

# First-Year Academic Seminars

## Spring 2024

### Program Description:

The First-Year Academic Seminar (FYS) is a foundational course for entering students.

- FYS is limited to **17 or fewer** students per section.
- They offer an array of topics from **multiple disciplines**
- Each seminar introduces students to **diverse historical and contemporary perspectives** on a particular issue, context, or problem.
- Students develop a discerning understanding of these perspectives through frequent and significant university-level **reading, writing, and discussion**.
- These courses are taught by **full-time faculty** from across the university.
- All sections are open to students across all schools.
- The course does not count toward any major or minor.

Barbara Allen (Associate Professor of History)

### **“Gaming the Past: People, Ideas, Events”**

This course provides experiential exploration of historical crisis points and ideological controversies through student re-enactment games in the Reacting to the Past (RTTP) series. Students will play at least two RTTP games with related themes, taking on the roles of historical characters who must make crucial decisions about complex issues and events in a particular time frame.

Marco Cerocchi (Associate Professor of Italian)

### **“The Interplay of Literature, Religion, and Music”**

This seminar introduces students to the major products of Italian literature and culture. As a cultural introduction, the course will provide a brief overview of Italian history, Catholic religion, and the fine arts by offering “virtual trips” to cities such as Rome and Florence. These are the cities that were home to the poets, writers, religious figures, and artists we will study, and where they set their stories and created their masterpieces. In addition to excerpts from Italian literature, we will view video clips and analyze the relationship between literature, music, and contemporary religious beliefs.

S. Joel Garver (Assistant Professor of Philosophy & Director of FYS)

### **“The Dead Shall Rise: Zombies, Society, and Culture”**

Zombies appear with increasing frequency in literature, film, television, graphic novels, and popular culture. And the issues they raise bridge philosophy, religion, political theory, film studies, and cultural studies. From Victor and Edward Halperin's *White Zombie* (1932) to the latest episode of *The Last of Us*, the threat of zombies to society functions to reveal the political fears, social tensions, and controverted values of their time period.

Victoria L. Ketz (Professor of Spanish & Chair, Global Languages, Literatures, & Perspectives)

### **“Fairy Tales, Fables, and Fantasy”**

Over the centuries, children have been told bedtime stories and sung nursery rhymes even though they do not know the history behind the stories. Socially, fairy tales, fables, and fantasy fiction serve a variety of functions including developing imagination, building emotional resiliency, crossing cultural boundaries, creating a common language, and teaching social mores as well as addressing the skills of critical thinking and problem solving. This course will focus on the evolution of children's tales to contemporary times placing emphasis on the history and psychology that gives rise to this fiction.

Rachel McCabe (Assistant Professor of English)

### **“Philadelphia on Film”**

Philadelphia has a complex national reputation: it is the “city of brotherly love,” “the cradle of liberty,” and a place where “bad things happen.” As the fifth largest city in the United States, Philadelphia has a complex national and local reputation. For this reason, Philadelphia has been a frequent setting for films since the 1940s. In this First Year Seminar, we will examine Philadelphia's shifting representation on film. To do so, we will explore Philadelphia's history throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the local and national stories told about Philadelphia, and the ways that the lives of different Philadelphians are represented on screen.

Francis McKee (Director of American Studies)

### **“Trusting Penn and Hinkie's Process”**

We will examine the literary, cinematic, artistic, musical, and photographic history of Philadelphia and its citizens both real and imagined who have breathed life, controversy, and character into the city for the past four centuries. William Penn envisioned a “City of Brotherly Love,” where people seeking religious freedom and individual rights would find a home. And so the process of building and becoming a city infused with unique character and characters began. Through founding fathers, eminent bankers and physicians, immigrant artisans and factory workers, religious scholars and the religious faithful, beloved entertainers, artists, and athletes, Philadelphia has grown from Penn's principles and Benjamin Franklin's virtues to current contributors to its character in Rocky Balboa's “going the distance” resilience and Charlie Kelly's wry one-liners in “It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia.”

Mey-Yen Moriuchi (Associate Professor of Art History)

**“Art of the Street: Monuments, Murals, and Graffiti”**

What is the impact of art located in the street, in other words, art in the public sphere? What is its value? Its purpose? This course will explore various forms of art that are located in public spaces: monuments, murals, graffiti, and street art. These artworks engage the public in different ways and raise questions about the significance of art. Throughout the semester, students will investigate the role of art in the street as a form of self-expression, social practice, political activism, identity building, and community engagement. We will examine diverse historical and contemporary perspectives integral to public art discourse. For example, we will use the Mexican Muralist movement and Mural Arts in Philadelphia as case studies to analyze muralism as a tool of social and political change and a means to unite communities.

H. Lyman Stebbins (Associate Professor of History)

**“Power, Justice, and Community”**

This seminar introduces first-year students to diverse historical and contemporary perspectives on key questions about the relationships between state, society, and the individual: What is the nature of authority? How are communities defined in terms of inclusion, exclusion, and hierarchy? What is the common good? This interdisciplinary seminar engages key, excerpted texts in the humanities and social sciences by Plato, William Shakespeare, Karl Marx, Mary Wollstonecraft, Martin Luther King Jr., Pope Francis, and others. Students will think critically about these texts in reading, discussion, and writing to prepare them for intellectual discovery and academic success at La Salle University.