

Elizabethtown College Honors Program

Current Courses

First-Year Seminars

The Bible as Literature

Dr. Christina Bucher

Why does Abraham allow his wife Sarah to be taken into the household of a foreign ruler, not just once, but twice? Why does the conniving Jacob—who takes advantage of his older brother and deceives his father—prosper in the book of Genesis? How is it that the secret of Samson’s power lies in his long hair? Is the story of Jonah a satire? Why doesn’t biblical poetry rhyme? This seminar explores ways to answer questions such as these by approaching the Bible as literature, exploring basic elements of ancient Hebrew narrative (e.g., plot, characterization, and linguistic strategies_ and the essential characteristic of Hebrew poetry, semantic parallelism. We also draw upon the material culture of the ancient world (e.g., cylinder seals, amulets, wall reliefs) to help us better understand the cultural context in which the narratives and poems of the Bible were written. Finally, we get a taste of some newer literary approaches to the Bible by sampling reader-response, feminist, deconstructionist, and psychoanalytic interpretations of selected biblical texts.

The Big Theological Questions

Prof/Chaplain Tracy Wenger Sadd

This course introduces students to the fields of systematic and philosophical theology by placing phrases from the Christian creeds in the context of larger philosophical questions. This course explores questions about the existence and nature of God, the problem of evil, the doctrine of salvation, the divinity and humanity of Jesus, the relationship of Christianity to other world religions, and more. At the same time, this course is neither a philosophic defense of Christian belief, nor a discourse solely from the theistic tradition. In addition to reading apologetic and philosophical texts, students will be challenged with the diverse human dimensions of religious belief and encounter alternative views through reading short stories by writers from religious traditions including Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Confucianism. Granting significant attention to analyzing arguments made by scholars who hold opposing theological and philosophical positions, this course challenges students to debate controversial issues in theology and to begin to articulate their own constructive arguments.

Diversity, Social Justice and Identity

Dr. Tara Smith

People define themselves in terms of multiple identities -- we are students, men, women, sisters, athletes, gay, straight, vegetarians, etc. However, in our society, some identities and group memberships are more valued than others. In this course, we explore the issues of social justice that our social systems of privilege and disadvantage bring up. We consider both marginalized and privileged identities using a variety of sources, and will also consider the multiple identities that we all possess. We particularly focus on the ways in which one’s gender, social class, race / ethnicity, and sexual orientation / identity influence our sense of self.

Political Self-Determination

Dr. E. Fletcher McClellan

This seminar explores the politics and morality of how nation-states deal with the demands of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities for political self-determination. Through case studies drawn from the American experience and the international arena, we look at the kinds of claims minority groups have made upon majorities, ranging from protection from discrimination to political independence, and how majorities have responded. We address the questions of what rights minority cultures should possess and what moral justifications exist for secession. Ultimately, we consider how majority-minority conflicts can be resolved peaceably and justly.

Cryptologic Mathematics

Dr. Tim McDevitt

An introduction to the use of mathematics in cryptology including both the making and breaking of codes. Elementary introductions to advanced mathematics (modular arithmetic, matrix algebra, probability) are provided at a level appropriate for first-year college students with the goal of studying cryptologic algorithms of historical

importance. This provides the background necessary to understand the foundations of current popular cryptographic algorithms like AES, RC4, and RSA.

Gotta Have It--Exploring the Science of Addiction

Dr. Thomas E. Hagan

Understanding the science of addiction is a key factor in making good decisions about health-related issues. By exploring the applicable biology, chemistry, physiology, and pharmacology that takes place during the process of addiction, students will be able to delineate how exposure to potentially addictive substances can impact the operation of the body at the cellular, tissue and organ levels. Armed with a solid understanding of addiction at the biological science level, we will conclude the course by probing correlations in the social science realm so students can effectively establish the strong link to the psychological basis of addiction and how this affects our social interactions and ultimately our own identity.

Mythbusters

Dr. April Kelly-Woessner

Every day, politicians, the media, and political activists mislead Americans with twisted facts, half-truths, and inaccurate statistics. In this course, students will learn to be critical consumers of information and to challenge the misinformation they encounter. We will discuss the motivations behind misleading and false claims and consider why seemingly smart people believe absurd things. Students will learn to recognize suspicious sources of information and to identify unsubstantiated conclusions. They will learn the art of empiricism and the use of the scientific method as a tool for uncovering the truth. Finally, students will put their knowledge to use by becoming “myth busters,” designing their own social science experiments to test commonly held but questionable beliefs about human behavior.

Shakespeare Through Performance

Dr. John Rohrkemper

In this seminar we will work intensely with four of Shakespeare’s greatest plays: a classic tragedy, *Hamlet*, and a classic comedy, *Twelfth Night*, as well as two more mixed and problematic plays, the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* and the comedy *Merchant of Venice*. We will employ literary analysis in considering each play, but also will consider each text as a script—a plan for performance. I will expect students to begin to think in theatrical ways, and ask them to imagine and sometimes enact ways of making Shakespeare’s language come alive, particularly through voice and movement. I won’t expect students in this seminar to have any experience in acting or directing, but I will ask them to “get on their feet” and explore performance concepts and techniques in class. We will also consider Shakespeare and his work historically, examining four centuries of performance history—and how these performances reflected and shaped culture.

What’s Wrong with the World?

Dr. R. William Ayres

The purposes of this course are three. First, like all First Year Seminars, this course is meant as an “*introduction to college*.” You should get a sense of what the academic side of college is like, how it works, and what to expect in your four years here. Second, it is a course about a *particular set of problems*, which most Americans lump together under the heading “things wrong with the rest of the world.” These things – poverty in Africa, ethnic conflict, and the challenge of making democracy work in the current world system – all show up regularly in headlines, but we don’t usually make much sense of them. This course will seek to make sense of these problems. Third, this is a course about *how to answer questions*. Big “why” questions – wondering why the world is so messed up – require critical thinking to address. As it turns out, most other important questions in college (and in life) also require critical thinking, too, so the final purpose of this course is to provide training in a vital set of skills that will carry you through life.