FALL 2018 FIRST YEAR SEMINARS
(These courses are open ONLY to freshman of the class of 2022)
Students may register for only ONE First Year Seminar

FINA-159-F2  “Truth is Stranger Than Fiction”     L. Peterson                                                            TTH 01:00PM-02:50PM
Do you sometimes feel like the truth is stranger than fiction? In this class, we will examine the expectations that we have for documentary film and photography to tell us the truth. We will explore documentary storytelling including the art of the interview and image making techniques. Film screenings will include those that address social, cultural, and historical issues. Students will learn to analyze how documentary film and photography represent distinct perspectives thereby actively shaping viewers’ understanding of these subjects.

This course looks at the role archaeology can play in illuminating the cultural, historical, and geographical environments in which the New Testament texts were written. Students will learn about some of the methods used in the excavation, dating, and interpretation of material culture. They will examine some of the problems faced by archaeologists who use the New Testament as a reference guide for interpreting historical data, or Bible scholars who seek confirmation of New Testament events through archaeology. The course surveys numerous archaeological sites around the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East that are relevant to the study and understanding of the New Testament and early Christianity.

HUMA-159-F2:  Reading Vampires: From Dracula to Twilight   M. Snyder-Broussard                   MWF 11:30AM-12:35PM
This course will simultaneously explore college-level reading strategies and the evolution of the vampire from the mid-18th century to modern pop culture using representative texts and films such as Dracula, I Am Legend, Interview with the Vampire, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and Twilight. A special emphasis will be placed on reading secondary sources that will prepare students for reading in other college courses. Furthermore, this course will explore how authors have used vampires to explore many social and psychological phenomena, such as fear, sexuality, death, and racism.

HUMA-159- F3  Salem Witch Trials   C. Pearl                                                                                       TTH 09:45AM 11:35AM
The Salem Witch Trials of 1692 are one of the iconic events in American history. Almost from the conclusion of the final trial, these tragic events captured American imagination. This class examines the trials themselves and the various ways in which contemporaries and historians have interpreted them. Largely a discussion based class; students will analyze trial records, poems, and firsthand accounts of the event. Students will also evaluate differing scholarly and popular interpretations of the trials in Salem. Through this class students will learn the historical method, how to critically evaluate texts, and be able to place the Salem Witch Trials within early Puritan New England society, culture and religion.
If you love to write, this course may be ideal. During the semester, we’ll discuss lyrically written books that explore identity, as well as your own personal reflections. You’ll be asked to contemplate your lives in ways that transcend simplistic descriptions by developing detailed scenes and metaphors. You need to have an open mind about sharing your experiences, always understanding that our class remains our class: respectful, kind, and completely private.

Utopia is a slippery term; its definition varies from writer to writer -- and from reader to reader. When we allow ourselves to dream of the ideal life and the ideal society, we reveal the values, assumptions, aspirations, deepest fears, and limitations that, consciously or unconsciously, help shape the choices we make for ourselves and our society in the real world. This course will examine the human yearning for radically improved, imaginary elsewheres -- a motif which extends from ancient tales of the Golden Age to twentieth century predictions of future wonderlands -- and explore elements of commonality and difference. These works offer insights that seem increasingly provocative (and frequently poignant) as today’s readers face a world which seems at war with itself: the spectre of global warning; the tragedy of multiple wars and their atrocities; the frightening (and increasing gap between obscene wealth and abject poverty. The student’s reading of the assigned utopian texts, and viewing of selected films, will be the subjects of discussion, brief lectures, tests, quizzes, a “Do It Yourself Utopia”, and essays. Students will also research, read, and report on an additional text, either "literary" or theoretical.

Is the gap between knowing and believing vast or small? What is the difference between the two? In this course, we will explore questions such as these, questions that lie at the very heart of all three enterprises listed in the title – science, religion, and magic. Through these questions we will investigate what seem like neat and tidy distinctions between the three conceptual spaces and discover what sort of relationship they actually have with one another.

Have you ever wondered why people tell ghost stories, trick or treat, carve pumpkins, or dress up in costume in late October? This course explores the traditions of All Hallows Eve and how it became the multi-billion dollar Halloween holiday celebrated around the world today. We will discuss Halloween traditions, practices, and culture using a variety of mediums, including works of fiction and a few site visits. Along the way, students will learn how culture shapes human behavior. By the end of this course, students will also learn tips to successfully navigate the college research process.
This course takes a critical look at some of the fantastic interpretations of archaeological remains that make popular subjects for movies, television shows, magazine articles, books, and the web—interpretations typically described as “pseudoscience.” In this class we explore a series of questions that often attract pseudoscientific claims: Who were the First Americans? Who built the large earthen mounds found across the eastern US? Is the city of Atlantis really lost? Did ancient aliens help the Egyptians build their pyramids? As a student, you will leave this course armed with the critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate this and other claims—that is, the archaeological myth buster’s toolkit.