on Thomas More’s pivotal novel Utopia (1516), the course centers on nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers whose often wild and idealistic imaginings profoundly affected the shape of the real world. We’ll read and explore the works of Charles Fourier, Edward Bellamy, the Italian Futurists, and Le Corbusier, among many others. The purpose of the course is to better understand the role that the utopian imagination has played in the construction of power.
FYSB BC1713 Things and Stuff. 3 points.
How do our material choices shape our cultural and individual narratives? How do the things we make, buy, use, keep, and discard tell stories, impact our environment, and help define who we are? Americans create over 125 million tons of landfill every year, and up to 60%-80% of global greenhouse gas emissions have been traced to household consumption (food, stuff, and transport). With this contemporary reality as our reference point, we will examine how designed and built objects contribute to the human story over time, and how our decisions about “things and stuff” might change our stories moving forward.

FYSB BC1599 Tipping Points. 3 points.
The printing press helped pave the way for the scientific revolution and the invention of human rights. What will transpire in the digital age of artificial intelligence and globalization? This seminar questions whether intellectual, economic, technological, and ethical tipping points transform what it means to be human. Authors include Locke, Jefferson, Shelley, Freud, Rushdie, Ishiguro, McLuhan, Lyotard, and Offill.

FYSB BC1707 Confession. 3 points.
Not offered during 2021-22 academic year.
This seminar explores the notion of “confession” in many manifestations (autobiography, memoir, sacrament/ritual, political/judicial performance, public spectacle/confessional culture) and from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (history, literature, psychoanalysis, theology, cultural studies). Readings include: Augustine, Confessions; Foucault, History of Sexuality, vol. 1; Ginsberg, The Cheese and the Worms; Dostoyevsky, Notes from Underground; Miranda v. Arizona; Gillian Slovo, Red Dust; Jackson, The Politics of Storytelling; Bauer, The Art of the Public Grovel; Cole, The Torture Memos; Asad, Genealogies of Religion; “The Lives of Others” (film; 2006, Florian Henckel von Donnersmark).

FYSB BC1715 ARTS OF ADAPTATION. 3.00 points.
Can a ballet tell the same story as a Shakespeare tragedy? Do the violent fantasies of a fairytale shape romantic comedy? What does Bollywood have to do with Victorian England? Can ancient mythology animate slave narrative? Using as textual anchors Grimm’s Snow White, Ovid’s Medea, Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, and Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, this course will explore poems, paintings, films, musicals, dance, illustration, advertisement and song to consider the accretion of meaning that results when stories cross, historical, cultural, and generic borders.

FYSB BC1722 Postcolonial Comics. 3 points.
In postcolonial studies, we look at the history, politics, and culture of countries that were once colonized. In literature, this work is done through careful close-reading and paying attention to how the struggle for independence is represented in literary texts, both on an individual and collective level. In this course, we will push the boundaries of the discipline of postcolonial studies and use its methodologies to read about locations and peoples that weren’t formerly (or formally) colonized (for example, Ancient Greece, New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, 20th century Iran, and female Jewish immigrants in New York City circa 1910). We’ll also investigate why graphic novels present an appropriate medium for studying postcolonialisms.
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, 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 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 ‘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 Chanse’s Lydia’s Funeral Video and Patricia Lockwood’s Motherland Fatherland Homelandsexuals.

Spring 2021: FYSB BC1733
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FYSB 1733 001/00586 T Th 11:40am - 12:55pm 323 Milbank Hall Nina Sharma 3.00 16/16

Fall 2021: FYSB BC1733
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FYSB 1733 001/00726 M W 11:40am - 12:55pm Room TBA Nina Sharma 3.00 16/16

FYSB BC1734 CULTURE, IDENTITY, & THE SELF. 3 points.

In 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, Satrapī’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.

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 to 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, Beatrix 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?

Fall 2021: FYSB BC1735
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FYSB 1735 001/00727 T Th 4:10pm - 5:25pm Room TBA Timothy Vasko 3 16/16

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.

Fall 2021: FYSB BC1736
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FYSB 1736 001/00745 T Th 4:10pm - 5:25pm Room TBA Rebecca Wright 3 16/16
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, Gaiano, 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, Annamarie Mol); and written and audio journalism topical to these accounts.

Fall 2021: FYSB BC1737
Course Section/Call Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
BC1737 001/00730 M W 10:10am - 11:25am Gina Jae 3 16/16

Room TBA

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 the collective body safe from contagion? What are the ways in which we engaged with our community to reaffirm a common humanity?

Fall 2021: FYSB BC1738
Course Section/Call Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
BC1738 001/00731 T Th 2:40pm - 3:55pm Shayoni Mitra 3.00 10/16

Room TBA

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 likely 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-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, 1:10 pm-2:25 pm: 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, 2/5, 2/12, and 4/2. These dates are for the Spring 2021 semester only

Spring 2021: FYSB BC1739
Course Section/Call Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
BC1739 001/00591 T Th 1:10pm - 2:25pm Usher 4.00 16/16

Room TBA

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 Reshma Menakem.

Spring 2021: FYSB BC1740
Course Section/Call Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
BC1740 001/00587 T Th 1:10pm - 2:25pm Bartlett 3.00 16/16

Room TBA

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.

Spring 2021: FYSB BC1741
Course Section/Call Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
BC1741 001/00588 M W 10:10am - 11:25am Logan Brenner 3 16/16

Room TBA
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 transformative 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 BC1744 Here/There: Migrant Narratives. 3.00 points.
This first-year seminar brings together texts, films and contemporary art that focus on migrant, immigrant, refugee, expat and exile experiences. We will explore how migrant subjects negotiate dominant discourses of nationality and citizenship, and how their identities as migrants intersect with their other positionalities, with a particular emphasis on race and queerness. Some questions we will consider: How are immigrant, migrant and refugees marginalized, racialized and queered by dominant discourses? How do Black and/or queer subjects negotiate belonging when they travel across cultural, national, linguistic and religious borders? How do these authors, filmmakers resist erasure and complicate our understanding of home, belonging and identity? Possible texts: fiction, poetry and nonfiction by James Baldwin, Ocean Vuong, Marjane Satrapi, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Cherrie Moraga, Gayatri Gopinath, C.P. Cavafy, Masha Gessen, Kazim Ali, Nazim Hikmet; films such as Saving Face, My Brother the Devil, Mr. Gay Syria, My Beautiful Launderette; as well as contemporary visual art, podcasts and activist texts.

Spring 2021: FYSB BC1742

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<td>Najam Haider</td>
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Spring 2021: FYSB BC1743

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<td>T Th 8:40am - 9:55am 113 Milstein Center</td>
<td>Taylor Carman</td>
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Spring 2021: FYSB BC1744

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Fall 2021: FYSB BC1744

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Spring 2021: FYSB BC1745

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<td>T Th 10:10am - 11:25am Room TBA</td>
<td>Kristi-Lynn Cassaro</td>
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### FYSB BC1746 Women of Color in Speculative Literature. 3.00 points.

"The Future is Female" except in science fiction, where it still looks pretty white and male. What happens when women of color take on such tropes as space exploration, cybernetics, superpowers, and the end of the world? How can women of color change the way we not only think of the future, but think of the present as well? In this first-year seminar, we'll look at how speculative literature approaches the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, technology, and environmental concerns. Readings will include work from such authors as Octavia Butler, Franny Choi, Sam Chane, G Willow Wilson, and Tananarive Due with potential critical readings from Lisa Yaszek, Charlotte E Howell, and bell hooks.

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<td>Quincy Jones</td>
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### FYSB BC1747 Writing Caribbean Feminisms. 3.00 points.

This course offers an in-depth engagement with the Critical Caribbean Feminisms series, organized at Barnard College since 2015. These in-person conversations with contemporary Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora women authors and the accompanying podcast series center their experience with race, gender, diaspora, and writing. In this course we consider how the authors’ thoughts on the Caribbean, feminism, and their experience in the U.S. are represented and expanded upon in their writings through close readings of their novels, short stories, essays, and poems. The course culminates with each student proposing a Caribbean woman writer to add to the podcast series and suggesting how this writer’s voice resonates with and expands on the authors and themes studied throughout the course. Some of the authors we will read and discuss are Jamaica Kincaid, Audre Lorde, Claudia Rankine, Edwidge Danticat, and Roxane Gay, among many others.

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### FYSB BC1748 Immortality, Death, # Meaning in Life. 3.00 points.

How are conceptions of the self tied to notions of temporality and mortality, life and the end of life? This seminar will take us on an exploration of various attitudes one can have towards the prospect of death, and what such attitudes might reflect about the meaning of life. We will address the coherence and desirability of immortality in both its literal and metaphorical senses. In what manner might one 'live on' through one's creations? Does death render life meaningless, or does it give meaning to life? Works include readings by Tolstoy, Albert Camus, Virginia Woolf, as well as poetry, artwork, and plays.

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<td>Maja Horn</td>
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### FYSB BC1749 Psychopolitics. 3.00 points.

What shapes our psychic lives today? How are histories of pain and possibility transmitted, ruptured, and transformed across generations? This class draws on anthropology, psychoanalysis, critical theories, literature, and poetry to explore the politics of the psyche. We will read writings by bell hooks, Frantz Fanon, Natalie Diaz, Ocean Vuong, Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, Gananath Obeyesekere, David Eng, Shinhee Han, and others. We begin with common encounters that inform and disrupt our lives, move to concepts of self and culture, explore how these are inflected by violent histories and extractive economies, and end with questions of what lives on.

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<td>FYSB 1749</td>
<td>001/00736</td>
<td>T Th 1:10pm - 2:25pm Room TBA</td>
<td>Emily Ng</td>
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### FYSB BC1750 Literature on Trial. 3.00 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 read works that feature trials in order to explore the relationship between the literary and the legal, two very different ways of making sense of the world that collide in literature about trials. We will put literary characters on trial in order to explore how guilt, judgment, and redemption operate in the works we read, and to consider our own role and responsibility as readers. Readings will include works by James Baldwin, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Vladimir Nabokov, Claudia Rankine, and Marjane Satrapi.

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<td>Erica Drennan</td>
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### FYSB BC1751 Creativity and Inspiration. 3.00 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 the 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 it 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-yuan Chang, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, bell hooks, Immanuel Kant, Henri Poincaré, Flannery O'Connor, Elizabeth Robinson, and others.

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<td>Christopher Prodoehl</td>
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### 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.

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**Spring 2021: FYSB BC1601**

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<td>Daniela Kempf</td>
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<td>FYSB 1601</td>
<td>003/00334</td>
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<td>Kate Glasner</td>
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**Fall 2021: FYSB BC1601**

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<td>Mark Carnes</td>
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