Freshman Seminars Fall Term 2019

**FSEM 101-01**  *Science, Weird Science, and Pseudoscience*
Professor Holly Bevsek  
MWF 9:00-9:50

**FSWI 101-01**  *The Weird Science of German Romanticism*
Professor Amy Emm  
MWF 11:00-11:50

Explore the boundaries of fact and fiction in this course pairing focused on astonishing scientific methods and claims.

Professor Bevsek’s seminar will focus on evaluating claims that sound like science but actually are not, i.e., pseudoscience, in topics that range from astrology, cryptids (like Bigfoot), and ghosts to current public debates on whether vaccination causes autism and whether or not emissions produced by the burning of fossil fuels is causing global climate change. This course will develop your skills in determining which claims are likely to be valid and which claims are not.

In Professor Emm’s linked writing intensive class on the science of German Romanticism, students will explore how a particular culture tested the boundaries between science and the imagination. Topics will include morphology, galvanism, mesmerism, gender science and alchemy. Through comparison of literary expression to scientific and academic writing, the course will focus on developing the skills to generate your own claims and to support them with documentation and critical analysis.

You should sign up for [FSEM and FSWI 101-01](#), if you...
Freshman Seminars  
Fall 2019

- Want to be empowered to evaluate the claims with which the world confronts you
- Plan a career in a scientific or humanities field
- Are interested in the strange and unusual
- Believe the truth is out there

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FSEM 101-02  “Humans Need Not Apply”: The Rise of Artificial Intelligence
Professor Siripong Potisuk
MWF 11:00-11:50

FSWI 101-02  “Humans Need Not Apply”: The Rise of Artificial Intelligence
Professor David G. Allen
MWF 9:00-9:50

The term “artificial intelligence (AI)” has recently become a buzzword within the computer industry after years in obscurity as an overhyped field of research. It is suggested that AI is poised to make a comeback and blossoming into exciting technology with limitless possibilities including computers capable of problem-solving and human interaction. Professor Potisuk’s seminar will explore the influence of AI in our daily lives and its impact on humanity, especially the increasingly pervasive nature of AI in manufacturing, media, entertainment, medicine, etc. The seminar will focus on three main topics: the future of work, privacy, and data security.

Professor Allen’s linked writing intensive class focuses on the pressing questions facing humanity regarding the rise of Artificial Intelligence. Three books will be assigned. Max Tegmark’s Life 3.0: Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence explains the threats and opportunities facing humanity from an AI that may indeed achieve a “Superintelligence” far exceeding human-level cognition. Two classic Science Fiction novels, Philip K. Dick’s Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (the source of the movie Blade Runner) and William Gibson’s Neuromancer, also address these issues.

You should sign up for FSEM and FSWI 101-02 if you
Freshman Seminars
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- Have an interest in Artificial Intelligence
- Want to understand a broad definition of AI pertaining to its various applications and its role in today’s technological advancements
- Wonder if you are well-prepared for the jobs of the 21st century
- Enjoy reading, analyzing, and debating government policies and ethical dilemmas that might arise when people’s ethical values are shifting in favor of or against AI

FSEM 101-09, FSEM 101-10  
*Reading Urban Spaces*

Professor Amanda Mushal
MWF 9:00-9:50 (section 9), 11:00-11:50 (section 10)

FSWI 101-09, FSWI 101-10  
*Reading Urban Spaces*

Professor James W. Leonard
MWF 11:00-11:50 (section 9), 9:00-9:50 (section 10)

These linked courses will focus on reading urban spaces in two different ways: through literature set in urban spaces, and through the streets, buildings, and public spaces of cities themselves.

Why do different cities look the way they do? Why does the Chicago River run backwards? Why are so many books, films, and TV shows set in urban places? Are cities places of energy and excitement, or are they disorienting, dangerous, and anonymous? Can you tell a city’s history by looking at its buildings? How do cities adapt to new challenges? Dr. Mushal’s class will examine significant trends in urban development over the past three centuries. These will include 18th-century ideas of ordering the landscape, the role of commerce in shaping urban layout, 19th-century industrialization and the Romantic reaction to it, suburbanization, race and urban development, and such 21st-century questions as urban revitalization,
surveillance, and sustainability. We will discuss how each of these developments reflects larger social values, and how they shape the experiences, as well as the challenges, facing urban communities today.

Dr. Leonard’s linked writing-intensive class will examine how cities have been experienced by generations living and working in them. Through film and literature, we will ask how various groups have responded to the city, and how they have, in turn, shaped and reshaped the city. If “knowing” a city is an act of reading—in which we assign specific meanings and expectations to regions within an urban space—then what can the lived experiences of literary characters teach us about re-reading the city through different eyes? We will also discuss how the city itself functions as a character in these stories. In this course we will travel from Africa to England, Australia to Kingston, and Los Angeles to New York in order to think through similarities and differences between urban experiences around the globe. Proposed novels include In the Fog of the Season’s End, Mrs. Dalloway, and Harare North, in addition to short selections by authors such as Richard Wright, Sukhdev Sandhu, Edith Wharton, and Thomas Wolfe. We will also be watching Fire in Babylon, The Big Sleep, and Miller’s Crossing.

You should sign up for FSEM 101.09 or 10 and FSWI 101.09 or 10 if you

- Are interested in the history and human stories that cities tell.
- Wonder why your hometown looks the way it does.
- Enjoy books and films set in cities.
- Want to see cities through the eyes of different groups who live in them.
- Have ever wondered why public benches are uncomfortable.
- Want to understand the challenges facing urban communities today.
- Want to know more about how local and global forces interact.
- Are interested in why American private detectives are so witty.

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FSEM 101-11, FSEM 101-12 The Titanic: Technology, Travel, and Tragedy

Professor Katherine Grenier
Freshman Seminars  
Fall 2019

MWF 9:00-9:50 (section 11), 11:00-11:50 (section 12)

**FSWI 101-11, FSWI 101-12. The Titanic in Popular Literature and Film**
Professor Frances Frame

MWF 11:00-11:50 (section 11), 9:00-9:50 (section 12)

Dr. Grenier’s course will examine the sinking of the RMS Titanic in April 1912 as case study for considering some of the key issues facing early 20th century Europe and the United States. We will look at the technology that enabled the building of such large ships. We will investigate who was on the ship and why, thus considering immigration and the expansion of cross-Atlantic travel. We will explore the memory of the Titanic: what lessons did people draw from this tragedy in 1912 and why do people continue to be fascinated by this event?

Dr. Frame’s course will encourage you to consider the role of creative imagination in making sense of disaster. We will look at responses to the Titanic catastrophe in popular culture, including James Cameron’s blockbuster hit Titanic, the Grand Hotel’s annual Titanic Weekend, and Vintage Digital’s video game Titanic: Honor and Glory. More broadly, through brief course readings by Stephen King and other writers we will explore the power of writing to interpret both personal and national suffering. Class discussion will be lively and entertaining. Students will have the opportunity to write about their own interests connected to the calamity.

You should sign up for FSEM and FSWI 101-11 or 101-12 if

- you are interested in early 20th century history
- you are interested in the Titanic
- you want to improve your skills in historical research.
- you enjoy watching disaster movies and talking about them.
- you wonder about the role of writing in personal and national recovery.
- you want one-on-one guidance and revision opportunities as you write.

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**FSEM 101-13  Video Games Past and Present**
Professor Kevin Skenes
MWF 11:00-11:50

**FSWI 101-13  Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Human Nature**
Professor Jennifer Adair
The popularity of video games has increased exponentially since the introduction of *Spacewar!* in 1962. These games, now considered a normal part of popular culture, exert considerable influence on the decision-making of many people. This course will provide an overview of video game history and design from several perspectives, including technological advances, in-game physics, real-life effects, and business approaches. Students will be asked to think critically about open-ended issues related to video games such as the importance (or unimportance) of historical accuracy and will be encouraged to develop their own approaches to complex situations.

In Professor Adair’s linked writing-intensive class, we will use the genres of science fiction, horror, and fantasy to explore what it means to be human; what do we fear, what we do crave, and where is the thrilling place where these overlap? While such questions may not be immediately connected to video games, the class should provide insight and even inspiration for Dr. Skenes’ course. We will analyze themes such as science fiction’s ambivalence towards technology and the ethics of new technological developments, as well as explore how horror and fantasy, no matter how supernatural or far-fetched, can actually reveal a larger collective anxiety, such as the ways in which the fear and taboo surrounding death leads to the creation of zombies and vampires.

You should sign up for **FSEM and FSWI 101-13** if you…

- Enjoy playing and talking about video games.
- Enjoy reading, writing, and discussing science fiction.
- Are interested in historical and contemporary issues involving treatment of video games alongside film, television, and written literature.
- Are interested in the effects of new technology on society.
- Are interested in how to define what makes a “good” game.
- Have ideas on how to build your own fictional worlds.

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**FSEM 101-18, FSEM 101-19**  *Texts & Contexts: Reading, Writing, and Research in the 21st Century*

Professor Sarah Clere

MWF 9:00-9:50 (section 15), 11:00-11:50 (section 16)

**FSWI 101-18, FSWI 101-19**  *Texts & Contexts: Reading, Writing, and Research in the 21st Century*
In Dr. Clere’s seminar, students will examine well-known poems, short stories, and one play, placing these works of literature in their historical and cultural contexts via a range of documentary media, including letters, films, book reviews, museum displays, digital archives, and court cases. We will also discuss why some works are deemed classics and studied in high school and college, while others might be read widely during a given period and then fall into obscurity. As the class progresses, we will expand our idea of what qualifies as a text. For example, can we “read” and interpret a monument or a building the way we do a poem? To that end, we will be exploring the intertwined public history of Charleston and The Citadel. Literary works we will cover may include “Battle Royal” by Ralph Ellison, “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson, “Barn Burning” by William Faulkner, and *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry. We will also consider popular literature and series books.

In Dr. Spring’s writing intensive course, students will use a variety of archival and secondary sources to explore the intersections of identity, perspective, and representation. We will begin the semester using Charleston and The Citadel as backdrops for an exploration of texts and contexts. Students will extend this exploration as they conduct research to compose an argumentative essay project and to understand the context of their argument. During this process, students will consider what makes an argument effective in both academic and public spheres. Our work for the semester will improve your approaches to researching, reading, and writing.

You should sign up for **FSEM 101.18 or 19** and **FSWI 101.18 or 19** if

- you are interested in thinking and writing about history and literature
- you would like to improve your analytical and decoding skills
- you want to practice researching, reading, and written communications skills for your major
- you enjoy student centered discussion