

# First-Year Academic Seminars

## Fall 2022

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.

Claire Busse (Associate Professor of English)

### **“Shakespeare Today”**

William Shakespeare’s plays and poems are frequently invoked to address contemporary issues: quoted in political speeches, debates, and newspaper op-eds; performed on stage in contemporary settings (at times to great controversy); and reimagined in films and novels that relocate Shakespeare’s plots to global and contemporary settings. This seminar will study three to four Shakespeare plays with current cultural significance. We will examine them in their original historical and cultural setting and also in their contemporary reiterations to explore why these works have such staying power—as well as how much they change as we reimagine them for our own uses.

Br. John M. Crawford (Associate Professor of Religion & Theology)

### **“Saints Among Us”**

This course invites students to investigate religious exemplars in contemporary society. The Catholic tradition has a formal process for naming “saints,” who are outstanding examples of devout faith and practice. Does 21<sup>st</sup> century life still have a place to recognize extraordinary persons whose holy lives are worthy of emulation and imitation? What does sainthood mean today? What is the place of everyday holiness for contemporary persons, especially college students?

Matt DeCarlo (Assistant Professor of Social Work)

### **“Global Human Rights & Social**

**Justice”**  
This course will examine social issues and injustices from a global perspective. A central focus will be the struggles of individuals, families, and communities from around the world. This course will introduce the student to the concepts of social justice, human rights, social welfare and oppression, and discuss ways to promote social welfare from a human rights and social justice perspective.

S. Joel Garver (Assistant Professor of Philosophy)

### **“Paths of Enlightenment, Ways of Wisdom”**

Monks and metaphysicians. Buddha and Bonhoeffer. Stoics and saints. Over the centuries thinkers, mystics, and sages sought wisdom, pursued ultimate Reality, and gained enlightenment to make a difference in the world and in their lives. This course looks at three traditions: Hellenistic philosophy, Buddhist wisdom, and Christian faith. We will read and write about secular and sacred texts, their theories and thinkers. But we will also journey into (and journal about) practices: meditation and mental focus, fasting and philosophy, self-discipline and centering. This is an opportunity not only to explore these traditions, but also to learn about yourself and embark on a pathway of your own.

Kevin J. Harty (Professor of English)

### **“Growing Up: A Literary View”**

This seminar looks at literary texts that have attempted to depict the struggles young people such as yourselves have had in figuring out who they are. Such struggles might be related to issues of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, levels of ability, family, geography, and a number of other factors. Figuring out who you really are or who you want to become is an ongoing, sometimes challenging process that literature has repeatedly examined. Students will read, discuss, and write about contemporary literary texts reflecting the challenges that characters face when they ask who they are and who they hope to be.

Lisa Jarvinen (Professor of History)

### **“The Land Where La Salle Stands”**

For thousands of years, people have been present on the land that our campus now occupies. In this course we will ask why different people came here, how they interacted with each other and their environment, in what contexts they had to make choices, and what this place has meant to them. We will learn how to do local history and historical research by studying methodologies and case studies and by using campus archives, primary, and secondary sources as well as interviews with campus community members. In the first half of the course, we’ll examine the time period before La Salle was here and in the second half, we’ll look at the arrival and growth of the university.

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

### **“Food in Our Culture”**

Sustenance is vital for human existence, but few ponder the many ways in which food is used in our society. This course will examine food as a biological need and a cultural identifier as well as the problematics surrounding this topic including sustainability and shortage. By studying historical, biological, psychological, and cultural factors, a greater understanding will be obtained about this need/privilege.

Daniel “Reg” Kim (Lecturer, Religion & Theology)

**“Oh Em Gee: Religion and Youth Culture”**

From the Jonas Brothers wearing Purity Rings to *Euphoria*’s Rue saying she doesn’t believe in God, declarations of religious identity appear throughout popular youth culture. Social media provides representations of the lived experiences of a wide range of religious people. Likewise, depictions of how religion plays a role in the world view of young people lie at the heart of many stories we tell. In this course, we will interrogate the implications of claiming religious identities in young people’s lives by examining a wide range of different media. We will analyze stories – the ones people tell of themselves and the ones told about them – in order to detect the function of religious identities for young people and to discern how this may be different from previous generations.

Vincent R. Kling (Professor of German & Comparative Literature)

**“Alchemy: Science of Body & Spirit”**

Tarot reading and alchemy are looked on as anti-scientific, but in an age when science investigated both physical and spiritual, they were noble vehicles of bridging matter and mind. Used with historical understanding, which we will study, they are powerful means of connecting intellect and intuition, science and psychology. We will study the history and practice of these arts by learning principles of alchemy, especially color symbolism, and by practicing Tarot readings. We will read *Harry Potter* but also see alchemy at work in *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. The course includes discussions, position papers, other readings, and a potential visit to the American Chemical Heritage Museum.

Kimberly Lewinski (Associate Professor of Education)

**“Celebrate Your Voice & Empower Youth”**

This unique experiential course focuses both on finding your own voice and on researching and observing how education for students transforms when trauma-informed practices help them find their voice too. Breaking down barriers due to the student/teacher power dynamic will allow students a voice in the classroom to discuss the impact of real-world problems on our lives (e.g., the COVID-19 epidemic), thereby creating a safe space that is trustworthy and transparent. As we experience trauma-informed instruction in class, we will also explore educational challenges facing urban schools today, specifically in Philadelphia, such as inequality, social justice, and human rights for marginalized populations. In this way, we will better understand the urgency of transforming urban education and the need for trauma-informed practices.

Francis T. Mallon (Assistant Professor of Economics)

**“Entrepreneurship: Philly Style”**

This course will analyze the role of Entrepreneurship and Innovation on the economic well being of the community. Historical and current day entrepreneurial pursuits engaged in here in the City of Philadelphia provide the framework (via case study analysis directed by the professor) for student research, discussions and writings regarding the evolution of the economic state of our City. Students will examine and debate the role of government to both regulate, while at the

same time inspire, entrepreneurial activity to enhance the economic living standard of the citizens of the city. Entrepreneurs currently engaged in business operations in the City will present to the class their experiences in identifying business opportunity, founding their business in the city, navigating the dual challenges of serving the needs of their market while satisfying their responsibility related to governmental controls and regulation. Students will question/develop their personal perspective on the value of economic development associated with entrepreneurial action and responsibility for social justice in the development and perpetuation of the businesses formed by these entrepreneurial actions.

James M. Mancinelli (Assistant Professor of Communication Sciences & Disorders)

### **“The Origins & Evolution of Human Communication”**

This course will engage the student in the study of the evolution of human communication which includes the biological, sociological, and linguistic prerequisites to human communication as we now know it. The student will be read literature in the above areas and engage in discussions to compare and contrast the various theories proposed by researchers in this area of study. Students will engage in hands-on experiments related to the material being discussed. Comparisons and contrasts will be made with non-human, primate species, and differences highlighted. The student will be required to develop and explain their own theory of the evolution of human communication, incorporating the biological, cognitive, sociological, and linguistic aspects discussed. Applications to communicative differences in today’s society will also be discussed, e.g., male vs. female, cultural differences, etc.

Margaret M. McGuinness (Professor Emerita of Religion & Theology)

### **“Catholicism in Philadelphia - Then and Now”**

We will read about, write about, talk about, and think about the rich and diverse story of Catholicism in the City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection (and its suburbs) from a historical and contemporary perspective. Topics to be covered include—but are not limited to—immigration, sports, gender, race, and the sexual abuse crisis. No prior knowledge is required; students of all faith traditions, or none at all, are welcome.

Francis X. McKee (Director of American Studies)

### **“Philadelphia: Trusting Penn & 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.”

Trent W. McLaurin (Assistant Professor of Education)

**“Trauma & Resiliency as Told through Hip Hop”**

Students will develop an understanding of trauma and resiliency through the narratives told through Hip Hop music. Hip Hop artists and other musicians have shared stories of trauma and resilience through their lyrics since the inception of the genre. Students will develop an understanding of trauma, protective factors, and resilience while studying the art form of Hip Hop.

Maureen H. O’Connell (Professor of Religion & Theology)

**“Welcome to Belfield: Religious Belonging”**

In this seminar you will use elements of our Lasallian mission that foster collaborative learning for the sake of the common good to explore the University’s historic Belfield neighborhood. We will use themes of religious identity and belonging to engage the history, values, beliefs and practices of the diverse cultures in our neighborhood, past and present. We will consider the ways in which religious communities have shaped our northwest corner of Philadelphia and identify elements of La Salle’s Catholic tradition that might contribute to the flourishing of all people who live, work, and study here. As part of a “Together and by Association” teaching and learning cohort (TABA), we will join students in another First Year Seminar in Public Health in some of our explorations of our Belfield neighborhood.

Mark Thomas (Visiting Professor of Political Science)

**“Politics of Literature: Conscience & Protest in the Contemporary Era”**

In this seminar students describe the diverse contemporary and historical perspectives relevant to the impact of western civilization’s understanding of economic progress, democratization, and freedom on human beings’ relationships to themselves, society, and the environment. We will examine how various authors perceive and portray an individual’s “meaningful existence” in this present milieu. In this regard, we examine how the individual reconciles personal values, community values and western values, and how “progress” stirs the conscience and whether it places the individual at odds with society and those who govern us.

William A. Price (Professor of Chemistry & Biochemistry)

**“Brave New World: Ethical Issues in Modifying Nature”**

This course creates an interactive atmosphere to discuss and evaluate several scientific issues that challenge some of our basic human values. Some of these issues challenge us to reassess the role of humans in the world from passive observers of nature to active modifiers. Humans have been changing nature for generations as we untangle challenges in medicine, genetics, and agriculture. An overriding question will address the meaning of “human nature” in both philosophical and scientific perspectives. We will get past the sensational headlines and carefully evaluate a number of modern scientific issues that cause division along ideological, religious, and scientific fronts. Some of these issues did not even exist a decade ago and thus we may find ourselves at the front lines of a controversy. Others have existed for generations and continue to

present controversy. Historical examples involving modification (e.g., vaccine discovery, biological weapons, chemical synthesis) and modern perspectives (e.g., gene therapy, stem cell research, gene editing) will be presented and discussed.

Candace J. Robertson-James (Assistant Professor of Public Health)

### **“Welcome to Belfield: Public Health”**

This course introduces students to some of the core components of urban life, specifically with the context of Belfield and surrounding communities (Germantown, Logan, Olney, West Oak Lane, etc.) around the La Salle University Campus. Local community health assets will be explored along with public health challenges and concerns. Students will explore specific aspects of the Belfield Community (e.g., housing, transportation, food and hunger, faith, crime, poverty, arts, culture, healthcare access) and their impact on health and implications for healthy communities. Programs and policies that influence the health of urban populations in general, in Philadelphia and Belfield specifically will be discussed and contemporary and historical perspectives will be considered. As part of a “Together and by Association” teaching and learning cohort (TABA), this course uses elements of our Lasallian mission oriented toward collaborative learning to explore the intersection of health, wellbeing and religious belonging as we collaborate with another First Year Seminar Course.

H. David Robison (Professor of Economics)

### **“Immigration, International Trade, and Regulations”**

This course will examine several contemporary economic policy issues in a seminar format (read, research, and discuss). As suggested by the title of the course, the key topics will be immigration, international trade, and economic regulation, but additional policy debates will be included. Rather than attempting to draw specific policy conclusions or even build a policy consensus, the primary goal of the course is to help students understand the nature of the debates from their historic underpinnings to the contemporary views on the issues. A secondary goal is having students understand the trade-offs necessary to support a policy position, because no policy is free of costs.

Laura A. Roy (Associate Professor of Education)

### **“Literacies of Change”**

The course is designed to address organizing, activism, and resistance literacies related to issues of social justice. This course examines the potentials and benefits that accrue from exploring histories, models, and pedagogies of change at the grassroots level. Grounded in the notion of “city as classroom,” this course will connect students with local organizers, activist, and ally groups committed to issues of social justice such as linguistic human rights, racial justice, environmental justice and sustainability, public health, educational access, and immigration reform through authentic engagement with grassroots organizations

Br. Edward Sheehy (Associate Professor of History)

### **“Philadelphia in Wartime”**

What role did Philadelphia play during the major wars in American history, from the Revolutionary War to the military conflicts of the 20th Century? What were the effects of that participation in warfare on the city and its people, both in the short and in the long term? This course will examine the rich history of the city’s institutions and people in wartime, including specific battles, logistics, military leadership, and wartime participants such as women, Quakers, and African-Americans. It also will consider Philadelphia’s articulation of attitudes both for and against participation in war, and of its approaches to conflict, at various moments in the city’s history.

Anthony Paul Smith (Associate Professor of Religion & Theology)

### **“Black Philadelphia”**

Black people make up 44.2% of Philadelphia’s total population, as of 2016 according to the US Census Bureau, making the community even with whites as the two largest population groups in the city. Despite this fact, the political, religious, and intellectual story of Philadelphia is usually told from the perspective of the various white settler-colonial stories of the Founding Fathers and the white immigrant struggles of the Italians and Irish. This course seeks to prepare Freshman for their academic career through a serious and focused study of the Black tradition in Philadelphia. To study and explore Black Philadelphia we will employ diverse methods from sociology, religious studies, political theory, history, and literature in addition to possible field trips to historic sites and guest speakers. While we focus on understanding the ways in which various methods allow us to understand one part of an object of study, we will come to see how employing these methods together allow for a richer understanding of the city we inhabit, that we shape, and that shapes us.

Brian R. Wyant (Professor of Sociology & Criminal Justice)

### **“Crime, Case Studies, Current Events”**

This course examines current and high-profile criminal justice events in the United States from the mid-1960’s to present day. For example, students will study the Attica prison revolt, L.A. riots, the Central Park Five, and the more recent Black Lives Matter movement to develop a better understanding of the characteristics of these significant historical events but to also aid in making sense of current events. Students will use works of historical and contemporary scholarship in order to try to understand the period and as well as stay current with ongoing events. A knowledge of the historical development and portrayals of crime and justice may provide a clearer understanding and solutions for current-day problems.